

# Trauma Driven Shame

Guilt: I **did** something wrong.

Shame: I **am** something wrong.

## Healthy guilt:

- Informs you that you may have crossed your own values or beliefs.
  - Lets you know when you made a mistake.
  - Motivates you to make a repair
- **Example:** cancelling plans last minute with a friend which leads to them being disappointed.

## Healthy shame:

- Sense of dishonor or disgrace
  - Brings strong regret or self-blame
  - Happens when our behavior has a more serious effect
- **Example:** Getting drunk and breaking something in a friend's house and then hiding the evidence.

## Unhealthy shame

- |                                                  |                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ◆ Self-hatred                                    | ◆ Feeling like a bad person who will always do or cause bad things because he/she/they has a bad, flawed, or destructive nature. |
| ◆ Feeling bad                                    |                                                                                                                                  |
| ◆ Worthless                                      |                                                                                                                                  |
| ◆ Flawed                                         |                                                                                                                                  |
| ◆ Unworthy of anything good                      |                                                                                                                                  |
| ◆ Feelings of exposure and extreme embarrassment |                                                                                                                                  |

### Thought examples:

*-If you knew who I really was, you would run away.*

*- I don't deserve friends*

*- I cause pain in people's lives*

Unhealthy shame can be chronic and can arise within the context of making reasonable decisions (like setting a boundary/saying "no"). It causes *us* to feel responsible for other people's distress (other people's anger, disappointment, cold shoulder).

Causes:

- 1) The belief trauma is your fault
- 2) The feeling of being worthless and no good
- 3) Humiliation associated with trauma experiences, especially early in life, can lead to chronic negative self-talk

**Destructive shame** is created by extreme differences in power between 2 or more people (parent/child, clergy/congregant, teacher/student, supervisor/employee).

- ***The person with the most power is responsible*** for managing healthy and appropriate boundaries and looking after the general welfare of the person with the least power.
- If a shameful act occurs (something abusive) and the person with the most power does not take responsibility, the shame is absorbed by the person with the least power.
- The more powerful person may also blame the less powerful person, which reinforces the shame and deepens the sense of responsibility for the less powerful person.
- The more powerful person may even lie, pretend it never happened, and deny responsibility.

THE LESS POWERFUL PERSON CAN BE MADE TO CONCLUDE, **"IT IS MY FAULT."**

*I must be a terrible person at my core.*

*I can't do anything right.*

*I don't deserve anything good.*

*There is something inherently wrong with me.*

*I don't deserve to live.*

*I am responsible for other people's happiness.*