



guilt vs. shame

*spiritual malady

Session Two

“Guilt is a feeling we have when we think we’ve done something bad and shame is a feeling we have when we think we ARE bad.”

Brene Brown

guilt *noun* (FEELING)

a feeling of worry or unhappiness that you have because you have done something wrong, such as causing harm to another person.

Guilt is what we feel when we do something that we know is wrong. Feeling guilty can lead right into feeling sad, angry, or anxious. We can even get physical symptoms like upset stomach or headaches. However, guilt is good for us. It lets us know when we are out of line, doing things we shouldn't do or not acting like the person we really want to be.

Feeling guilty lets us know we have a problem. A clean and sober person who recognizes guilt, can turn a bad situation into an opportunity to grow and learn. By acknowledging our mistakes, changing our behaviors, and making amends, we gain self-respect and integrity.

shame *noun* (FEELING)

the painful and unhealthy belief that we are flawed and unworthy of love and belonging. Shame is built on fear, self-hatred, and the sense that you're not “enough.”

VS.

Shame is a feeling that your whole self is wrong - you are bad, inadequate and unlovable. Shame encourages you to reject and hide parts of yourself that you think others will judge or dislike—for example, your flaws and your failures. It convinces you that people won't like your true self. It also tells you that if you admit to your flaws, people will no longer be able to see all of the positive things about you. Instead, they'll become overly focused on the bad. Therefore, you should hide your flaws at all costs.

Ultimately, self-esteem and self-worth can't grow if you feel ashamed of and hide parts of yourself. You'll never feel good if you believe that there are parts of yourself that you can never show.

How Shame Happens

From the day you were born, you were learning to feel that you were okay or not okay, accepted or not accepted, in your world. Your self-esteem was shaped by your daily experiences of being praised or criticized, lovingly disciplined or punished, taken care of or neglected.

People who grow up in abusive or very strict environments can easily get the message that they are undeserving, inadequate, and inferior—in other words, that they should feel ashamed. Over time, intense feelings of shame can take hold of a person's self-image and create low self-esteem. Feelings of shame often stem from what other people think. The person may become super-sensitive to what feels like criticism, even if it isn't, and may feel rejected by others. Inside, they feel painful self-contempt and worthlessness.

Someone who feels deep-seated shame and low self-esteem may not realize that it's the motivation for many destructive behaviors, which can include substance abuse, eating disorders, road rage, domestic violence, and many other personal and social crises.

People who experience traumatic events are also likely to feel shame, particularly if they blame themselves for what happened.

Shame also affects men differently from women. It's said that men with shame-based low self-esteem tend to "act out" through anger and violent behavior toward others, while women "act in" by turning their feelings inward and hating themselves.



guilt vs. shame

*spiritual malady

Session Two

“If we can share our story with someone who responds with empathy and understanding, shame can’t survive.”

Brene Brown

empathy *noun*

the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

vulnerability *noun*

the quality or state of being exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally.

Shame is lethal.... shame is deadly. The more we try to hide it, the more it buries itself inside of us. We need to be **vulnerable** - willing to open up and share who we really are. When we bravely share our stories, we stop hiding who we are. This is our chance to finally make fulfilling, healthy connections (love, friendship, trust). Our shared experience teaches us that we are all human. We share our mistakes and stop looking for perfection. We share our heartbreak and realize that we can survive. We support our friend, and she is there for us. We stop being ashamed of ourselves and begin to understand that we really are worthy of living a good life.

Credit to Brene Brown

Finding freedom from shame through the 12 Steps

Deep seated emotional issues like shame affect our spirits. Shame can make us feel so badly about ourselves, that running to a drink or drug seems like the only way to shut down our minds and quiet the hurt in our hearts. But inevitably, if we pick up or use, we will find ourselves feeling guilty, ashamed and sicker than ever. We need healing. Our brokenness, our loneliness and our self-destruction need to end.

Every one of the 12 steps will lead us to a place of greater health and happiness.

Steps 1 -3 help us find a power that is strong enough to carry us through this process.

Step 4 - 5 (the inventory steps) help us name our guilt and shame so we can understand what is really in our heads and hearts.

Steps 6 -7 allow us to surrender what we cannot carry.

Steps 8 - 9 get rid of guilt.

Steps 10 - 11 help us maintain our new healthy selves.

Step 12 allows us to share our newfound peace and hard-won wisdom with the newcomer.