

Let's Learn Together!

# WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

"Owning our story and loving ourselves through that process is the bravest thing that we'll ever do." - Brene Brown

## Recognizing Shame

Guilt- "I did something bad"

Shame- " I am bad"

The first element of shame resilience is recognizing shame and understanding our triggers. Men and women who are resilient to shame have this capacity. This enables them to respond to shame with awareness and understanding.

When we can't recognize shame and understand our triggers, shame blindsides us. It washes over us, and we want to slink away and hide.

In contrast, if we recognize our shame triggers, we can make mindful, thoughtful decisions about how we're going to respond to shame-before we do something that might make things worse.

Shame has physical symptoms. These might include your mouth getting dry, time seeming to slow down, your heart racing, twitching, looking down and tunnel vision. These symptoms are different from one person to the next. So if you learn your physical symptoms, you can recognize shame and get back on your feet faster.

Shame's universal tapes - "never good enough" & "who do you think you are."



## Exploring Triggers and Vulnerabilities

Our unwanted identities dictate our behavior everyday. It's worth it to figure them out and get real about them. Often, you'll see that the perceptions you want to have and want to avoid are totally unrealistic.

To get at shame triggers, figure out how you want to be perceived around a specific identity. So for example, with regards to motherhood, one might want to be perceived as calm, knowledgeable, educated and not perceived as overwhelmed, stressed out, unable to balance career and mothering. When we write these down and look at them, we understand the perceptions that make us vulnerable to shame. In the process, we learn a lot about ourselves.

For women, shame is a web of competing and conflicting expectations. For men, shame is a box - they do not want to be perceived as weak and do not want to be criticized or ridiculed.

## Connection vs. Disconnection

We are wired for connection. It's in our biology. As infants, our need for connection is about survival. As we grow older, connection means thriving - emotionally, physically, intellectually, and spiritually. Connection is critical because we all have the basic need to feel accepted and to believe that we belong and are valued for who we are.

We have developed unhealthy strategies to protect ourselves from shame triggers. We have learned to move away by withdrawing, hiding, silencing ourselves, and secret keeping. Or we have learned to cling toward. This can be seen when we attempt to earn connection by appeasing and pleasing. Finally we may have learned to move against. This includes trying to gain power over others and to use shame and aggression over others to fight our own shame.

