



Journal:

Guilt and Shame

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A free downloadable (PDF) version of this journal can be found at www.MyTherapySession.com

Guilt and Shame 1

(video: 17 minutes)

Notes:

Power and purpose of guilt and shame:

Definitions:

Guilt:

Shame:

Description of how my Shame and Guilt “looks” and/or “acts”:

An alarm: crisis / emergency:

Discussion/Reflection:

Have you ever experienced guilt or shame?

Do you have a hard time letting go of them?

Have you (or people in your family) experienced the crisis, the alarm, of guilt and shame?

Guilt

Notes:

Ideal "Court":

What can go wrong:

Personal experience of "Innocence":

Discussion/Reflection:

Has a sense of guilt ever improved you?

Have you ever been falsely accused? How did you handle it?

How would you rate your confidence in your innocence?

"Guilt trip":

Feelings of guilt may or may not have anything to do with reality!

May or may not have anything to do with the expectations of others!

May have nothing to do with being a better person!

Distorted guilt - interferences with our potential:

If feeling overly guilty

If feeling not guilty enough

Discussion/Reflection:

Does your “guilt trip” play appropriately?

Has “guilt trip” ever played when it shouldn’t?

-Or failed to play when it should?

A child’s experience:

A child’s less-than healthy situation / experiences:

“Invalidating environment”

Genuinely accepts guilt

Underdeveloped sense of appropriate anger

Underdeveloped verbal ability

False judgment is accepted

Loss of trust in a sense of right and wrong

Silence can also be invalidating

Discussion/Reflection:

Did you have any experiences of guilt during development (growing up)?

Good?

Bad / false accusations?

Do you recall “selling out” or “giving up” to “keep the peace”?

Were there times that you remember when you defended your innocence?

Discussion/Reflection... cont:

Are there feelings and actions that you would like to defend now as you look back on them?

Did you grow up in a silent or invalidating environment?

How would you rate the level of unconditional love and acceptance while growing up?

Spiritually inclusive segment:

Reflection:

Seeing God like our authority figures?

Unconditional love?

Experiences in spiritual communities?

God:

Perfect love

Perfect justice

Never incorrectly judged

Every judgment is made in unconditional love and acceptance

-With the express purpose of making us better people

Discussion/Reflection:

The "Ideal"?

Grace

Forgiveness

Love

Unconditional acceptance

Guilt and Shame 2 (video: 13 minutes)

Shame

Notes:

Permanent shame is one of the most damaging and limiting of all experiences:

Also extremely common (You are not alone!)

So it needs careful consideration!

Power and purpose of shame:

Character Counts” (ethical behaviors):

Trustworthy
Respectful
Responsible
Fair
Caring
Citizenship

The “Golden Rule”

Shame as an alarm for not living up to my own standards

Discussion/Reflection:

What is the healthy side of shame as a way of learning standards of behavior?

Ethical Standards Development”

“Modeling” (seeing things) as a primary form of learning

Less-than healthy environments:

“False self”

“Superhuman”, “Human Doings”

“Subhuman”

Challenge: claiming our own truths / expectations

Shame and guilt are not character traits and are changeable

Discussion/Reflection:

Were you exposed to any unhealthy modeling or teaching about ethical behaviors?

Can you identify with this concept of “false self”?

Does it make sense that it would be easier to deal with the result of unhealthy experiences rather than a fundamental character trait?

Considerations:

1. Appropriateness of feelings (sensitivity)
2. Duration

Appropriate sensitivity:

Discussion/Reflection:

Do you have an appropriate sensitivity to guilt and shame?

Is your sensitivity too high or too low?

Appropriate duration:

Temporary and motivating factors only

There should be some time limit!

Saps our energy for becoming a better person

Discussion/Reflection:

Do you believe the notion that guilt and shame should be temporary, motivating factors only?

Do you agree and does it make sense that most of our days should be guilt and shame-free?

Would it be okay to let go of some of your shame/guilt?

Spiritually inclusive segment:

Aspects of guilt (review) and now, shame

Broken but loved

Choice vs. Chosen

How are we to use guilt and shame to be better people?

Forgiveness

Grace

Love

Discussion/Reflection:

How could shame affect our experience of God?

How could God help heal that shame?

Would it be okay to let go of shame and guilt (if you feel you can choose)?

Would it be okay to “be healed” or to be “chosen” (if you feel like you cannot choose)?

Guilt and Shame 3 (video: 16 minutes)

Letting Go of Shame

Change will feel different – beware of “emotional reasoning”

Techniques:

1. It is acceptable to let it go (temporary motivating factor only):
2. Accepting your humanness:

Discussion/Reflection:

Are humans perfect?

Are you human?

Is imperfection equal to brokenness?

Is imperfection equal to unacceptability?

3. Emphasizing your value:

Discussion/Reflection:

What creates value for people?

We all have limitless value – we all are equal!

Discussion/Reflection:

Are you willing to see yourself as a precious, fundamentally valuable human being?

4. Reject the lies! – The “Practice” approach:

Discussion/Reflection:

How can you practice thinking differently?

How can you fight emotional reasoning?

What reminders and “practices” can you think of?

What “lies” were told to you?

Would it be okay to see them that way and let them go?

5. The “Ticketed” approach:

Discussion/Reflection:

How does it feel to be accepted?

How does it feel to gain entry?

6. A “Rights” approach:

Discussion/Reflection:

Generate your own personal list of rights:

Discussion/Reflection:

Compare your list to other “Personal Bill of Rights” examples
(links on MyTherapySession.com)

7. The “Declarations” approach - Declaration of Human Worth and Value:

Discussion/Reflection:

Make a Declaration of your own Human Worth and Value

8. Affirmations

Short and Positive

Repeat and practice

Discussion/Reflection:

Create your own affirmations

What ideas do I have about how I will practice using them?

9. Guilt/shame exercise (Found at Mytherapysession.com)

Discussion/Reflection:

10. Nurturing the inner child

11. Confronting

Discussion/Reflection/Visualization:

Picture and nurture yourself as a child.

Imagine confronting the person who laid the shame on you.

12. Sounds

Water

Bell

Music

Others

Discussion/Reflection:

13. Have a “Shame-Free” day!!!

14. Poetry

15. Stories and writings

Discussion/Reflection:

Spiritually inclusive segment:

Letting go of shame:

God loves us

God values us

God wants us mobilized for action

Songs

Meditation

Discussion/Reflection:

Has your religion helped or hindered your shame?

Does God accept and love you?

Can you accept God's love?

Guilt and Shame 4 (video: 16 minutes)

Letting Go of Guilt

Techniques:

1. Pay the price:

Accept and be changed by the experience

Apologize

Discussion/Reflection:

Paying back

Restitution

Apology

2. Willingly dismiss it:

Discussion/Reflection:

Practice dismissing guilt.

3. Physically discard it:

Discussion/Reflection:

Practice discarding guilt.

4. Visualizations

Give it back:

Discussion/Reflection:

Practice giving the guilt back to the person who laid it on you.

5. Self-Forgiveness

Discussion/Reflection:

Practice forgiving yourself.

Claim “enough” punishment.

6. Accepting ourselves:

“Be”

Discussion/Reflection:

Practice “being”.

7. Claiming innocence / freedom:

Discussion/Reflection:

Practice claiming innocence / freedom.

Claim “another chance”.

8. Have a “Guilt-Free” day!!!

9. Poems / Stories / Artistic expression / Movies

Discussion/Reflection:

What are three things (at least) that you could do today to let go of your guilt (and shame)?

1.

2.

3.

Spiritually inclusive segment:

Letting go of guilt

10. Confession and forgiveness

Discussion/Reflection:

Practice confession and forgiveness

11. Adjusting the sensitivity or duration of our conscience

Religious contributions

God as judge and love

God's help in change

Grace

Faith

Mercy

Reconciliation

Restitution

Discussion/Reflection/Meditation:

How can these ideas help you let go of guilt?

Grace

Love

Mercy

Restitution

Confession

Forgiveness

Other suggestions?

What are three things you could do today to let go of guilt (and shame)?