

MyTherapySession.com Guilt/Shame Exercise

(Coyle, 2008)

For the purposes of this exercise:

Guilt is a sense that you have done something wrong that needs to be punished.

Shame is a sense that something is wrong with you; you are broken or defective in some way.

Embarrassed is a sense of being "self conscious" or distressed by perceived social humiliation or rejection.

Although this exercise may ultimately be helpful in resolving some conflicts with shame and guilt, I urge you to be fully honest in your responses.

(For each item rate 0=don't agree/disagree, 5=moderate agreement, 10= absolute agreement)

- _____ Other people don't often deserve the good things they have.
- _____ I often feel I don't deserve the good things I have.
- _____ People should be punished for having nice things.
- _____ I should be punished for having nice things.
- _____ I often feel that something is fundamentally wrong with me as a person.
- _____ I often feel I should be punished.
- _____ I often feel like I am emotionally broken or empty.
- _____ I often doubt that I could be fixed or filled.
- _____ I'm so broken I can't be fixed.
- _____ I am often preoccupied with how "bad" I am.
- _____ People should be critical of others, noticing that people are overweight, tall, short, some deformity, etc. and make comments about it.
- _____ I tend to be critical of others, noticing that people are overweight, tall, short, some deformity, etc. and find myself commenting on that.
- _____ People should be bothered by being served or waited on by someone that they believe has a deformity.
- _____ I would be bothered by being served or waited on by someone that I believe has a deformity.
- _____ People should feel ashamed if they have done something that is embarrassing.
- _____ I often feel ashamed if I have done something that is embarrassing.
- _____ People should be punished for doing things that are embarrassing.
- _____ I should be punished for doing things that are embarrassing.
- _____ People should feel ashamed if they make a mistake.
- _____ I often feel ashamed if I have made a mistake.
- _____ People should be punished for making mistakes.
- _____ I should be punished for making mistakes.

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_____ People should be ashamed of their weight if they are too _____.

_____ I often feel ashamed of my weight.

_____ People should be punished if their weight is too _____.

_____ I should be punished if my weight is too _____.

_____ People should be ashamed of their height if they are too _____.

_____ I often feel ashamed of my height.

_____ People should be punished for being critical of others.

_____ I should be punished for being critical of others.

_____ People should be ashamed of their race if they are _____.

_____ I often feel ashamed of my race.

_____ People should be ashamed of their age if they are too _____.

_____ I often feel ashamed of my age.

_____ People should be ashamed of their background if they are _____.

_____ I often feel ashamed of myself for my background.

_____ People should be ashamed of being mean.

_____ I often feel ashamed of being mean.

_____ People should be ashamed of being dirty.

_____ I often feel ashamed of being dirty.

_____ People should be ashamed of being ugly.

_____ I often feel ashamed of being ugly.

_____ People should be ashamed of being lazy.

_____ I often feel ashamed of being lazy.

_____ People should be ashamed of being wasteful.

_____ I often feel ashamed of being wasteful.

_____ People should be ashamed of their intellect if they are too _____.

_____ I often feel ashamed of my intellect.

_____ People should be ashamed of being alive after someone close to them dies.

_____ I often feel ashamed of being alive despite the death of someone close to me.

_____ People should be ashamed of their financial status if they are too _____.

_____ I often feel ashamed of my financial status.

_____ People should be ashamed if they have problems.

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- _____ I often feel ashamed of having problems.
- _____ People should be ashamed to ask for help.
- _____ I often feel ashamed of asking for help.
- _____ People should be ashamed of being sexually traumatized.
- _____ I often feel ashamed of being sexually traumatized.
- _____ People should be ashamed of being physically abused.
- _____ I often feel ashamed of being physically abused.
- _____ People should be ashamed of being emotionally abused.
- _____ I often feel ashamed of being emotionally abused.
- _____ People should be ashamed of their sexuality/sexual function/problems with sexual function.
- _____ I often feel ashamed of my sexuality/sexual function/problems with sexual function.
- _____ People should be ashamed of not being able to remember things.
- _____ I often feel ashamed of not being able to remember things.
- _____ People should be ashamed of being in debt.
- _____ I often feel ashamed of being in debt.
- _____ People should be ashamed of being angry.
- _____ I often feel ashamed of being angry.
- _____ People should be ashamed of drinking alcohol or using drugs.
- _____ I often feel ashamed of my use of alcohol or drugs.
- _____ People should be ashamed of smoking cigarettes.
- _____ I often feel ashamed of smoking cigarettes.
- _____ If people felt ashamed enough of themselves they would change and be better people.
- _____ If I felt ashamed enough of myself, I would change and be a better person
- _____ People need to be aware of how broken they are before they can be fixed.
- _____ I need to be aware of how broken I am before I can be fixed.
- _____ People generally deserve to be punished
- _____ I deserve to be punished.
- _____ People are "damaged goods".
- _____ I am "damaged goods".
- _____ Things need to be perfect to be acceptable.
- _____ I need to be perfect to be acceptable.

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Other people's human value is dependent on:

- _____ Their ability to keep things clean, neat and organized.
- _____ The money they have
- _____ Their ability to make money
- _____ Their physical appearance
- _____ The people they associate with
- _____ Their own sense of confidence
- _____ Their intellectual ability
- _____ The words they have to give to others
- _____ The extent to which they can serve others.
- _____ Their dedication to my work
- _____ The roles they play in their family
- _____ Their sexuality
- _____ What they can give to others
- _____ How they sacrifice themselves for others

My human value is dependent on:

- _____ My ability to keep things clean, neat and organized.
- _____ The money I have
- _____ My ability to make money
- _____ My physical appearance
- _____ The people I associate with
- _____ My own sense of confidence
- _____ My intellectual ability
- _____ The words I have to give to others
- _____ The extent to which I can serve others.
- _____ My dedication to my work
- _____ The roles I play in my family
- _____ My sexuality
- _____ What I can give to others
- _____ How I sacrifice myself to others

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- _____ I am ashamed of my role as a mother or father.
- _____ I am ashamed of my role as a spouse.
- _____ I am ashamed of my role as a son or daughter.
- _____ I am ashamed of my role as a sister or brother.
- _____ I am useless.
- _____ I am worthless.
- _____ I am hopeless.
- _____ I am helpless.
- _____ I constantly live in a state of guilt and shame.
- _____ Guilt and shame should never go away.
- _____ I have gotten my beliefs about guilt and shame from the Church.
- _____ I have gotten my beliefs about guilt and shame from growing up in my family
- _____ I have gotten my beliefs about guilt and shame from school.
- _____ I have gotten my beliefs about guilt and shame from carefully thinking it through for myself.
- _____ The purpose of experiencing guilt is to ultimately be a better person.
- _____ The purpose of experiencing shame is to ultimately be a better person.
- _____ It is possible for people to experience too much or too little guilt.

I experience too much or too little guilt? (circle)

_____ It is possible for people to experience too much or too little shame

I experience too much or too little shame? (circle)

_____ It is possible for people to change the amount of guilt they experience in life.

_____ It is possible for people to change the amount of shame they experience in life

As I look over and think about things in life, I am most ashamed of:

As I look over and think about things in life, I am most guilty of:

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- _____ I was not treated as well as others in life.
- _____ I am not treated as well as others in life.
- _____ I have had it tougher in life than other people.
- _____ No wonder I have the problems I do after how I have been treated.
- _____ I could have done a lot better if only I had had more opportunities.
- _____ I have been traumatized beyond belief.
- _____ The damage that has been done to me is permanent.

As I look over and think about things in life, the most traumatic have been:

- _____ People focusing on being a victim takes the trauma out of their control.
- _____ Focusing on how I am a victim takes the trauma out of my control.
- _____ People should NOT completely recover from traumatic experiences.

My recovery from my traumatic experiences overall should be (circle):

- Complete (100% recovery)
- Successful (75% recovery)
- Moderate (50% recovery)
- Fairly unsuccessful (25% recovery)
- Impossible (0% recovery)

- _____ Guilt should only be a temporary motivating experience for people.
- _____ People should be guilt-free most of the time.
- _____ Shame should only be a temporary motivating experience for people.
- _____ People should be guilt-free most of the time.
- _____ Guilt should only be a temporary motivating experience for me.
- _____ I should be guilt-free most of the time.
- _____ Shame should only be a temporary motivating experience for me.
- _____ I should be guilt-free most of the time.

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I live with guilt about ____% of the time.

I live with shame about ____% of the time.

_____ I feel guilty for feeling guilt.

_____ I feel shameful for feeling guilt.

_____ I feel shameful for feeling shameful.

_____ I feel guilty for feeling shameful.

This questionnaire has helped me see that:

_____ It would be ok to feel less guilt.

_____ It would be ok to feel less shame.

_____ It would be ok to blame others/situations less.

_____ It would be ok to feel less like a victim.

_____ I could choose to feel less guilty about things

_____ I could choose to feel less shameful about things

_____ I could choose to blame others/situations less.

_____ I could choose to feel less like a victim.

_____ I am determined to accept myself more completely.

_____ I am determined to channel my feelings of guilt, shame and being a victim into being a better person.

_____ I am determined to let go of guilt, shame and a sense of being a victim once I have channeled them into something more productive.

What comments do you have?