

Shame

In its positive form shame acts as a kind of social glue – something which helps bind a group together in relation to a set of commonly held values. A criminal might, for example, feel shame for stealing, healthy shame.

But shameful feelings are often unwarranted. You can experience shame even if you have done nothing wrong. Something has happened which leads you to believe that you don't feel entitled to the good things in life, or often even, perhaps, to the basics. You might undervalue your health, education, or accommodation. You may not feel able to ask for a pay rise, or to assert your right not to work ever hour of the day. You may accept a relationship full of unfairness and unhappiness.

If this is you then somehow, somewhere in your life, you will have regularly received a false message: you are not good enough. Sometimes this happens when we are over-exposed, especially when young, to people who try to arrest their own feelings of worthlessness by trying to grind down those around them. Other times shame can be inherited from our parents or other carers who feel so bad about themselves they project into their children's lives a sense of 'we are not good enough'. The child who experiences this is unlikely to develop a strong sense of who he or she is and may grow up with a sense of being a problem.

Therapy offers ways of working with this kind of negative self-belief. It can provide an honest mirror to the client: one which doesn't distort or lie, and engages with specific techniques which help an individual develop new, more sustaining ways of thinking about him- or herself.

Begin by offering yourself regular affirmations. Talk to people you trust and agree on something about yourself you know to be honest and true: a quality you can take strength from. Stand in front of the mirror each day and remind yourself of that quality.

Also take stock of the way you are looking after yourself. When was the last time you went to the dentist or had a check-up at the doctor's? How many hours do you work in the day and how many are left for you and the people you love? Asking yourself questions like these can be a very good way of beginning to develop a healthy relationship with shame because one of the things toxic, negative shame does is to effectively take away your voice. It stops you questioning things in ways that may lead to you getting more out of life.

If you feel you don't deserve more it's unlikely you'll be able to ask for it. People who feel full of shame get stuck in life and often end up feeling oppressed.

If you think you suffering from shame then give us a call, we can help

Call 020 7323 4970

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