Recognizing & Overcoming Trauma & Shame

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Defining Shame:

- **noun: shame**

  1. a painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behavior.

- **verb: shame**

  1. (of a person, action, or situation) make (someone) feel ashamed.

- **AKA:** To humiliate, mortify, embarrass, abash, chasten, humble, take down a peg or two, cut
Between the two, what are we more likely to discuss?
Repeated experiences cause groups of neurons to wire together with greater strength.

Over time, with repetition, especially when accompanied by emotional intensity, these neural circuits develop a greater probability of firing, forming our habitual responses to experience.

Any state of mind can become a trait of being with sufficient reinforcement.
The true definition and feeling of SHAME

Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging...
What does it mean to come home?
Healing begins when we grasp:

The hurtful things that others said were never true, the loving things were never false — choose to focus on the love.
Take 10-15 minutes and share one hurtful thing that someone said to you and the kindest message that someone has ever told you and what each experience meant – take turns.
Circle of Courage

Generosity
Independence
Mastery
Belonging
Self-Esteem

Lovable

Capable
Locking it Down: The Barriers to Healing
Silence Secrecy and Judgment
(brene brown)
Private Logic
What are the commonalities?

DON'T TALK

DON'T TRUST

DON'T FEEL
If the overwhelming messages that we receive (both overtly and covertly) are that we cannot trust others, our surroundings, and we cannot trust what we feel/think/know - what are we supposed to gain from this?
How might our clients respond to these – how do WE respond to these?

- Women Are –
- Men Are –
- People Are –
- The World Is –
- I AM -
ACTIVITY

Take 5 minutes and write as many things into your notes on the 5 arenas of private logic as possible.
Feeder Sources for Shame

Traumatic Events

Family/Friends

Social Media
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Shame and Gender
Men and Shame

- Old ways (hunter, gatherer, provider) vs. New Ways (partnering)
- The issue of “feminine” expression expectation on the masculine
- Conflicts of expectation
- New Societal expectations
- Sexuality
- Men and parenting
- Anger – “the way men weep”
Wear the pants.

Dockers

You're not a bloke.

Rotafellow.

Chap, dude, cat.

Gent or bro-ham.

Face it, you're a man.

Which is worse: An abusive wife, or a buddy too chicken to speak up about your abusive wife? Hypothetically.
Male Myths in Society

- Men Can’t be victims
- Men are ALWAYS the aggressors/abusers
- Sexual addiction isn’t real – it’s an excuse that men use when they get caught cheating
- Men are to always be in control
- If a man can’t provide, he’s not much of a man
- A man must ‘take care of his woman’
- Real men don’t cry
- A real man can handle his own
- Father’s are the enforcers
- A real man can handle a drink
Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

*TRAUMA AS DEFINED BY SAMHSA*
Women and Shame

- The issue of “feminine” expression
- Conflicts of expectation
- Ongoing and evolving societal expectations
- Sexuality
- Parenting
- Anger
- Lack of support – even within our own gender
Which bit would you alter first?  
The culture.
“I don’t know which I should be—a good girl or a slut?”
"Do you ever worry you’ve had to sacrifice your femininity to succeed in the male business world,"
Female Myths in Society

- Women are victims
- can’t provide as well as a man can
- Shouldn’t earn more than her partner
- Should look good
- Should take care of her family and friends
- Being a mother is the most important thing
- Is responsible for how her children turn out
- Caused all the trouble with family breakdowns when they went back to work
- Make better bosses
- It’s just known that every woman is going to struggle with some guy being a jerk or getting hit, or getting touched in ways she doesn’t want to be – that’s just how life is.
Circle of Courage
How might recovery be different for someone with mental & chemical health issues?
Shame and Addiction

Feeling the shame, don’t want to feel the shame and use to self-medicate

Shame is deepened & reinforced with every use & every failed promise to self & others

Use, feel better for a bit, then feel worse for using

Self-esteem drops, more feelings of powerlessness, hopeless, frustration
The moral compromise, the willful casting aside of one’s own values, breaks something inside us, changing us into people we
This results in the confusion of:

- **Guilt**
  - I did something bad

- **Shame**
  - I AM something bad
Guilt is positive - It’s a response of psychologically healthy individuals who realize they have done something wrong. It helps them act more positively, more responsibly, often to correct what they’ve done.

Shame tends to direct individuals into destructive behaviors. When people focus on what they did wrong, they can correct it; but when they’re convinced that they are wrong as a result of shame, their whole sense of self is eroded – they seek safety in unhealthy and unproductive ways, and can seek confirmation that they are less...
For the shame based person it is not a separation:

Their leading belief is I do bad things because I am bad/defective/less than...
Healthy – I did something wrong, I feel bad, I’ve learned from it, I’ll make amends and I’ll move on

Unhealthy – I did something wrong and I ruminate over it, but I don’t make changes or amends
“Early in life, individuals develop an internalized view of themselves as adequate or inadequate within the world,” she said. “Children who are continually criticized, severely punished, neglected, abandoned, or in other ways abused or mistreated get the message that they do not ‘fit’ in the world — that they are inadequate, inferior or unworthy.”

Marilyn J. Sorensen, Ph.D., author of “Breaking the Chain of Low Self-Esteem”
What does this sound like?

- Feeling upset by things that remind you of what happened
- Having nightmares, vivid memories, or flashbacks of the event that make you feel like it’s happening all over again
- Feeling emotionally cut off from others
- Feeling numb or losing interest in things you used to care about
- Depression – or feelings of
- Thinking that you are always in danger
- Feeling anxious, jittery, or irritated
- Experiencing a sense of panic that something bad is about to happen
- Sleep disturbances
- Difficulties in mental focusing
- Relational struggles
Healing Guilt

To heal guilt is to look at what was done, why it was done, and what can be done differently next time. To offer empathy and to help the person make amends to the injured party when appropriate and to work to forgive themselves.
ACTIVITY

Take 5 minutes to talk with those around you about how you have successfully helped a client deal with feelings of guilt – what were the specific interventions and what was the outcome?

ALSO

What areas do you struggle with in helping...
Healing Shame
Compassion, Connection

Clearly, Calmly, Consistently
Create a

Should Free Zone
“The truth will set you free, but first it will piss you off.”

- Gloria Steinem
The first things to know

If you do not address trauma and shame, your chances of helping someone fully heal from addictions is limited.

For persons who have undergone trauma, and have shame as a result, this is part of their personal narrative and in order for change to occur, they have to be willing to look at their lives from a new role: The main 3 roles we have are victim, survivor or hero.

In order to even consider talking about the trauma and shame, there needs to be an open, safe environment with people who are not just familiar with the terms and emotional states of these concepts, but who have also done the work to address their own.
Clients need to know that this will be difficult, painful but transformative.

Mental Health professionals should be involved for those who have had significant trauma and shame as we do not want to risk re-traumatizing a client.

Clients will need to go through the stages of grief, and regardless of if addiction was present or not – really going through to make changes can (for many) temporarily feel like the hurtful experiences just happened.
Lies of the EGO – Wayne Dyer

“More”
I am what I have

SHAME

I am what I do - achievement

I am what others think - reputation
We are led to believe or feel that we are separate from one another, from the things that we feel are lacking in our lives, from the things that we feel we need in order to be connected and healed.  

(Wayne Dyer)
Recognizing the Shame Bound Person

Shame based people can present as:

- The victim or offender
- Rigid, controlling, perfectionistic
- Numb or spaced out
- May place image over substance
- Not be able to be authentic
- Can display issues with intimacy in a variety of ways
- Feels consistently separate from
“The most paradoxical aspect of neurotic shame is that it is the core motivator of the super-achieved and the underachieved, the star and the scapegoat, the righteous and the wretched, the powerful and the
Taking steps to heal embedded shame

Per John Bradshaw, healing our embedded shame means we need to heal our inner child:

1. Trust – opening up
2. Validation - awareness
3. Shock and Anger - awareness
4. Sadness/grief
5. Remorse/grief – to awareness
6. Loneliness – but not lonely
“To be shame-bound means that whenever you feel any feeling, need or drive, you immediately feel ashamed. The dynamic core of your human life is grounded in your feelings, needs and drives. When these are bound by shame, you are shamed to the core.”

John Bradshaw, *Healing the Shame that Binds*
For any level of shame:

1. recognize that the shame isn’t about the person who is feeling it – place responsibility where it belongs
2. face it, confront it, and add it to our beings in healthy ways
3. create a family of choice and find ways to get belonging needs met in healthy ways
Acceptance vs. Surrender in Shame Healing
Acceptance is simply an acknowledgement of the situation. Acceptance is saying, ‘Okay, here’s the situation. I accept that I am here.’

Surrender means stopping the fight against forces that you cannot control. Surrender allows you to reserve your energy for later. It’s the process of letting go. It does not mean giving up.
Empowering clients to trust – & who to trust?

“If we share our shame story with the wrong person, they can become one more piece of flying debris in an already dangerous storm”

Brene Brown – Gifts of
What does it mean to be a safe person

- Non-judgmental and non-reactive*
- Accepting
- Validating
- Open
- Active-listening
- Honest
Q & A
Like what you heard today – want more?

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Look for Tamarah’s TEDx talks on Youtube!