

Solutions: Support for Emotional and Binge Eating

Session 7: Shame and Self-Compassion

Check-In

- Identify at least one success and one challenge from the past week.
- Did you have any opportunities to practice moderation with behaviors this past week? What skills did you use? How'd it go?
- How can the group support you?

Quote of the Week

If you put shame in a petri dish, it needs three ingredients to grow exponentially: secrecy, silence, and judgment. If you put the same amount of shame in the petri dish and douse it with empathy, it can't survive.

-Brené Brown

Shame

Shame is an emotion stemming from a wrongness within us or a perception that we are mistakes or failures.

- “The intensely painful feeling or experience that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.” –Brene Brown
- Different from guilt. Guilt is about what we do and offers an opportunity for redemption and encourages us to reach out and make amends
- The purpose of shame is protective- to warn you that you’ve fallen short of an expectation or stepped outside of convention. However, shame is not a truth teller. When we hear shame narratives, it just means we got activated.

Origins of Shame

Parents/primary caregivers/relatives regularly:

- Humiliate you for shortcomings
- Degrade, demean, and devalue you
- Tease you
- Make fun of your mistakes
- Put you down for your failures
- Protect you from feeling shame as much as possible

Feeling “bad” begins to function as a mood descriptor *and* an assessor of self-worth. Not knowing how to sit with shame prevents learning how to tolerate and deal with it.

“Not Enough” Messages

Many of us grew up in families where the message of “you’re not good enough” was common, whether it had to do with performance, achievements, appearance, or worth as a human being. Check the “not enough” messages you may have heard growing up and who you heard the message from, and how old you were.

“Not Enough” Message	Person telling me this was:	Age I heard this was:
What’s wrong with you?		
You should be ashamed of yourself.		
Stop crying before I give you something to cry about.		
You’re out of control.		
Stop acting like a baby.		
I can’t believe you would do that.		
You’re a lazy bum.		
Suck it up.		
You should be grateful.		
You’re a mess.		
Write your own:		

Shame-Based Behaviors

Behavior that chronically leaves you feeling ashamed, including:

- Chronically sabotage your success
- Ignore healthy advice from others you trust to engage in high-risk behaviors
- Consistently take high-risk or harmful behaviors and try to hide them
- Regularly neglect the health of your mind, body, and spirit
- Habitually act on impulse without regard for consequences

Shame-Based Behaviors with Food

- Secretive eating
- Hiding destructive eating behaviors
- Punishing self with behaviors to compensate for food consumed
- Restricting nourishment or sensory delight
- Rigid or highly-controlled eating on a regular basis
 - Stems from an intense fear of shame
- Blaming others for driving you to eat

Discussion Questions

- How does your discomfort with shame influence your behaviors with food and eating?
- How does your dysfunctional relationship with food influence your shame?

Disordered eating both alleviates *and* perpetuates shame, while also doubling the dose.

Healing Shame

- Self-Compassion
- Acceptance of behaviors
- Believing you're doing the best you can while remaining curious about your motivation

Self-Compassion

The process of turning compassion inward:

- **Acceptance**- neutral understanding of your behavior.
- **Empathy**- you're doing the best you can, validating that this is tough!
- **Curiosity**- how are you trying to care for yourself? What are you trying to protect yourself from? Will this lead to more or less discomfort in the long run?
- **Kindness and nurturing**- confronting and replacing the critical voice.
- **Flexibility**- permission to NOT be perfect!

What does self-compassion do?

Self-Compassion is a regulator by:

- **Allowing**- knows this will be hard. Softens expectations.
- **Understanding**- I will have tough moments (*“In all fairness, I’m dealing with a lot internally.”*) Recovery is non-linear.
- **Embracing** the difficult- meets the difficulty without minimizing or taking it away. *“No mud, no lotus.”*
- **Embracing** holistic view- more to me than what I think. Mind, body, spirit need to be part of this path.
- **Offering** care/support vs. criticism- it is softer, kinder, and less harsh.

Discussion Questions

- What makes self-compassion difficult? Can you challenge any negative beliefs that you don't deserve it, aren't worthy of it, etc?
- What does your self-compassion voice sound like?
- What would happen to your shame and shame-based eating behaviors if you heard from your self-compassion voice more?

Any last thoughts or questions?