



GUILT & SHAME

*Relief From the Burden
of Guilt & Shame*

WORKSHEET

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Enevoldsen

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OvercomingSexualAbuse.com

Most childhood abuse survivors are plagued with guilt and shame. Though the abuse ended years ago, the internal messages of guilt and shame continue.

You've likely already noticed there's no magic bridge we cross when our abuse ends. We don't end up in a new world feeling like empowered adults when we turn a certain age or break ties from toxic relationships. We carry the same beliefs, emotions and behaviors we learned in abuse until we consciously change those things.

And it is our responsibility to explore and confront the harmful things we learned to survive abuse. I've included exercises for you to do after the class ends. I encourage you to use them explore your own beliefs at the root of your guilt and shame.

When we see who we are under all our masks, coping methods and the lies we've heard and told about ourselves, we'll see the wonderful truth about ourselves and feel more connected with our own value.

01

Difference Between
Guilt & Shame

Understanding the difference between guilt and shame helps us move past negative self-judgments.

GUILT

Guilt is an uncomfortable feeling triggered when we act against our own set of principles. "I've done something wrong."

EXAMPLE:

PURPOSE:

FALSE GUILT

False guilt is an uncomfortable feeling triggered when we act against a set of principles that are unreasonable or perfectionistic.

EXAMPLE:

PURPOSE:

SHAME

Shame is the pain of believing you are inferior, defective in part or in whole. "There's something wrong with me."

EXAMPLE:

PURPOSE:

02

GUILT

THE BENEFIT OF GUILT

Each emotion has a message. Emotions reveal our internal state and instruct us to engage in motion.

The emotions we usually label as "negative" emotions are meant to move us toward change. Those "negative" emotions are meant to feel uncomfortable because without the discomfort, we wouldn't be motivated to change anything.

Often, when we don't understand our emotions, we treat them as threats and resist them or cover them. But emotions are our allies and when we understand them, we benefit from them.

How does guilt benefit us?

Guilt is useful if _____.

Guilt is meant to _____.

Guilt is destructive when _____.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Our code of conduct is not a "true north" or based on universal right or wrong. Our personal code is a collection of rules we learned based on:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

The problem is, a lot of our code of conduct was written to fit abusive relationships. Abusers have rules and expectations that are communicated verbally and non-verbally. The purpose of the rules is:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

We obeyed and adopted the rules as our own because it was safer to follow those rules than to resist them. But continuing to live by them in adulthood perpetuates our self-loathing, learned helplessness and codependency.

BREAKING FREE FROM FALSE GUILT

By questioning the specific rule I'm violating when I feel guilty, I can decide for myself if it's a rule I want to live by or discard.

Use this pattern to examine your own code of conduct:

I feel guilty for...

The rule I'm breaking is...

I don't want to live by this rule because...

OR

I want to live by this rule so here is the change I need to make to get back in alignment with my values...

I forgive myself and allow myself to grow and improve.

03

SHAME

STANDARDS OR IDEALS

Shame can be triggered when we fail to reach a standard or ideal. Standards or ideals are commonly based on:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Each group of people has its own standards or ideals.

Out of fear of not belonging, people have denied _____ and replaced it with a system of _____.

When inherent value is denied, value is viewed as a limited resource and must be:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

A hierarchy of value determines who is first in line to be loved or treated with honor. The standards or ideals decide who is _____ or _____.

COMPARISON AND COMPETITION

In shame, we compare ourselves to others and estimate ourselves as inferior.

Shame depends on a belief in scarcity; there must be a limited amount of love, value and honor to go around. Shame breeds envy, competition and comparison.

In comparison and competition, people are reduced to _____ or _____ . That limits our ability to _____ .

SOLE IDENTITY

Shame amplifies (in your own mind) the part of you you're ashamed of, reducing you to _____ .

ASPIRATIONS OR REQUIREMENTS?

Ideals can serve us when we use them as aspirations or they can enslave us when we use them as required achievements. Do you say these things to yourself?:

"If only I _____ , then I'd love myself."

"If only I _____ , I'd consider myself important."

"I only deserve love if I _____ ."

"I'll be worthy if I _____ ."

HOW TO LIFT SHAME

Shame comes from the thoughts you have about yourself in anticipation or expectation of how others will experience you.

Shame tells you that you need to control other people's opinions of you. Or else you hide so they don't consider you at all. The lie is that if you can get others to accept you, you'll feel acceptable.

Shame comes from the thoughts you have about yourself. Shame is about your thoughts, not theirs.

What are some groups, communities, organizations or cultures you've been in and what are the things they find valuable? What impresses them? What spoken or unspoken standards or rules do they have?

Do you truly share those ideals? Or do you fear feeling shame if you don't conform? (Anger or resentment are indications you may not share those ideals.)

Do you believe you have to live up to those (or any) standards perfectly or do you give yourself permission to grow into them?

THE ORIGINS OF YOUR SHAME

Shame happens when we fail to reach a standard or ideal. So who sets those standards? Who decides what is ideal?

As children, we're sensitive to the values and judgments of our caregivers. We adopt those values as our own and they help form our ideals.

Passive sources of shame:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Active sources of shame:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Instead of coming to the conclusion that mom or dad is imperfect (or abusive), we tell ourselves:

"I'm the kind of person who makes my mother upset."

"I'm the kind of person who entices child molesters."

Parents may shame children because:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

HEALING THE SHAME

What is an experience when you felt shame? When you were conscious of feeling wrong, inferior, defective, flawed, weak, dirty, irrelevant, unimportant, ridiculous, pathetic, freakish, repulsive, loser, failure, worthless, different, tainted, or disgraceful?

In the most present and unguarded way you're able, put yourself back in the scene. Feel the emotions that come up and experience them first. Then write about it in the present tense as if it's happening now.

Describe the surroundings in detail so someone listening would feel like they're standing right next to you and could picture it in their mind's eye. What did it look like? Smell like? Feel like? Sound like? (Include if anything was said.) Taste like?

Remember to stay present in your senses as you experience the whole memory.

My Shame Experience:

My Shame Experience:

My Narrative:

What did this experience tell you about yourself? What are the actual words you say about yourself?

What did this experience tell you about how you need to be? (What would keep you safe--from abuse, criticism or judgment like "I'll never ask for help again.")

What did this experience tell you about what you can expect from others or from the world in general?

This next part of the exercise is about seeing your inner narrative from another perspective. As your adult self, sit with your child self in compassion and understanding. Pause as you do this. Take time to feel the connection.

What is some truth you can offer from your more experienced adult perspective in response to your inner narrative?

If you have trouble seeing or telling your child-self the loving truth about himself or herself, imagine you are talking with your own child or a child you know.

My Truth:

What the *true* truth about about yourself?

What is the truth about how you need to be? From your adult self, what are some other options for how to be?

What is the truth about what you can expect from others or from the world in general? From the position of your adult self, what are some other perspectives? (You may want to think about when you experienced others or the world in a variety of other ways?)

Speak these truths aloud directly to your inner child. How does your inner child respond to this? Pay attention to how you respond.

Being sensitive to how you respond is an important part of connecting with yourself. Whatever loving truth you share, sit with that truth and take it in. Imagine it as a warm blanket enveloping you, comforting you, shielding you and protecting you.

Do you believe the truth and feel relief, comforted or peaceful? Or do you have trouble believing it and feel agitated or angry? Or something else?

Sometimes saying this just once leads to a breakthrough. But since this is a long-held belief that was developed as part of your survival, chances are very good you'll need reinforcement. After all, it met a need at one time even if it harms you now.

You Don't Have to Do This Alone

Private support

For additional help in working through guilt or shame or healing from abuse, I'm available for one-on-one coaching support to take your healing and life's journey to the next level.

I'll walk beside you. I'll provide gentle guidance to help you feel confident while you learn to trust your own inner guidance. I'll light the path for you and then show you how to be your own light. You'll see what you're really capable of and how beautiful your life can really be.

Here's what one of my clients shared...

"Christina's combined wisdom, experience and compassion make her an excellent coach. The difference she has made and continues to make in my life is unparalleled."

If you're not familiar with how quickly transformation can happen through coaching, email me today to schedule a complimentary discovery session to see for yourself.

I'm honored to walk alongside courageous people ready to do the work necessary to go from surviving to flourishing.

All my best,

Christina Enevoldsen

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As a survivor of incest, sex trafficking and a 21-year long abusive marriage (now remarried to an emotionally healthy, loving and supportive man), I bring personal experience, empathy, and insight as well as professional training to help childhood sexual abuse survivors thrive.

*I'm a Strategic Interventionist and Certified Professional Life Coach with a specialty Life Story certification and author of *The Rescued Soul: A Writing Journey for the Healing of Incest and Family Rejection*.*

For almost 10 years, I've worked with childhood sexual abuse survivors in their healing journey through the online support website I cofounded, OvercomingSexualAbuse.com

I'm honored to walk alongside courageous people ready to do the work to go from surviving to flourishing.