



## Self Esteem and Self Confidence as Self Preservation © copyright UnrulyNerdGirl

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### Note

- I am not a mental or physical health care professional, and can not provide professional advice in terms of coping with mental or emotional trauma.
- I can only provide you with what I have learned through lived experience, and my own research. It is my hope that both of these will be of benefit to you, and perhaps make your journey a little easier.
- If you are in need of counselling or professional help, I would urge you to seek it - with no shame or judgement - in case it might assist you in walking your best path.

### Four Human Affects

- Shame - I am bad, falling short of societal standards
- Guilt - I did something, falling short of own self standards
- Embarrassment - fleeting, happens to everyone
- Humiliation - didn't deserve it, usually brought on by others

### What is Shame?

- a painful feeling of distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behaviour
- the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed, and therefore unworthy of love and belonging - something we've experienced, done, or failed to do makes us unworthy of connection

**Shame leaves one feeling alone and isolated.**

### What Does Shame Feel Like?

- Hot
- Perspiration
- Tingling
- Tunnel Hearing
- Fight/flight/freeze/fawn (friend)/flop/fuck
- Anger
- Numbness
- Crying
- Choked up
- Stomach tightens

- Face flush
- Dry mouth
- Shutting down
- Racing heart
- Mind goes blank
- Can't hold a gaze

The physical/mental/emotional/psychological reactions to shame are the same as the reactions to trauma. The brain can not distinguish between shame and trauma. Shame is often the motivation for or the reason behind addiction issues, depression, violence, aggression, bullying, suicide, eating disorders. Shame has absolutely no positive effect on us, and does not foster growth at all.

**Two main shame drivers: you're not good enough & who do you think you are.**

### **Reaction to Shame**

- Move against shame: try to gain control or power over others, being aggressive
- Move away from shame: withdrawing, hiding, keeping secrets, staying silent
- Move towards shame: seeking approval and belonging

**High correlation between shame and low self esteem/low self confidence**

### **Good Type of Shame**

- Folx who engage in erotic degradation/humiliation
- When shame can be transformed into something that is empowering

### **Definition of Low Self Esteem/Self Confidence**

- It is a negative perception, or feeling (not fact) about one's worth
- It is often characterized by lack of confidence, negative self talk, difficulty in communicating wants and needs
- Can influence/hinder satisfying relationships and pursuing future goals

### **Signs of Low Self Esteem/Self Confidence**

- Anxiety/depression
- Shyness
- Negative thoughts about self and abilities
- Pessimism about capacity to be successful
- Addictive or compulsive behaviours (e.g. alcoholism, drug abuse, food, shopping and smoking, tv, computer games, social media - numbing out)
- An inability to overcome past negative emotional experiences
- Avoiding making eye contact with others and/or walking with head down
- Feeling uncomfortable and isolated
- Difficulty accepting compliments and easily hurt by criticism
- Frustration and impatience with oneself
- Tendency to blame oneself for negative events and not take credit for positive ones
- Avoidance of risks in personal and professional lives

- Negative comparison of self versus others.
- A lack of confidence in decision making abilities.
- Others?

## **Shame - Low Self Esteem/Self Confidence**

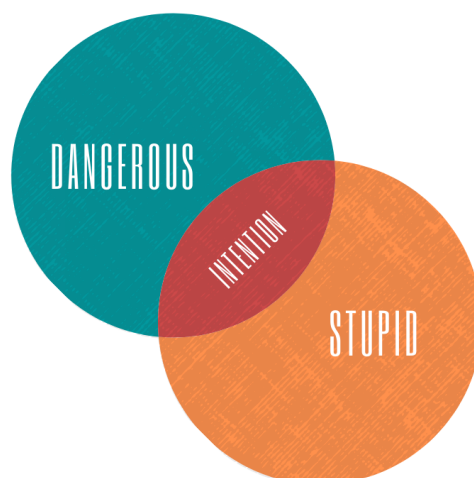
Can cause or leave us open to:

- Predatory behaviour
- Subtle manipulation/coercion
- Emotional manipulation
- Reliving trauma
- Silence
- Going along to get along

## **Forms of Emotional Manipulation**

- Gas lighting
- Negging (Backhanded compliment)
- Ghosting
- Love bombing
- Angry outbursts
- Silent treatment
- Blackmail
- Bullying
- Devaluing
- Minimizing and magnifying
- Humiliation
- Playing the victim
- Moving the goalposts
- Fear/Threats

## **Predators/Bad Actors - Intent**



## **Building Our Shield - Hardening as a Target**

- Diffusing Shame
- Building Shame Resilience
- Coping with Low Self Esteem/Low Self Confidence

## **Diffusing Shame - Employing Empathy**

For shame to exist, it needs three factors:

- Isolation
- Secrecy
- Judgement

**If you douse shame in empathy, it can't survive.**

**The two most powerful words when we are struggling with shame are hearing "Me too".**

## **What is Empathy?**

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. To be empathetic to another, we need to understand the darkness they are sitting in, because we have experienced it ourselves, and we need to be vulnerable enough to sit with them in their darkness. This means we need to be able to open up and understand with no judgement what the other person is going through. You can not be empathetic and be aloof, disconnected, or shy away from human experience, contact, or emotions.

## **How to Develop Shame Resilience**

- Recognising shame and understanding our triggers (e.g. physical responses like our heart racing or tightness in our chest)
- Reality check the messages and expectations that fuel shame (ie. what is society saying, what are the messages external to me, who benefits from these expectations)
- Reaching out and telling our story (i.e. by reaching out to our support network and sharing our story, we can increase our resilience and create change)
- Speaking shame is so important as it's survival depends on going undetected (i.e. through secrecy and silence). Subsequently, if we recognise and understand our triggers, practice critical awareness and reach out to others, we can grow our resilience as we practice communicating about our shame with our most-trusted advisors who use their own compassion and courage whilst listening and supporting us.

**Not everyone deserves to hear our stories - so we need to choose wisely  
Can the relationship bear the weight of our sharing**

## **What Erodes Our Self Esteem/Self Confidence**

- All-or-nothing thinking - things are all black or all white - there is no gradient.
- Mental filtering - seeing only the negative, dwelling on it, and even magnifying it.
- Converting positives into negatives - rejecting or downplaying your achievements, or finding the flaws in your accomplishments.

- Jumping to negative conclusions - coming to a negative conclusion with no evidence to support it whatsoever.
- Mistaking feelings for facts - taking feelings or beliefs as absolute facts.
- Negative self-talk - talking down to yourself, using self deprecating humour.

## **Coping with Low Self Esteem/Low Self Confidence**

- **Seek counselling when or if you feel it is necessary**
- Acknowledge your strengths and abilities - start with what you have, where you are, take an inventory
- Learn from mistakes, being easy with yourself when something doesn't work out as planned
- Focus on self compassion (embracing ourselves as we are)
- End comparing yourself to others, how are we the same as others
- Seek out your cheer squad
- Treat ourselves like we would treat our good friends
- Be comfortable with what is at the moment (Mindfulness)

No matter who we are, how we identify, all of us are worthy of love and belonging.

You only are free when you realize you belong no place — you belong every place — no place at all. The price is high. The reward is great.

**Maya Angelou**

## **Resources**

### **Kristin Neff**

- The Space Between Self-Esteem and Self Compassion: Kristin Neff at TEDxCentennialParkWomen (YouTube)
- The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook, Kristin Neff and Christopher Germer

### **Brené Brown**

- The Power of Vulnerability: Brené Brown TED Talk
- Listening to Shame: Brené Brown TED Talk
- I Thought It Was Just Me (But It Isn't): Telling the Truth About Perfectionism, Inadequacy and Power. Avery. 336 pp. ISBN 978-1592403356 (2007)
- The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are. Center City, MN: Hazelden. 160 pp. ISBN 978-1592858491 (2010)
- Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent and Lead. New York City: Gotham. 320 pp. ISBN 978-1592408412 (2012)
- Rising Strong: The Reckoning, the Rumble, the Revolution. Spiegel & Grau, now Random House. 352 pp. ISBN 978-0812985801 (2015)
- Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone. Random House. 208 pp. ISBN 978-0812985818 (2017)

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