

## Day 7 Turning Against Ourselves



Shame is a tool to teach young people the rules of our culture and to maintain social order and hierarchy. It is meant to create an immediate bad feeling to arrest an action quickly. Ideally, shaming of a behavior is followed quickly by a repair, a connection, so we know **we** are not bad. It is our behavior that was not okay.

The evolutionary value of shame is that it helps people behave socially to fit in. We have a survival level need to belong to our community. We can't afford to be kicked out or ostracized.

Toxic shame is when we internalize the feeling there is something inherently and deeply wrong with us. We feel ashamed of being who we are. We begin to believe "I'm bad. I'm disgusting. I'm unlovable". Shame drives the inner critic and core deficiency beliefs.

As adults we see that the strategies we had as a child were based on our brain development, lack of power, and not wanting to feel helpless. We can see now it was never our fault. We didn't cause it and we are not to blame.

What would happen if we let go of these beliefs? Do you still need them? Many people believe we need

to drive ourselves to produce, to be functional in society, to make a go of our life, and to get ahead.

Shame research around body shaming confirms it never helps us change. When we feel shamed, we collapse. We can't move.

Awareness is the first step to come out of shame. Mindfulness helps us become aware of the sensations in our body and thoughts in our mind. The inner critic may have been driving us since we were very young and be a familiar background noise we might not even notice.

To stop internal shaming, we need to start where we are and not wait until we are somehow better to be worthy of accepting ourselves. This is practical.

Self acceptance and compassion rewire earlier shame experience. A lack of self-compassion keeps shame alive.

Does shaming fit the facts? Is it appropriate to the situation? Does it still apply?

Would we see it this way if it was a dear friend who made that mistake? We are so often harsh with ourselves. Gratitude and self-compassion can help us to move out of the isolation and self-loathing of shame and into social connection.

Shame is an experience we feel in our whole body. We can't think our way out of it. We have an immediate desire to make it go away at all costs. When we feel shamed, we typically lower our head and eyes, and roll our shoulders over and down. There could be a feeling of nausea and ringing in the ears. The breath could be held or shallow.

We lose our sense of humour and have no sense of perspective. Shame feels like a threat. We feel exposed and without value.

Move shame out of your body by changing your body position. Stand up and move around. Breathe deeply or do box breathing. Bring your eyes up and look outward. Make eye contact with someone friendly (live or a picture). Bring your shoulders back and down to open your chest. Bring awareness to the soles of your feet and palms of your hands.

As we work with shame we learn we can tolerate the feeling. It doesn't shut us down anymore in quite the same way.

To really heal shame we need to shift from the “I am bad” false core deficiency belief to a behavior focus. Maybe you have done something wrong and need to change the behavior. This shift helps you know there is nothing wrong with you at your core.

Putting everything on the table is an antidote to shame. *This is who I am. This is how I feel. This is what I've worked through.*

The inner critic is that voice in our head that condemns, ridicules, and shames us. Read below and pause between or listen to the [audio](#).

What is your inner critic's job? What is it trying to accomplish? Did it take over from a parent? Stay connected with your breath and body and take care of yourself as you look into this. What is your inner critic trying to accomplish?

Bring a specific situation to mind and visualize it vividly. Stay connected with your body and breath as you're looking. What was the underlying intent of the inner critic in this situation? Is it possible it was trying to get you to hold back and protect you? Is it related to a social or emotional threat?

How effective is your inner critic? Did it accomplish your goal? Are there other ways you could have met that need? Take your time with this inquiry.

Do you feel shamed by your inner critic? Look back through your life and see how the patterns of inner criticism developed and how your core deficiency beliefs play into it. Maybe you were shamed by your parents, teachers or peers and now you are shaming yourself.

What would happen if you could let go of your false core deficiency beliefs and inner critic? What does that feel like in your body? Is it safe to let go of this? If you were never again to have that critical voice driving you, would you get out of bed in the morning? Would you ever do something challenging?

The inner critic does not help us. Research backs this up. It keeps us playing small so we won't be judged. Only when we are free from the inner critic are we able to be authentic and open. We're not as worried about other people's judgment. The memory of being shamed fuels our inner critic so we can avoid it happening again.

Is there a longing in you to know yourself and really be on your own side? If the role of the inner critic is to keep you safe by protecting you from other people's judgments, what other way could you accomplish that?

Kindness and compassion are the answer. Although it doesn't work, the inner critic is actually trying to help. Can you turn that into an inner encourager that will support healthy change, connection and happiness?

Perfectionism and controlling are an attempt to protect ourselves from being hurt.

Compassion for ourselves when we're having a difficult time helps us to be open, honest and vulnerable. Shame needs darkness and secrecy to stay alive. Self-compassion is a way to move out of isolation and self-loathing. It is a powerful experience to share who we are and not be judged.

What is the cost of continuing to be aggressive with yourself and treating yourself like the enemy? Once we understand the origin and drivers, we can challenge the inner critic. Be firm with your mind. Our bodies react to these words in our head as though they are the capital T Truth.

Use your breath, tapping, tracing, box breathing, or any of the emergency practices to interrupt the momentum. How can you reassure yourself in this moment? Can you include yourself in your circle of kindness and compassion? Your mind might resist that and that's okay.

Keep coming back to your intention. *I am on my own side. I feel compassion for myself right now in this moment.*

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