

Wounds

Many of us are walking around with wounds that no one can see, especially emotional wounds that were inflicted upon us by people we loved and trusted. These wounds strike at the very core of who we are. They deeply affect how we think and feel about ourselves, how we think others see us, and how we respond to everything in life. They cause us to follow a belief pattern that is not based on reality or truth. This brokenness leaves us feeling flawed and unworthy of love or anything good in our lives. And it robs us of the ability to reach for our potential. If your emotional wounds cause you to want to physically harm yourself or others, then you should see your healthcare provider immediately. You are valuable and worth it!

Shame's Grip

We use the word *SHAME* a lot in our culture. We've said to our children, "Shame on you!" a time or two. This shame is different from the damaging shame created by abuse. The "shame on you" phrase is meant to apply guilt to a behavior that broke a moral rule or value, such as lying, stealing, cheating, or being unkind. It's meant to motivate us to make better choices in the future. However, shame caused by abuse lays down a powerful message that's repeated over time. It leaves us feeling like we have less value than anyone else. Shame makes us feel isolated and set apart from others. It's felt by a child raised by an angry or controlling parent, or one who is made to feel responsible for the sexual abuse she courageously blew the whistle on. It is felt by the child who is treated violently or with neglect. This is the message of shame, and it is laid down through the years until the real truth of our value is strangled and lost! And the lie, that we have no value, becomes the lens through which we now view our world. The pain caused by this lie is intense, and it has a tight, tight grip. Your story will be different from mine, but I'm sure that the message of shame is the same.

What Is Healing?

Healing has occurred when you can lean into the truth more than leaning into the lies. Your actions, reactions, responses, and behavior all will be affected by this. It will change how you parent. It allows you to break the cycle of abuse, so that your children's future will be much brighter. Healing does not erase the painful memories. Rather, it just removes their power. It's naïve to believe that healing means that we completely stop hurting from those past wounds. Even when we are able to grasp the truth, the lies still lay at the edges of our minds, trying to worm their way back in.

Laying Down the Lie

We were each born with our temperament and much of our personality. But we were not born to believe that we are flawed or without value. That is the lie that is nurtured over time. So, how does this work? Our parents were just adults parenting through the lens of their own histories and wounds. Often, as we get older, we can see that more clearly. But as a child, we just don't understand that our parent's shame is what is causing them to behave poorly. Because of this, children believe that they are the cause of their parent's problems. This is made much worse when parents either intentionally or unintentionally communicate that the problems are the child's fault. After many years of hearing and feeling this shame, the foundation for the lies has been powerfully laid.

What Is Truth?

Truth matters because it's the shovel we use to dig through the layers of shame to find our core value and worth. I've had many people in my life tell me that I have value. It was nice to hear, but until I dug through the shame to find it myself, it was head knowledge only. Faith plays a very important role in healing. Look to God to remind you of your value and worth. Do you want to feel this value? Do you want to reject the lies and embrace the truth that you are valued by the most valuable Being in the universe? This is the start to your healing—to lean in to the truth that God values you and loves you. And the best part is, God doesn't value you because you do good things; He values you because He is loving and forgiving. This is great news because we all do things that aren't right. Even though we do these things, God wants to forgive us and He wants us to know the truth. If you want this forgiveness, and you want to accept the truth that Jesus died for those things you have done, then this is the perfect time to tell Him. God wants you to trust Him and to know the truth about how much He loves you. This is an important step in healing. Psalms 139:14 - I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Forgiving Others

Once we understand that we are forgiven, we can start forgiving others. Forgiving those who hurt us is an important step to healing. It is also one of the hardest. Forgiveness doesn't excuse what the abuser did, but it helps us to heal and to remove the POWER that we give to our abusers. Forgiveness happens when we become aware that our abusers were flawed people who were acting out of their own shame. They were wrong, and that's why they need to be forgiven—both by us and by God. This isn't an easy thing to do, and it's something that you will have to do over and over again as painful memories of the abuse threaten your normal daily life. This step may feel impossible to you right now. Healing is a process that takes time to unravel, and forgiveness happens during this journey.

Beginning the Process

Your journey of healing has to start with your decision to begin. Some of us need a guide, someone who has traveled this path before and who can help us along the way, especially if your abuse was severe or violent. Your guide may be a good counselor who understands shame. It could be a good friend, someone who will listen and shed tears with you as you lay bare your deepest pain. There are also many support groups that can help, as well. Churches and counseling centers can guide your search for these. There are wonderful books and online resources written about shame and abuse that help us to navigate our way to the truth. There are also great online communities that provide classes and resources. Here are a couple of links that could be helpful to you:

- www.mendingthesoul.org
- www.brenebrown.com

We all need an anchor, something to keep us grounded in truth, someone like God. He can be your Anchor though this tough time.

Resources

1. Brené Brown. "Shame vs. Guilt." www.brenebrown.com, Brené Brown, 28 Oct. 2021, brenebrown.com/2013/01/14/2013114shame-v-guilt-html/.