



# SHAME

**"Shame is that warm feeling that washes over us, making us feel small, flawed, and never good enough."  
-Dr. Brené Brown**

# What is Shame?

Shame is an intense and confusing feeling that we all go through at some point. It's the loud voice in our mind that makes us doubt whether we're good enough or even deserve good things, such as love or happiness. It's a lie that turns into more and more lies, and that takes a significant toll on our mental health. It might push us to do some unhealthy coping mechanisms like turning to bad habits, battling eating issues, feeling super down, super anxious, or even hurting ourselves.

There are tons of ways shame can sneak into our lives, and it's different for everyone. It might pop up when you mess up an answer in class, lose a game, love someone who doesn't love you back, feel left out, or even when you're looking at yourself in the mirror. And sometimes, it's tied to deeper issues, like tough things that happened when you were younger, getting bullied, or being rejected by someone you thought would always have your back. Shame can creep into all sorts of things – money, work, family, how you look, your body, your mind, addictions, relationships, and a bunch more. Anything you can think of, there's a chance someone's felt ashamed about it.

A common mistake people make is confusing guilt and shame. Guilt is when you realize you've messed up, and it pushes you to be accountable for your mistake and even grow from it. However, shame stops you from making changes. When you are ashamed, you may believe you are a terrible and worthless person. Guilt shows us areas where we can grow, and shame makes us feel small and trapped. Shame is like being stuck in the mud and feeling like you will be there forever.

SHAME.

HALTS.

CHANGE.



# What Does It Look Like to Experience Shame?

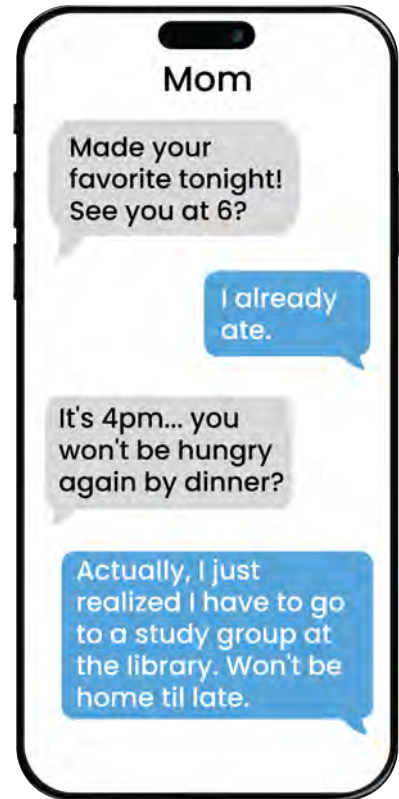
Perhaps you struggle with shame about your appearance. When you look in the mirror, you may not like the face looking back at you, and you may start to slowly point out all the areas of your appearance that do not live up to the unrealistic standards of beauty that you see online. When you scroll through social media, you compare what you see in the mirror to the perfectly edited photo of someone else. The shame starts to develop and makes you believe you need to change your appearance to find value.



Physical



Maybe this is causing you to isolate yourself from others for fear that they may think the same negative things about you. You may become obsessed with controlling your food, exercising to the point of injury, finding any way to buy the right clothes or makeup, and thinking that you can force your body to look differently. The shame started with a glance in the mirror, but it spiraled into an eating disorder, pulling you deeper into the lie of shame.





Have you ever been in a group where one friend effortlessly steals the spotlight? They're the life of the party, cracking jokes and spreading laughter, while you feel like you're just not as outgoing. When shame sneaks in, suddenly, you start doubting yourself.

Do they really like you? Are they just pitying you? You begin to believe you're somehow lesser than your friends, swallowed up by the lies shame whispers. It's like a dark cloud that follows you around, distorting your perceptions of others and the world, even of yourself. Instead of hanging out with friends, you might retreat, preferring your own company. Just the thought of stepping outside your room feels like a burden because shame convinces you that you're not worthy of being around others. Shame deceives you, feeding you false beliefs and making you believe that you're somehow less than who you really are.

Maybe you grew up hearing a lot about "sin" at church – the Ten Commandments, scary stories about plagues, and warnings of Hell. Rather than seeing sin through the eyes of guilt, it started to build up in your mind as shame. That shame tells you that if you are imperfect, God won't love you anymore.

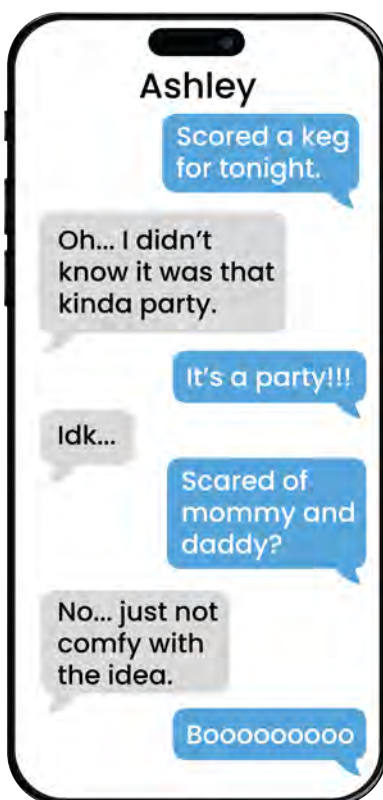
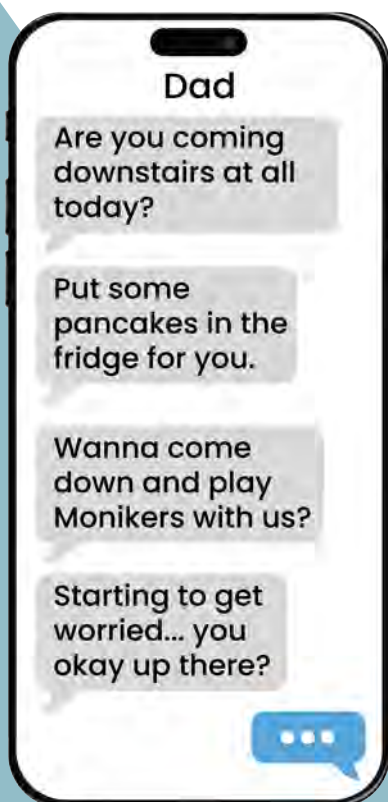
Shame encourages you to have what is often called "all-or-nothing thinking" around your faith. On one hand, you can fool yourself into thinking you are perfect and deserve the love of God, or you see nothing but your sin; therefore, you believe the lie that you cannot be loved by God.

# Spiritual



This shame weighs heavily because, deep down, you know you can never be perfect. When faced with a difficult choice, you may make the wrong choice because what is the point? Why even try to do good? The lie of shame starts to build, and you feel that you can never achieve love from God, and then that lie compounds further and further. It throws you into a never-ending loop of feeling inadequate and unloved.

Maybe you even begin to judge other people and their faith. Rather than seeing hope in their faith, you may start to make fun of them or talk down about what they believe in. There is no place for shame in faith! Faith consists of love and forgiveness, while shame breeds through hate and unforgiveness.



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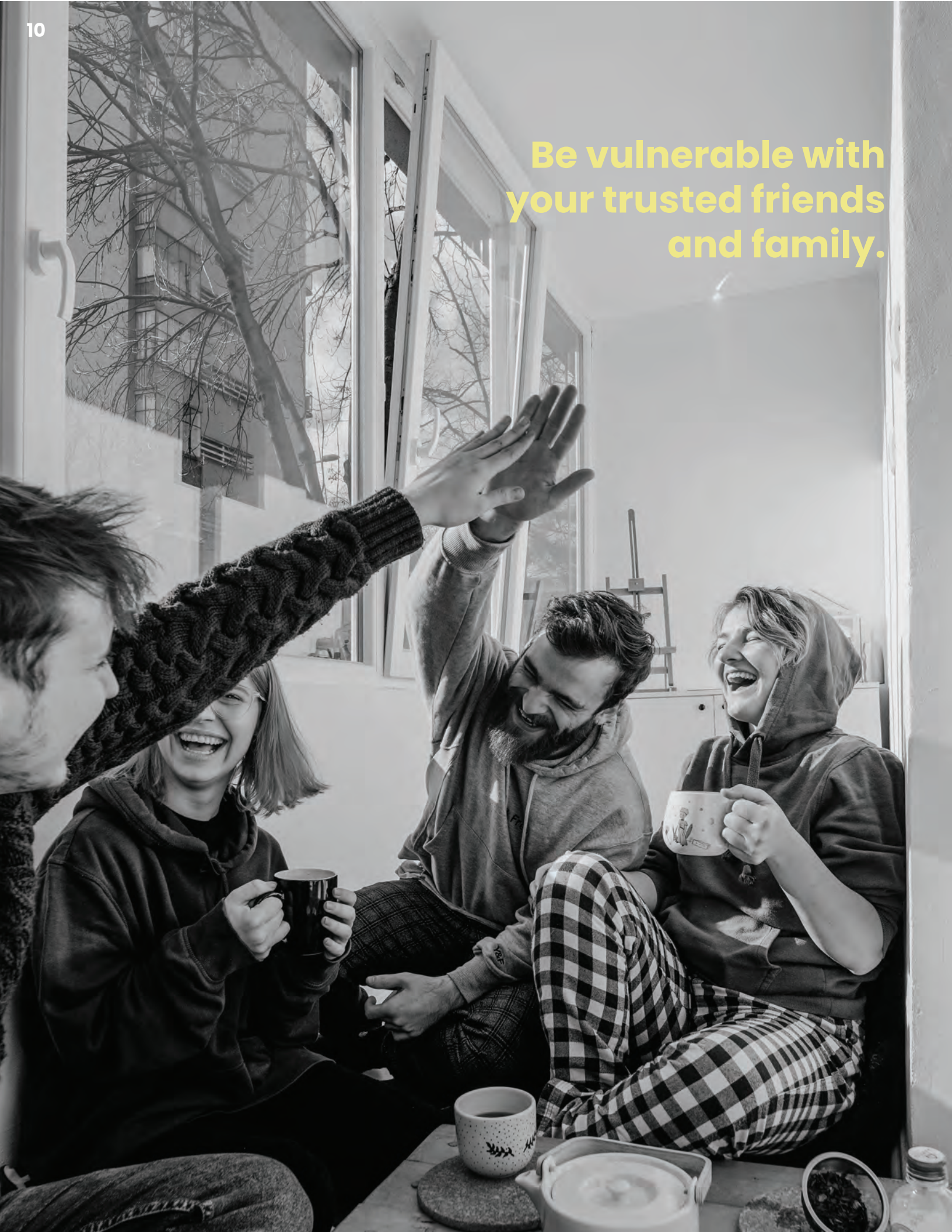
# How Do You Heal From Shame?

Shame is a strong emotion, but it does not define who you are! The truth is that shame can be defeated, no matter how deep it runs in your mind and heart. Shame doesn't have to win! Resources are available to you, and there are people who want to help you fight against the voice of shame. There is hope!

A black and white photograph of a city street, likely in New York City, showing a wide road with multiple lanes, cars, and large trees lining the sidewalks. The street recedes into the distance between tall buildings.

**Shame can be defeated!**

**Be vulnerable with  
your trusted friends  
and family.**



# How Do You Heal From Shame?

## Professional Guidance

Shame is a big topic to tackle, and since it can affect many areas of your life, it is essential to seek professional help, such as a mental health professional. Professional help can help you break down the lies you are wrestling with, and they can give you appropriate tools to utilize when you feel trapped. Sometimes, simply talking about your shame can be what you need to start taking back the power of your thoughts. We are not meant to do life alone; therefore, you do not have to fight this battle in isolation. A professional can walk alongside you and cheer you on as you navigate your healing journey.

## Caring for Yourself

Shame is a painful feeling, and when someone is in pain, they need comfort. Comforting yourself in healthy ways that can also help you build shame resilience is your big task now. That's going to take compassion and empathy, muscles that are likely a bit atrophied after your mind has been used to the judging and unrelenting voices of shame. If being kind and patient with yourself feels impossible, try imagining how you might comfort a child. If a little kid were to come up to you, crying, and saying that nobody likes them or that they are the worst person in the world, how would you react? Hopefully, you'd comfort them, saying that's not true, and offering them a hug or a smile. Can you practice giving that kindness to yourself when shame rears its ugly head? It's also crucial that you don't isolate, because connection is one of our biggest weapons against shame. Be vulnerable with your trusted friends and family, and don't be afraid to reach out to them when you're struggling.

**Take ten minutes to think of ways to take care of yourself this week.**

# Spiritual Practice

The Bible teaches us to wrap ourselves in qualities like compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience—all opposite of shame! Jesus is the best example of all those qualities, and He is the ultimate truth in our lives.

Jesus specializes in helping us overcome shame. When your shame lies to you and says you are unworthy of love, Jesus shows us His love time and time again. Jesus loves you so much that He sacrificed His life for you. Even if you were the only person in the world, Jesus would have still chosen to die for just you because that is how much He loves YOU!

When the voice of shame begins to whisper lies to you, remember that Jesus gives you an endless supply of grace, mercy, and forgiveness. While the lie of shame will dry up, the love and truth of Jesus is a never-ending flow. Jesus died for you so your life can be full of joy and peace. There is no shame in Jesus.

If you want to learn more about Jesus and how much He loves you, or if you want to talk about your struggles with shame, reach out to one of our Hope Coaches today. They are equipped and ready to help you navigate through shame!

*get  
prayer*

Send your prayer  
requests today!

**Real**  
**People**  
**Praying.**



# Next Steps

You deserve to be heard and understood. We help students and young adults in crisis by offering sound advice and a safe place to connect.

*explore*

Check out other topics on our website, [TheHopeLine.com!](http://TheHopeLine.com!)

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Browse through these posts and articles to learn more about mental health!

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Talk to a 24/7 Hope Coach for free now!

