

Shame: What can I do? (Week 7: Helping Others with Their Shame)

Ten practical ways anyone, with God's grace, can help another person confront and heal from shame.

Many of these will work in tandem, but I've broken them down so you we can understand them a little easier.

1. Tend to your own spiritual/emotional health

- People with a strong sense of shame will not be able to help others with their shame.
- People with unhealthy boundaries will not be able to help others with their shame.

2. Establish safe life-contexts

- Friendship
- Family
- Work
- Church

3. Accept the person unconditionally

- Keep expectations to a minimum
- Help them feel worthy and valued
- Commit to the relationship
- Be authentic

4. Be a move-a-body friend.

A year or two ago, my good friend called, and as soon as I said, "Hello!" she said, "You're a friend who would move a body." I could tell by her voice that she was serious. I lowered my voice and whispered, "What does that mean?"

She said that one of her sister's close friends had called her sister and asked her to help her move her mom. The friend's mother, who was apparently only invited to visit once a year, struggled with alcoholism. When my friend's sister's friend came home from work, her mother was passed out drunk on the sofa. It was 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and the kids would be busting through the front door any minute. She called because she physically needed help moving her mother.

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I let out a deep sigh and said, "Yes. You could definitely call me."

Then she said one of the kindest things that anyone has ever said to me. She explained: "I'd call you because you would come right away, give me a hug, never look judgmental or disapproving or disgusted. And then you'd say, 'Let's do this.'

"The next day, when you saw my mom at the park or the soccer game, you'd be kind and respectful.

'And most of all, it would never cross my mind to say something to you like 'Please don't tell anyone.' You don't do that."

I thought about that conversation for days. I thought about how lucky I am to have a couple of move-a-body friends in my life. I thought about how crazy it is that most of us can steamroll over these friends while we work to win the approval and acceptance of people who really don't matter in our lives—people whom we'd never call when we were in a real struggle. When we're in the shame storm.

About a week after this call, I thought I'd pay the kindness forward, and I called my friend Dawn. As soon as she answered, I said, "You're a friend who would help me move a body." She replied, "Oh man. Did you kill somebody?" I laughed. "No, not today." Then I told her how much she means to me and how grateful I am to find shelter in her friendship.

- Embrace the person for their strengths and struggles.

Those who struggle with shame are looking for compassion and need someone who is deeply rooted and is able to bend and embrace them for their strengths and struggles.

- Earn the right to be the one the person with shame goes to.

For the person struggling with shame, it's about connecting with the right person at the right time about the right issue.

- Don't expect your friend to be your pillar of worthiness and authenticity.

They will let you down and once they pick up on this, they will feel more shame with you as the source.

5. Respond don't react

- With empathy (I get it, in my way I've been there) not sympathy (I'm so sorry, you poor thing, well bless your heart)
- Without condemnation

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- Don't be the fix-it person.
 - It's harder to experience someone's shame along with them than it is to rush to try and "fix it" — but the first option is the best one. Maybe they'll want a hug, maybe not. Listening and understanding without judgment or trying to make it go away is enough.
 - Don't try to excuse the feelings or attempt to make everything better. This friend is all about making it better and, out of her own discomfort, refuses to acknowledge that you can actually be crazy and make terrible choices: "You're exaggerating. It wasn't that bad. You rock. You're perfect. Everyone loves you."

6. Listen

- Practice active listening
- Don't respond in horror and reinforce the shame
- Don't allow shame transference (where you as the listener feel the shame for the person). You will only confirm the shame message.
- Ask how you can help. Don't rush to deny what they're feeling, or turn into a mindless cheerleader. That's never the most helpful move.
- Don't contradict their feelings. Even if you mean well, what may seem to you like being helpful can feel like a) emotional bullying or b) obtuseness. That sort of response can come across as denying what your friends are feeling, not understanding the depth of their misery, and perhaps even not caring enough. For example:
 - If a friend tells you she feels ugly, don't say, "But you're so beautiful!"
 - If a friend says they feel like a failure, don't tally their successes for them.
 - If a friend shares a humiliating mistake, don't counter with all the right choices they've made.

7. Help the person reframe the message

- Name the source
- Expose the message
- Ask questions

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- Use a scripture grid to suggest alternative interpretations
- Edify, build up

8. Help him identify the triggers that cause the person to feel shame.

What happens right before he punishes himself? Whatever sets him off is a trigger.

9. Speak truth in love

- Only if asked to weigh in.
- Be honest about actions/behaviors/attitudes...but don't judge them.
- Accept where the person is stuck
- Explore alternative ways the circumstances and emotions can be dealt with.
- Reinforce Christ's identity

10. Be a source of grace.

- We get to choose and cultivate what kind of source we are in people's lives.
- Watch your words.
- Be a cheerleader.

Go back and review the order.

Preparation

1. Tend to your own spiritual/emotional health
2. Establish safe life-contexts
3. Accept the person unconditionally
4. Be a move-a-body friend.

Participation

5. Respond don't react
6. Listen
7. Help the person reframe the message
8. Help him identify the triggers that's causing him to hurt himself.
9. Speak truth in love
10. Be a source of grace.



Shame: What can I do?
(Week 6: Helping Others With Their Shame)

Ten practical ways anyone, with God's grace, can help another person confront and heal from shame.

1. Tend to your own _____ and _____ health.

- People with a strong sense of _____ will not be able to help others with their shame.
- People with unhealthy _____ will not be able to help others with their shame.

2. Establish safe life-_____.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

3. Accept the person _____.

- Keep _____ to a minimum.
- Help them feel _____ and _____.
- _____ to the relationship.
- Be _____.

4. Be a _____ -a- _____ friend.

- Embrace the person for their _____ and _____.
- Earn the _____ to be the one the person with shame goes to.
- Don't expect your friend to be your _____ of worthiness and authenticity.

5. _____ don't _____.

- With _____ not _____.
- Without _____.
- Don't be the _____ person.

6. _____.

- Practice _____ listening
- Don't respond in _____ and reinforce the shame.
- Don't allow shame _____.
- Ask how you can _____.
- Don't _____ their feelings.

7. Help the person _____ the shame message(s).

- Name the _____.
- _____ the message.
- Ask _____.
- Use a _____ grid to suggest alternative interpretations.
- _____, build up.

8. Help him identify the _____ that cause the person to feel shame.

9. Speak _____ in _____.

- Only if _____ to weigh in.
- Be _____ about actions/behaviors/attitudes...but don't judge them.
- Accept where the person is _____.
- Explore _____ ways the circumstances and emotions can be dealt with.
- Reinforce Christ's _____ in them.

10. Be a source of _____.

- We get to _____ and _____ what kind of source we are in people's lives.
- Watch your _____.
- Be a _____.

Go back and review the order.

The first four steps are about _____.

The last six steps are about _____.