

Audio File Transcript

Mindfulness of Shame in Daily Life

This practice is mindfulness of shame in daily life. Shame feels scary and it reliably triggers a threat response, sending adrenaline and cortisol coursing through our bodies. Research shows that being able to label a difficult emotion reduces the threat response in your brain and your body. Therefore, if you can recognize shame while you're in the midst of it, shame will lose some of its intensity. Labeling emotions like this is a key mindfulness skill. Many participants in the Self Compassion for Shame course said that this practice, mindfulness of shame in daily life, was one of the most helpful practices in the entire program. This exercise will help you to identify how you're most likely to recognize shame when it arises. So I'm going to ask some open-ended questions for you to reflect upon. And also please feel free to write down whatever comes to mind.

So the first question is, what's the main thing that goes on inside your body when you feel ashamed? For example, you may feel a sinking sensation, a thump in the chest, tightness in your throat, a hollow feeling in your head, maybe your jaw clenches, or your skin crawls or you feel nauseous. What goes on inside your body? What's the main thing such that when it happens you can say, oh I feel shame? The second question is, how would other people recognize when you're feeling shame? In other words, what's the main outer physical expression of shame for you? So maybe you slump your shoulders, you swallow hard, you hide your eyes, maybe you smile nervously or sweat or mumble or just freeze? What might other people see that you could also recognize to be able to say, shame? The third question is, what thoughts go through your mind when you feel shame? There are so many options. Maybe you feel confusion. What? Or you criticize yourself. I'm such an idiot. Or you feel unworthy. I'm just not good enough. I'm bad. Maybe you feel powerless. Nothing I can do. Or you feel like a stranger. I just don't fit in here. Or when you feel shame maybe you mostly feel vulnerable, like you'll be hurt. Or maybe you may notice, maybe I'm feeling shame when you ruminate. If you're thinking over and over, why me? What's wrong with me? It could be shame. So what thoughts could indicate to you that you're feeling shame? The 4th question is, there another emotion that you typically feel along with shame or even instead of shame? Shame easily mixes with other difficult emotions. So you may feel anxiety or fear instead of shame or along with shame or despair or sadness. Maybe anger or irritation. Maybe you feel that and you don't feel shame. Maybe shame is the cause of your anger. Or maybe disgust. When you feel disgusted with yourself, are you feeling shame? Or perhaps you might feel in a moment of shame confused, like, what's this? or lost. Very common expression of shame. We might

not be able to say, this is shame. We can just say, I'm so confused. Or maybe you feel emotionally numb, like I feel nothing. Are any of these emotions a sign of shame for you that could help you name shame while you're feeling it. And the last question concerns behavior, how you act. So how do you usually behave when you're feeling ashamed?

So there are three general categories. One is moving away, hiding, going small, going silent, going away. Very common. Another is to move against. In other words, to get angry or aggressive or blame others, which is a relief from blaming ourselves. Or another direction is moving toward. In other words, some people become submissive or appeasing or people pleasing. Do any of these behaviors resonate with you? If you find yourself doing them, is it worth asking, am I feeling shame? So if you've been writing down your answers, please take a moment now and go through your answers and choose one or two signs, what you might call the strongest signals that you're feeling shame, or red flags. And in daily life, when one of these red flags of shame waves, try to say to yourself with as much acceptance as you can muster, I'm feeling shame. This is shame. Oh, shame. Naming it for yourself in a kind and sympathetic way. That would be a moment of mindfulness and it will give you a little perspective, just a little freedom. Freedom from shame. Thank you.