

2-21-23 shame and guilt

Tue, Mar 14, 2023 10:24AM 23:34

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

guilt, shame, book, mistake, moral inventory, supports, embarrassment, kid, wrestles, number, moral, resolve, people, feel, categories, dumb, podcast, librarian, presentations, unresolved guilt

welcome to Healthy perspectives with Jeremiah, a podcast that brings you current social and cultural issues through a clinical lens, you can find us on Apple, Spotify, Rumball, YouTube, all kinds of places to look for us. Please like and subscribe on any of them, or all of them. We also love interacting with our audience. So join us on all the social platforms, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and many more.

Hello, hello, welcome back. Thank you so much for joining us. As always, we appreciate your time, I'm gonna give you a quick down and dirty today on a topic that easily could be, you know, a four hour seminar, an eight hour seminar, one week seminar, but I'm not going to do that to you. My goal here is not to torture you, it is to help you. And so today I'm gonna give you the down and dirty. And then my hope is you have some questions, you send me some notes and say, Hey, could you expand on this, I've done presentations on this topic. And we're gonna get after it right now. Today's topic is shame. Every single one of us wrestles with this issue, because it's a natural tendency inside of our system, right, and I'll gradually get you there. So hang on, where you will get to the point that you understand what's going on. Now, I'm not going to promise you that we're going to do any healing in this one. This is very academic in its presentation. So if you gotta hit that rewind button, you know, I may take one of my old I've done presentations on this, I've got old presentations, I may post one of them on my website, for you to access so that you can at least understand a little bit of what you're wrestling with. And if I do that, please remember all the credit where credit is due, whether that's me or the people I reference. But I got to, I got to study under a Dr. Richard Shaw, when I went to when I was in university. And what a privilege that was. He was a smart guy. He is a smart guy. He actually recently I think last year, I bought his book, he finally published the material on this. I'm actually not really I don't remember the name of the book is his his class was shame, no more or something like that. And so my guess is the book is something along those lines, but it's Dr. Richard Shaw. And it's definitely worth in my opinion, it's worth a purchase. Because the content that he creates is useful and understandable. Yes, it's academic in its approach, I'm going to try to break some of that down. Not all of this is directly from him. Some of this was done together with other classmates, some of it was done post graduation on my own and my own research. But I'm going to put together a little tiny bit of the system, so that you can understand, but we of course, we have to decide where to start. And where we typically start is with definitions and understanding. So let's start with the foundation. At the very starting point of shame, where is that the starting point of shame is actually embarrassment. Okay, hang in there with me. Number one, embarrassment is a failure. It's a mistake. The example that I like to use is, you know, if I, if I'm as a guest speaker, if I'm walking up on stage, and I trip and I fall onto the stage, I'm going to be embarrassed. It's not the end of the world. But it's a failure. Like I screwed up, I learned how to walk when I was young. I have no excuse for not being

able to walk, right? Like I'm, I'm, you know, pretty healthy and life is good. It's just a failure. It's just a mistake. And it happened suddenly, in a public domain where I care about the opinions, I value the opinions of the people who see it. For instance, if I did that in a you know, walking up onto the stage, and you know, there was nobody there nobody at all. It has a deer For an effect on me, now, will I still feel that? Oh my gosh, I will I look around to see if anybody saw me, probably. But at the end of the day, if nobody's there, I just go, Oh, that was silly. And I move on. Right? Unless I'm hurt, of course. But if I'm not, I just move on. And soon probably forget to be honest, because accidents happen. There's nobody there to witness it. Oh, no, I just don't feel all that embarrassed. Right? So I gave you four components. These came right out of Dr. Shaw's work. It's a failure that happens suddenly in a public arena. And I value the opinion of the people around me. Now, why is that an important part? Because that's where shame begins. You're like, wait a minute, that's just embarrassment. I agree. It's just embarrassment until it's something more. And it becomes that after a sequence of events, and I'm going to explain those, the next step, you might think, oh, then we get ashamed. Because why? We pattern it out, right? No, we begin to feel a sense of guilt, when we start to pattern it out. Now guilt, I'm going to argue, is a good thing. We want it guilt tells me you have a moral compass. I think it's fantastic when somebody feels guilty, because then I know they have a heart. They are a real meaningful person. If they feel no guilt, then that's the kind of person that honestly you want to keep your kids away from. We are supposed to feel guilt. We're supposed to have that reaction. It tells us there's a moral compass inside of that person. And they realize that they are doing something that goes against their moral system. Okay. It's a mature feeling of regret. That's what it is. Guilt is good, like, corrects our path. Now, here's, here's part of the issue. If it's a moral compass, and we get one degree off, no one degree is not that bad. Just make the correction and get back on on our pathway, right? Yeah, that's true. Except what happens is we get a degree off, and then we don't correct it. We do not reconcile that wrong. And we ended up traveling with it for an hour, a day, a week, a month, a year. And over time, it takes us off course, further and farther and farther. Why? Because one degree is not a big deal. Until you travel a week, a month, a year down the road, one degree becomes miles and miles, sometimes hundreds of miles 1000s of miles if we travel far enough, which is why unresolved guilt gets heavier over time, because it takes us further and further and further from where we believe we're supposed to be our moral center. Okay, so the quicker we can resolve guilt, the better now, we can't just quickly resolve the guilt for our own good, right? We make a mistake, we pattern it out. For instance, if I feel guilty, because I yelled at my kid, or let's say, and I go into apologize immediately because I need to feel better. What's my apology going to sound like? Probably not that great. What's the chance that I'm going to repeat that mistake? If i Hurry up and apologize for my own good? Pretty good chance, I'm going to repeat that mistake. And I'm going to create a pattern of apology after a behavior, then a repeat of that behavior, then another apology, then a repeat, apology, repeat apology and so on it goes. I didn't actually make a change. I didn't actually address the guilt. Right. A real apology leads to a change of the pattern. It's I'm not gonna yell at my kids next time. I may be irritated. They may be wrong, but I'm not gonna yell at them. Right? We're supposed to change our pattern. Okay. That's what happens when we apologize, right? We change it. So I After we have unresolved guilt, which means repeated mistakes over and over and over, just like I described, it becomes shame. How does it do that? unresolved guilt becomes a statement that lowers our value. Maybe I'm

just too dumb to do it. Like, will I ever figure it out? Of course, we also blame others for our shame. It's like, you just must be too stupid to figure this out. Wait a second. Is that on you? Or is that on me? It could go either way. But oftentimes, we blame others for our own unresolved guilt, our own shame statement, like I'm worthless, worth less, I'm worthless. Because I am a klutz when I go to get on the stage, it just happens. I can't control my anxiety. I go to climb up there, my heart starts racing, you know, and I inevitably, I'm going to trip and I'm just too dumb to figure out how to overcome that. Or

I'm just not capable of overcoming that. I'm just not enough. I am worth less, not worth less but worth less. And the more I convinced myself that I'm worth less, well, the more I'm carrying shame, because in reality, you were designed uniquely, you are unique, and valuable as you are now can you get better? Oh, yeah, of course, the growth is important. You got to do the growing. But are you worthless? No. Absolutely not. And when you tell yourself that, what that is, is self abuse. Shame, is that point at which we feel guilt? We have unresolved deep enough that we just abused ourselves. We tell ourselves, we're unworthy. We're not lovable. There's nobody, no way somebody could care about me when I'm like this. So that's the process. It goes embarrassment, embarrassment, sorry about that. embarrassment, guilt, and then shame. But the big question, and this is what we always try to get to in this podcast, right? Because we're trying to create healthy perspectives and help people. So in reality, what you want to know is, what do you do about that? I'm going to give you six steps that I typically teach clients in my office. These I have put in order, in order of the way that I typically will teach them all right, now typically, they come to me. And they're already in this distress or whatever. And it's so I don't have to go over number one with most of my clients. Number one is find supports. Why do I say I don't have to go over that with clients typically, because they already found me or another therapist, and, you know, like the so if you're in therapy, use your therapist as a support. Use your friends, use your family, do not walk it alone. Shame loves to isolate. Don't fall for that junk. So the way not to fall for it, get supports around you tell them what's going on. Let them love you through it. Now. It's hard to accept the love when we are in shame I get that. I do I understand that and get the people around you. Anyway, let them throw the love at you until it sticks. Number two, take one bite at a time. Shame is an elephant in your soul. In your heart, in your mind, it is taking up space, and lots and lots of it. It feels heavy, dark, sad, painful, all of these things. So just remember, one bite at a time. One step forward. Just do one at a time. Number three, start the starting place. And this is this is where therapeutically I have I have moved away from some of the stuff that I learned in graduate school into things that are practical in application. Number three, the great place to start is a moral inventory. If guilt and shame all come out of moral dilemmas moral fatigue Moral stray, if that's where it comes from, then taking a look at your morals is a great starting spot, because otherwise, you just start floundering. This is what I've seen over and over a client will, you know, start to correct their their guilt. And then they'll make a correction and then realize that they just created two more sources of guilt, because they didn't address the moral issues first. So I'm trying to help you prevent more guilt and shame. We don't want to add to the pile that already is there. We want to take away from the pile, and a great way to do that start with morality. Alright, what do I stand for? Look, I've done podcasts on that, go back and look at them, listen to them. There's you know, they even this year, I think I did one on, on on principles, the idea of what do I stand for? Right? You have to go back and look for it, because I don't know the name of it right off the top of my head. Number four, explore areas of pest guilt and categorize them to categories, only two. All right, you could get really fancy and put these in 20 different categories don't do that. It's overwhelming. When we do that, the better bet two categories, things that I might be able to resolve. And things that I most likely cannot resolve. That's important, because if I, if I'm accurate in the in the part where I say over time, it gets heavier. That means you might be carrying stuff from when you were seven, eight. I remember. And one of them that I carried, I'll give you a great example. I remember, I must have been in second or third grade. Okay. The librarian calls me and says, hey, it looks like you have checked out this book. Do you happen to have this book? And this is at my tiny little school? And I said, No. And I said, but I look. So I go and I look, but I did a Jeremiah style look, which means I opened my bag, and I looked in and I didn't see it. And so I went back to the librarian, and I said, I don't have that book. And so the librarian goes, Okay, we're gonna go ahead and take it off of your chart. But if you find it, let us know. I leave, go about my business, get home from school that very afternoon, and I'm digging around in my bag for something. And underneath, I got a pile of stuff, where I couldn't see it was a book, not only a book, the book, I was so embarrassed that I made the conscious decision, I must have been probably second or third grade, I think I said right. I made the conscious decision to throw it in the dumpster. Now, as much as I love books. Now, that makes

me really sad. I don't even remember what the book was about. But books don't belong in dumpsters, they belong in kids hands so that they can read them. And I threw it away. For years, I felt guilty about doing that every time I went to the library I thought about I'm like, Oh my gosh, I should probably I don't know, drop money at the school library. Just set it on the counter and walk away or, like I came up with it. But I was a poor kid. So I didn't ever do that. And it got to the point where there wasn't really anything for me to do to make it right. Other than I tell that story, as part of reconciling that guilt, I tell you that story, and you go yeah, I've done dumb things, too. And how do we make it right? I own it. Own it, right? I do a moral inventory. I say, hey, you know what, I don't believe in throwing away books. I screwed up. It was a mistake. I shouldn't do that. But I own it. And it goes into the category of I can't go back and fix that issue. But what I can do is talk about it. So can I resolve it? No, it goes into I can't resolve it technically. But I can talk about it and help others not make those mistakes, right. So that part I can do. I can definitely not repeat that mistake. So then that leads me on to number five. I got it in those two categories. I can't go back and undo it. I can't make it that right. I or I can.

Number five is I forgive myself for all the ones that I can't make corrections on. I have to forgive myself. If I carry that baggage, I actually harm myself and the people around me, because I am letting this baggage this weight of the world, like, bear down on me and make me smaller than I was made to be. Because I wasn't made to be small. Neither were you. So I have to forgive myself. I was a kid. Given the circumstances, I did a really dumb thing. It was still really dumb. But given the circumstances, that little boy was forgivable. By the time, it really hit me of how to fix it. I was I was too late. But that little boy was forgivable. You have to find a way to forgive yourself

for doing the mistake. And just make sure you don't do it again, right?

learn, grow, and then maybe even share it. Look, let's be real. When people share their shame stories, beautiful things can happen. relationally beautiful things, and we can grow from other people's mistakes. It's kind of wonderful. And that right there is called grace. For those you who are biblical the term grace, that's what we're talking about forgiving yourself and others, right, Grace. Number six, begin to resolve the ones that are resolvable, one at a time. Now, at the beginning, I'm going to be real, it's slow. It's a slow process at the beginning. Over time, though, you will get faster and faster, you will correct your mistakes more quickly so that you don't continue to add to the pile. And you will work to a place where you understand how valuable you really are, and may take some time with the right supports, with tiny bites, one at a time with the forgiveness. And with the appropriate reconciliation when you can you will stop abusing yourself. It is possible. Not only is it possible, it will happen if you stay the course. Remember, you got to start with that moral inventory. That moral inventory is important. Because if you add new things onto the pile, because you didn't do that, you're not making anything really truly better. You're making one thing better while you make something else worse. So really start with that find out what it is that you stand for. A good therapist can guide you through that. That's not what I'm going to do here today. I told you you might not leave with a bunch of solutions. today. It was a process that I wanted to give you. And that's the process. Thank you so much for joining us. Let us know how we're doing and we'll see you next time.

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