

Shame: Why Am I This Way?

(Week 2: Shame Systems)

Review of Destructive Shame

The belief that I am defective.

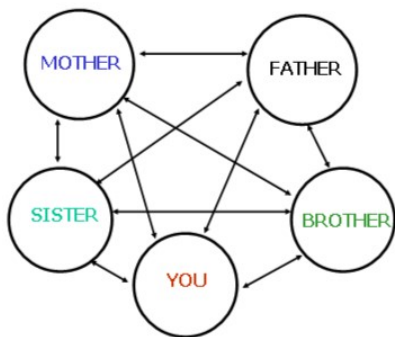
- Debilitating
- Consumes capacity
- Paralyzes
- Negative lens
- Poor communication
- Too self-focused
- Inability to receive criticism
- Feeling of not belonging
- Sense of powerlessness
- Hard to accept praise
- Hard to accept discipline

Destroys a person's ability to see the image of God in themselves. Thus a negative self-image, self-esteem, self-worth.

Debilitates emotionally. Difficult to relate in a healthy way to self, others, and God.

Shame Systems

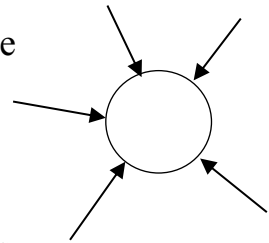
Destructive shame is not just an individual, single-person issue. It is a system issue.



- Relational Systems
 - People are interrelated. What happens to one affects the rest to a degree.
 - e.g. Church as a Body

- Inter-dependent on one another.
- The power to build up and the power to tear down.
- Primary emotions are especially felt (anxiety, shame)

- It is possible for the entire system to adapt in response to the hurt or dysfunctional behavior of one member.
 - The hurting or dysfunctional person is unable to function effectively as a member of the system
 - That person will continue to contribute less to relationships and draw more heavily on the resources of others. (under-function / over-function)
 - As a result, the person will become the focus of the family's efforts as the system expends a great amount of time, energy, and capital to function normally.
 - Sometimes this adjustment can work (e.g. person breaks a leg – under-functioning allows leg to heal).



- But if there is a more serious problem, and the under-functioning becomes a fixed way of life, the system becomes dysfunctional and unhealthy.
 - This dysfunction causes the system to become stuck.
 - The hurting dysfunctional member can now under-function just because s/he chooses to or can. This member is not healing or getting healthy.
 - The over-functioning members feel powerless to fix the system.
 - The system finds a new dysfunctional 'normal' way of operating. The under-/over-functioning roles establish as more permanent.
 - They system will actually use more time and energy NOT dealing with issues than dealing with them (homeostasis).

Shame-Producing Characteristics of an Unhealthy Shame-based System

1. "Out-Loud" shaming
 - a. Comparing one person to another
 - b. Name calling
 - c. Questions that demean "What's wrong with you!?"
 - d. Producing feelings of unacceptability (jobs, efforts not enough)
 - e. Recipients feel shame.

2. Performance-orientation
 - a. Value and acceptance are earned based on performance
 - b. It's what we do that matters...not who we are
 - c. Forces people to 'try harder' to be accepted
 - d. Parents praise & admiration for performance
 - e. Those who can't perform feel shame.
3. Unspoken rules that govern the system
 - a. Can't talk.
 - i. People with power in the system feel threatened by what 'problems' may indicate about them as a person/leader. So they squelch talk. "There really aren't any problems here. If you think there is a problem, you are the problem." Which shames.
 - ii. That fact that we can't talk about the rule keeps it a shaming issue.
 - b. Can't win.
 - i. Two contradictory rules.
 - ii. e.g. Always tell the truth...except in this instance.
 - iii. Failing at one of the rules produces shame.
4. Use 'code' talk
 - a. We use words as code. We say one thing but mean another.
 - b. e.g. Doing mom and dad a 'favor'
 - c. The 'code book' in the system that helps save face is essential (Oriental).
5. Idolatry
 - a. We turn to other things than God (path to health) to make us feel better or meet our emotional needs.
6. Struggle with children
 - a. Because they have a difficult time conforming to the needs of the system.
7. Preoccupied with Fault and Blame
 - a. Accountability is escalated to indictment, condemnation.
 - b. A member is labeled bad so the system is not.
8. Strong on 'head skills'
 - a. Avoid feelings talk
 - b. Win, convince through logic, argument
9. Weak on 'heart skills'
 - a. Emotions must be 'thought' and not felt
10. Only look as if needs are met

The Most Common Shame-Based Systems

- Shame in a Family System
 - Families should be a resource that builds up and affirms the value of each member. However, many families actually tear down the health and self-esteem of individual family members.
 - Overt acts (emotional, physical abuse)
 - Discounting another's feelings or opinions
 - Comparisons
 - Any message that destabilizes a member's sense of security
 - When one person struggles, the entire family struggles.
 - Families don't become dysfunctional overnight. It's a process.
- Shame in a Church System
 - Hurting people often given performance solutions
 - Can't fuel the drive to measure up
 - Feelings of condemnation because of failure
 - When there is a focus on 'appearing normal' to fit in
 - Makes confession very difficult
 - Relationships remain shallow
 - Differences invite comparison, so we strive for artificial uniformity
 - Spiritual Abuse
- Shame in a Work System
 - Everything is performance based
 - Comparisons with co-workers
 - Look
 - Productivity
 - Politics
 - Incentive and reward systems
 - Promotions
 - Aggressive co-workers
 - Difficult bosses/owners/supervisors
 - Spend time covering vs. learning from mistakes
- Shame in a Social Media System
 - Trolls
 - Anonymity
 - Group-think (people with axes to grind can find one another and unite)
 - Increased teen suicide

Shame systems are inter-related.

A cycle of shame set in place through an unhealthy shame system early in life can control a person long after s/he leaves the system.... Infecting the next system s/he becomes a part of. Shame in systems can go back generations.

Shame's Reponses within shame systems

- To wear masks
- Hide/Fight responses
- Addictions...the ultimate idolatry and coping

Getting Systems Healthy

1. Becoming aware of shame within the system culture
2. Differentiation
 - Become a healthy 'self'
 - Cease to over-function if not working
 - When one person gets healthy, unstuck.... affects the whole system
3. Empathy for others
 - Empathy (*ability to understand and share in the feelings of others*)
 - Acceptance
 - A sense of connection/relationship
4. Right theology about healthy relationships (*Household Codes*)
 - Boundaries
 - Reconciling
 - Submission / Authority
 - Unity / Harmony
5. Courage to stand within the system
 - Not having a failure of nerve

Free at Last

Breaking the bondages of guilt and shame

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Destructive shame is not just an individual, single-person issue. It is a _____ issue.

Relational Systems:

- People are _____.
- People are _____ on one another.
- Primary emotions are especially felt (anxiety, shame).
- It is possible for the entire system to _____ in response to the hurt or dysfunctional behavior of one member.
- A system becomes _____ and _____ when there is a more serious problem and the under-functioning becomes a fixed way of life.

Shame-Producing Characteristics of an Unhealthy Shame-based System

1. _____ shaming
2. _____ -orientation
3. _____ rules that govern the system
4. Use _____ talk
5. _____
6. Struggle with _____
7. Preoccupied with _____ and _____
8. Strong on ‘ _____ ’ skills
9. Weak on ‘ _____ ’ skills
10. Only looks as if _____ are met

The Most Common Shame-Based Systems:

- Shame in a _____ System

- Shame in a _____ System

- Shame in a _____ System

- Shame in a _____ System

Shame systems are _____.

Shame's Responses within shame systems

1. To wear _____
2. _____ or _____ responses
3. _____...the ultimate idolatry and coping

Getting Systems Healthy

1. Becoming aware of _____ within the system culture
2. _____
3. _____ for others
4. Right _____ about healthy relationships
5. _____ to stand within the system