

Overcoming Shame

Living with unhealthy or controlling parents can make you feel like you're constantly falling short, especially when they criticize your every move. This dynamic can lead to deep-rooted feelings of shame—those thoughts that tell you you're not good enough or that you're constantly failing to live up to their standards. Over time, this shame can undermine your sense of self-worth and make you feel powerless.

Understanding how shame affects you, especially when it originates from unhealthy parental relationships, is a crucial step toward healing. Addressing these feelings with kindness and understanding can help you create a more positive and supportive relationship with yourself. This worksheet will guide you in exploring how shame has been triggered by your parents' behavior and how you can begin to cope with it in healthier ways.

PART 1: Identify Shame

Understanding what shame looks, sounds, and feels like for you is a first step toward healing.

What does shame look like for you?

Is there a particular facial expression or posture you associate with feeling ashamed?

What actions or behaviors do you engage in when you feel shame (e.g., withdrawing, avoiding eye contact)?



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What does shame feel like for you?

How does shame manifest in your body (e.g., tightness in the chest, heaviness, a pit in your stomach)?

How does it affect your energy levels (e.g., feeling drained, wanting to hide)?

What does shame sound like for you?

How would you describe the “voice” of shame in your mind?



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PART 2: Draw Your Shame Monster

Drawing your shame monster can help you visualize this emotion and see it as something separate from yourself.

Grab some markers, pencils, stickers, or any other art supplies you have on hand. On the blank space provided, draw what your shame monster looks like. It doesn't need to be a perfect drawing; the goal is to capture how you perceive your shame. Think about what colors, shapes, and features represent your shame. Is it big or small? Does it have a voice? Is it looming or hidden?



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PART 3: Journal Questions for Reflection

Journaling can be a powerful tool for processing emotions and shifting your perspective. If journaling feels overwhelming, try setting a timer for maybe 10 minutes, and come back to this part as needed. Use additional paper as needed.

What specific actions or words from your parents have triggered feelings of shame in you?

How does shame impact your daily life and self-esteem?

What beliefs about yourself have you internalized due to your parents' criticism or control?

If you imagine a kinder, more supportive inner voice, what might it say to you in moments of shame?



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PART 4: Practicing Self-Compassion

Shame often thrives when we are too hard on ourselves. Self-compassion is about treating ourselves with the same kindness and understanding that we would offer a friend.



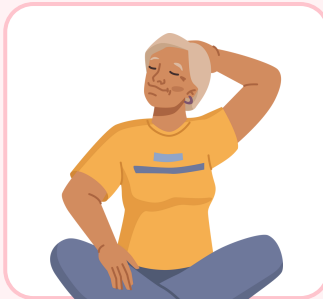
Replace self-critical thoughts with compassionate ones.



Use gentle physical touch to comfort and soothe yourself.



Journal your thoughts and feelings with a focus on self-compassion.



Observe your thoughts and feelings without judgment.



Speak to yourself with the same kindness as you would a friend.



Practice gratitude, focusing on what you appreciate about yourself.



Pamper yourself with some over the top self-care



Surround yourself with people and animals who love you



Protect your well-being by setting boundaries - say no when you need to.



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PART 5: Positive Affirmations & Mantras

Positive affirmations and mantras can be used to counteract shameful thoughts.

Circle one or two that resonate and repeat them daily.

1. I am enough just as I am.
.....
2. I did my best today, and that's enough.
.....
3. Mistakes are a natural part of growth.
.....
4. I am worthy of compassion and understanding.
.....
5.
.....
6.
.....
7.
.....

PART 6: Action Plan

Write down four steps you can take when you notice shame arising. Make the action plan as specific as possible, keeping in mind where you are and what is available to you.

Situation Description #1:

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Self-Compassion Practices:

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Situation Description #2:

Handwriting practice area for Situation Description #2, featuring seven horizontal dotted lines.

Self-Compassion Practices:

Handwriting practice area for Self-Compassion Practices, featuring seven horizontal dotted lines.

Situation Description #3:

Handwriting practice area for Situation Description #3, featuring seven horizontal dotted lines.

Self-Compassion Practices:

Handwriting practice area for Self-Compassion Practices, featuring seven horizontal dotted lines.

