

Letting Go of Shame: Understanding How Shame Affects Your Life

Part I

1) It's important to learn to recognize the messages of shame that have affected us the most. Rank the following messages you received according to the impact each message has on you today, starting from the strongest (no 1) to the weakest (no 5).

Depreciation messages

I'm not good.

I'm not good enough.

I'm too wanted here.

I'm not loveable.

I shouldn't exist.

Order of importance of messages received

2) Start with message number 1 (write it in the 1st column below) and describe how you received it (2nd column) citing as many incidents as possible. Then identify the impacts (emotional, psychological, physical) that each of these incidents had on you (3rd column). Beware: it's possible that this exercise triggers strong emotions in you. Be kind to your self if it happens.

Message	Incidents	What I lost
1.		

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Part II

1) Now focus on a specific incident by trying to remember it as best you can; write it down in the 1st column below.

2) Close your eyes, and remember a moment of shame in your childhood. What did you see, hear, feel? Write what comes to mind in the 2nd column below.

Incident	What I saw, heard, felt	What I needed to hear

3) Now imagine that you are a friend of yourself as a child, and tell her/him what she/he would have needed to hear during this incident. You can indicate the messages in the 3rd column above.

4) Then tell yourself the message you need to hear now by choosing from the following choices:

I'm good.

I'm pretty good.

I'm loveable.

I'm at home here.

It's good to be alive.

The purpose of this exercise is to be compassionate, comforting and kind to your *self*, and begin to grieve your losses. If the experience is too painful at this time and you can't do it, don't worry: one day you'll get there!

Reference: *Letting Go of Shame: Understanding How Shame Affects Your Life* by Patricia and Ronald Potter-Efron (1993) pp. 231-234.