

BUILDING SHAME RESILIENCE

Shame is a powerful experience that can be likened to a binding emotion and a freeze state (Lyon & Rubin, *Embracing Shame*; 2023). Developing resilience to shame involves building awareness and cultivating strategies to navigate these challenging experiences. This worksheet aims to guide you through exercises that promote shame resilience. It is designed to be done outside the acute experience of shame.

1. IDENTIFYING AND ACKNOWLEDGING SHAME:

- ▶ Start by familiarizing yourself with [this reactions to shame chart](#), noting which reactions to shame you can identify in yourself. The first step to healing shame is identifying it. Initially, we may not be aware of it in the moment, but reflection afterward, once we're out of the freeze state, can be powerful.
- ▶ Recall a recent situation where you experienced a shame attack. What thoughts, body sensations, and behaviors signaled to you that it was shame?
- ▶ Acknowledge the emotions associated with shame, using feeling words to describe what you experienced (e.g., grief, anger, fear, joy).

2. UNDERSTANDING TRIGGERS:

- ▶ Next, work to understand the situations and experiences that tend to bring on shame. These are often connected to past situations of shame and how you've been made to feel by others. For example, if you've been made to feel too demanding, you may feel shame around asking for what we need in a relationship. If you've been made to feel incompetent, you may feel shame when you make a mistake. Complete the following prompt: "In the past, I've been made to feel _____, and so it's hard for me to _____".



- ▶ We can also experience shame around the expression of emotion, especially intense emotion. What big emotions tend to send you into a shame spiral?

3. PRACTICING SELF-COMPASSION:

- ▶ Challenge the messages of shame by writing down a more compassionate and understanding perspective. How would you speak to a friend experiencing a similar situation?
- ▶ Consider what you would say to yourself if you were practicing self-compassion. Write down affirming and supportive statements that feel true to you.
- ▶ Reflect on your common humanity. Remember that everyone makes mistakes and experiences shame; it's a shared human experience (I highly recommend checking out the work of [Kristen Neff](#)).

4. TAKING A WIDER PERSPECTIVE:

- ▶ As you step back from the acute experience of shame, imagine you are a kind coach observing the situation. What advice would you give yourself? Write down supportive and constructive guidance.
- ▶ Consider the bigger picture and how you would view this situation if it were a friend experiencing it. Did you make a mistake (if so, that's human and can be repaired), or are you trying to live up to someone else's standards?
- ▶ Reflect on how this specific situation fits into the larger context of your life. What will it mean a year from now?
- ▶ Realign yourself with your values by writing them down. What actions align with your values and growth?

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Building shame resilience is an ongoing process. Regularly revisit these exercises to reinforce your ability to identify, acknowledge, and navigate shame in a healthier way. Remember that seeking support from others, such as friends, family, or a therapist, can be an important part of your resilience journey.

