

EMOTIONAL HEALTH SKILLS FOR PROCESSING

CONSCIOUS SHAME PRACTICES

UNPACKING SHAME AND TEARING UP CONTRACTS

Shame involves a physiological response that is so viscerally painful that we do almost anything to avoid it make it go away. In fact, most maladaptive coping methods, reactions and addictions are due to automatic subconscious attempts to avoid feeling shame (feels like guilt, 'bad,' failure, lazy, worthless, unlovable, rejected, not ___ enough or inheritly flawed.



With awareness you can learn to work with shame in a healthy, balanced way so it can work for you, instead of against you - and no longer cause havoc in your life. In fact, Healthy Shame acts as an inner compass and value system.



**With mindfulness,
shame will pass like
any other emotion.**

**Shame feels
permanent and all-
encompassing, but it
is transitory, like all
emotions, and it is a
burden carried by
only part of who we
are, our Inner Critic.**

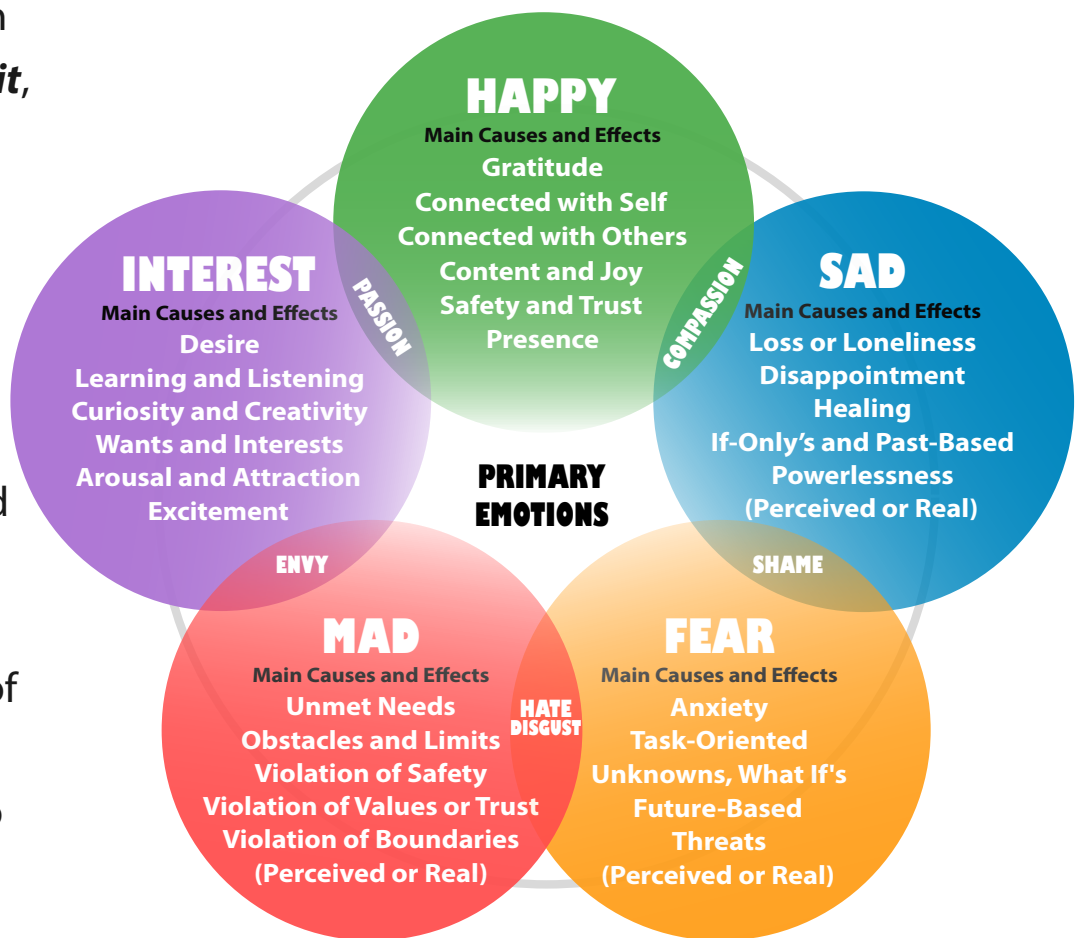
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Christopher Germer, PhD

SHAME'S PURPOSE

WORTHINESS AND BELONGING

Shame is an essential, healthy emotion when you are **working with it**, instead of trying to avoid, depress, self-medicate it, or blame it on others.

Shame is a social emotion. It is triggered when fearing getting 'kicked out of the village.' A **fear/threat** of a **loss** of connection, love, 'good enough' to belong within the 'village' (Self-Worth).



Shame needs Self-Compassion and Self-Leadership, to learn lessons from the past, evaluate your needs, wants, and purpose (that you decide) and understand your real belonging needs so you can make an action plan to get your needs met and feel an authentic sense of value-aligned lovability and Self-Worth.

AUTHENTIC SHAME

ALIGNS YOU AND WORKS WITH YOU



AGREED TO CONSCIOUSLY

Based on your genuine morals, values, rules, goals and boundaries, you have, at some point, thought about and agreed to by choice.



ALIGNED WITH YOUR GOALS

Aligned with who you are and want to be. If you want a limit of one dessert a day, you'll feel Authentic Shame if you eat more than one.



GUIDES AWAY FROM HARM

Guides you away from harmful choices and impulses. Felt when you violate or about to violate a personal value, moral, or goal.



BALANCED AND REALISTIC

Authentic Shame is clear, balanced, healthy and realistic. It entails goals that are attainable and 100% within your power to accomplish.



LIFTS WITH PROCESSING

When you process, learn, and have future corrective action for a regret or wrongdoing, Authentic Shame lifts with self-forgiveness.



SEEKS HEALTHY CONNECTION

Shame's job is to ensure connection. Healthy Shame and remorse help you behave in ways that foster relating and belonging.

TOXIC SHAME

CONFUSES, BERATES, OVERWHELMS AND DEPRESSES YOU



ABSORBED SUBCONSCIOUSLY

Subconscious rules, roles, labels and beliefs ('contracts') rooted in childhood, experiences, trauma, relationships, familial, societal and cultural programming.



BASED ON OTHERS' EXPECTATIONS

Based on who and what you've been (not who are authentically), on how you perceive others perceive you, and how you think they want you to be (very confusing).



BERATES YOU INTO BEHAVING

Blasts with self-criticism to get you to do or not do something. Triggers anxiety, reactivity and maladaptive ways (fight, flight, freeze, fawn) to avoid shame.



IMPOSSIBLE AND UNREALISTIC

Confusing, unrealistic, extreme, all-or-nothing. I need to always be happy, giving, perfect, pleasing, in control, #1, etc. to be enough, lovable or respectable.



UNRELENTING AND NEVER SATISFIED

Fueled by Inner Critic, no matter how right, perfect, nice, good, pretty, successful or selfless you are, it won't let you feel lovable, worthy or good enough.



SEEKS MISGUIDED CONNECTION

Toxic shame misguides you with core beliefs of being unworthy of being cherished, valued and protected. You may settle for toxic, even abusive connection.



**Shame arises out of
the wish to be
loved. The wish to
be loved is universal
and it drives the
whole train of
shame. Yet what
connects us more
than anything else
is our need to be
loved and belong.**

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Christopher Germer, PhD



UNPACKING SHAME

This practice allows you to start identifying your ‘contracts’ (beliefs, rules, internalized agreements, opinions, familial and societal expectations) and the “shaming should’s” you unconsciously believe to be true.

- Through self-reflection and curiosity towards your own beliefs you gain an understanding of your shame story.
- This insight will help you understand the feelings, thoughts and automatic reactions that get triggered due to internalized shame and Inner Critic beliefs.
- For example, if you had an overly critical parent who constantly critiqued your body. You were defenseless against this judgment and absorbed the all-or-nothing shame-based beliefs without awareness of toxic shame.


CONSCIOUS SHAME PRACTICE

QUESTIONS TO UNPACK SHAME

What behaviors or choices come to mind when you think of things you've been doing over and over, that have been causing harm, trouble, resentment, frustration or pain in your life?

What do think these behaviors say about you as a person? What do you say to yourself about these behaviors?

What kind of harm, pain, resentment, disappointment, frustration or other negative impact have these behaviors caused? Describe.



CONSCIOUS SHAME PRACTICE

CHOOSE ONE BEHAVIOR OR PATTERN FROM ABOVE TO WORK WITH FOR THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

Which behavior or pattern are you choosing to focus on?

Is this behavior possibly aligned with your genuine value system, or is it going against **your personal values**? Which values?

What do you fear will happen if you continue this behavior or choice over and over?


Is there any part of this behavior or choice that you're personally ok with but it's become an issue due to rules, beliefs or others' expectations of you? If so what about it is genuinely acceptable to you if you weren't feeling judged or judging yourself?

CONSCIOUS SHAME PRACTICE

What new or better ways of behaving are you wanting for yourself, so you can feel good about this aspect of your life?

Until now, why haven't you already been choosing or behaving in this 'better' way?

What do you fear could happen if you change and choose this new, desired way of being and behaving? Who or what could possibly be impacted or disappointed if you choose new ways?



CONSCIOUS SHAME PRACTICE

Imagine you're now doing things better, making new choices and no longer repeating the same behaviors and choices that brought you pain or frustration as described above.

What has improved in your day to day life? Your life overall? Freewrite thoughts and ideas with as much detail as possible.

As you imagine living aligned with these new and improved choices and behaviors, how do these new behaviors or choices feel? Describe feelings.

How do you hope this new behavior will improve how you feel about yourself? How will this improve your sense of confidence, worthiness, self-esteem and self-trust? How do you see it improving your relationships overall?



**Healthy Shame
helps us live up to
the morals we've
agreed to. We can't
get shame to shut
up or go away. But
we need to make
sure we have morals
and agreements
that are appropriate
and aligned with
our personal values.**

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Karla McLaren, PhD



TEARING UP CONTRACTS

This practice allows you to identify your 'contracts' (beliefs, rules, internalized agreements, opinions, familial and societal expectations) and the "shaming should's" you unconsciously believe to be true.

- Once unpacked, you have the power to consciously decide which of these beliefs, or 'contracts,' you want to keep and which you want to discard, or figuratively 'tear up.'
- Choose which 'contracts' are AUTHENTIC (aligned with your true values and aspirations, and your highest good vs INAUTHENTIC (internalized but not consciously agreed to).

A woman with brown hair tied back, wearing glasses, is looking down at a document she is holding. The document has the word "CONTRACT" visible on it. The background is a blurred office environment with a bookshelf and a clock on the wall.

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It's the shaming message or contract that creates the problem. 'Tearing Contracts' is an emotional practice that helps you identify unconscious agreements and behaviors, and release them consciously.

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Karla McLaren, PhD

EMOTIONAL EXPECTATIONS, BELIEFS, SHOULD'S AND RULES

How do you believe you're SUPPOSED to feel or how should you handle emotions?

Examples: I should be happy or energetic all the time. Sad is a sign of weakness or a disorder. Feeling angry is bad. If I feel hopeless or disappointed, I am a mess. I should not feel anxious around people. I should trust everyone. I should feel comfortable around strangers or even people who have wronged me.

POSSIBLY INAUTHENTIC SHAME

WHAT I THINK I SHOULD/SHOULDN'T BELIEVE

This includes what you've been taught to believe or have just believed this for whatever reason up until now.

Example: I shouldn't feel angry at anyone.

AUTHENTIC SHAME

WHAT I REALISTICALLY WANT TO BELIEVE

What you feel is right based on your values or from what you've learned. This could be the same or different than the left column.

Example: Anger is a normal emotion that detects a violation, an unmet need or a needed boundary.

INTELLECTUAL EXPECTATIONS, BELIEFS, SHOULD'S AND RULES

How are you supposed to think? Are you more interested in concrete facts or exploratory imagination? Are you supposed to think positive at all times. Should you be a realist, pessimist, or optimist? Should you only think about the future instead of pondering the past? Should you only have nice thoughts about everyone? Is accepting reality important or should you deny reality and only think happily?

POSSIBLY INAUTHENTIC SHAME

WHAT I THINK I SHOULD/SHOULDN'T BELIEVE

This includes what you've been taught to believe or have just believed this for whatever reason up until now.

Example: I should be a realist.

AUTHENTIC SHAME

WHAT I REALISTICALLY WANT TO BELIEVE

What you feel is right based on your values or from what you've learned. This could be the same or different than the left column.

Example: I want to be a realist.

RELATIONAL EXPECTATIONS, BELIEFS, SHOULD'S AND RULES

What do you expect relationships or friendships to be like? What should family be like? How should you be with co-workers? Currently single or not, what do you expect a relationship to be? What beliefs do you have about love? How do you expect your current or future partner to be? How much should a couple disagree? How should you deal with conflict? What do you expect trust to feel like?

POSSIBLY INAUTHENTIC SHAME

WHAT I THINK I SHOULD/SHOULDN'T BELIEVE

This includes what you've been taught to believe or have just believed this for whatever reason up until now.

Example: I should not have needs. I need to be fine with just giving and giving, and making sure my wife is happy.

AUTHENTIC SHAME

WHAT I REALISTICALLY WANT TO BELIEVE

What you feel is right based on your values or from what you've learned. This could be the same or different than the left column.

Example: I want to be able to communicate my needs clearly so my wife has the opportunity to give to me so I can feel loved.

PHYSICAL/FINANCIAL EXPECTATIONS, BELIEFS, SHOULD'S AND RULES

What beliefs do you have about appearance? What should your ideal career be? What is financial health? What do you need to look and act like to be considered acceptable, lovable, good-looking? Ideal weight? What should you be doing to impress others? What is success vs failure? What do you need to feel good in life? What should your dreams and goals be? What should your daily life be like?

POSSIBLY INAUTHENTIC SHAME

WHAT I THINK I SHOULD/SHOULDN'T BELIEVE

This includes what you've been taught to believe or have just believed this for whatever reason up until now.

Example: I should be fine with just enough money to get by.

AUTHENTIC SHAME

WHAT I REALISTICALLY WANT TO BELIEVE

What you feel is right based on your values or from what you've learned. This could be the same or different than the left column.

Example: I want to feel worthy of financial health so I can travel and help my family and charities.

RELIGIOUS/SPIRITUAL EXPECTATIONS, BELIEFS, SHOULD'S AND RULES

Are you living in alignment with your belief system? Are there aspects to your belief system you expect yourself to believe, but don't? What are your expectations for yourself about practicing your spirituality? Do you feel you're supposed to be peaceful all the time? Do your beliefs or lack thereof make you feel guilty? Do you feel the sense of belonging regardless of your belief system?

POSSIBLY INAUTHENTIC SHAME

WHAT I THINK I SHOULD/SHOULDN'T BELIEVE

This includes what you've been taught to believe or have just believed this for whatever reason up until now.

Example: I should go to church every Sunday.

AUTHENTIC SHAME

WHAT I REALISTICALLY WANT TO BELIEVE

What you feel is right based on your values or from what you've learned. This could be the same or different than the left column.

Example: I truly want to go to church every Sunday.

CONSCIOUS SHAME PRACTICE

MODIFYING AND 'TEARING UP CONTRACTS'

SHAME, EXPECTATIONS, MORALS, VALUES AND BELIEFS

What expectations or beliefs do you have about yourself, whether true or not, that have been causing harm, trouble, resentment, or pain in your life?

What is the first memory you have of having these expectations or beliefs about yourself? How old were you?

What do you fear may happen if you no longer had these expectations or beliefs?

CONSCIOUS SHAME PRACTICE

Is there an aspect to these expectations or beliefs that is aligned with your values, needs or genuine desires in life?

From what you've written in pages above, what expectations, rules and beliefs may be causing more harm than good?

Describe how these expectations, rules, beliefs ('contracts') have caused harm or distress to you or those you care about.

CONSCIOUS SHAME PRACTICE

What do you think would happen if you no longer agreed to these 'contracts'?

How can you modify or change any of these 'contracts' to be balanced, realistic, aligned with your values and highest good?

How would they change so they are Authentic Shame (healthy rules and expectations) instead of Inauthentic Toxic Shame?





MEDICAL DISCLAIMER

Content provided and presented in this document or otherwise is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Content is intended for educational purposes only. It should not be used as a substitute for medical or psychiatric advice, cannot diagnosis or treat any medical or psychiatric condition and does not replace care from your physician. Always consult a healthcare professional if you suspect you require medical or psychiatric treatment.

If you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency, in danger of hurting yourself or others, feeling suicidal, overwhelmed, or in crisis, you can access the following resources to find help.

If you are experiencing an emergency dial 911

Crisis Text Line www.crisistextline.org

Suicide Prevention 988lifeline.org

National Domestic Hotline www.thehotline.org