

SOME SIGNALS THAT SHAME MAY BE PRESENT (In You Or In Others)

There are a variety of signals that may indicate the presence of shame in you or other people. Look through the following lists and check off those that apply to you. Being aware of signals that let you know you are feeling shameful allows you to begin to identify and intervene in thinking, emotional, and behavior patterns that are maintaining and building more shame in yourself, in your relationships, and in your life (i.e. these are part of your “sustained shame,” the things that you do to add to the shame that you carry with you from childhood).

SOME NON-VERBAL OR PHYSICAL SIGNALS

- Averted or downcast eyes
 - i.e. frequently looking away from others’ eyes
- Lowering your head around others (a “hang dog” look)
- Blushing
- Slumped shoulders
- “Frozen face”
 - rigid and tight features or showing no emotion at all
- Frequent crying and tearfulness
- Sneering at others
 - looking contemptuous and disgusted
- A mocking or mimicking tone of voice
- “Glare-stare”
 - a fixed and unbending look used to intimidate the other person
- Red-faced with veins bulging
 - communicating hostility and rage non-verbally to others

SOME COGNITIVE, EMOTIONAL, AND BEHAVIORAL SIGNALS

BEING ABUSIVE TO OTHER PEOPLE:

- Emotional abuse
 - using non-verbal gestures and expressions to hurt, punish, demean, humiliate, intimidate, and control others
 - ...e.g. sulking, withdrawing affection and attention to punish, becoming loud and intimidating
- Verbal abuse
 - using words to hurt, punish, demean, humiliate, intimidate, and control others
 - ...e.g. name-calling, put-downs, insults, swearing, cursing
- Physical abuse
 - using physical force and actions to hurt, punish, demean, humiliate, intimidate, and control others
 - ...e.g. pushing, grabbing, restraining, slapping, punching
- Sexual abuse
 - any inappropriate sexually-loaded verbal messages or sexual touch that is forced on someone else
 - ...e.g. unwanted sexual comments or touch; pressuring or coercing sexual activity that is unwanted, uncomfortable, or unpleasant for the other person

COMPULSIVE AND ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS: when you form a “primary relationship” with a substance or activity that interferes with the rest of your life, especially in your relationships with the people who are most important to you:

___ Chemical abuse

- e.g. abusing alcohol and drugs, including nicotine, caffeine, and prescription and over-the-counter medications

___ Compulsive behaviors related to food

- e.g. overeating, bulimia, anorexia

___ Workaholism

- e.g. focusing on work and your job to the detriment of your relationship with your partner and family or other aspects of your personal life

___ Sexual acting-out

- e.g. compulsive masturbation, extramarital affairs, casual sexual encounters with strangers of the same or opposite sex, contact with prostitutes, voyeurism, exhibitionism, compulsive use of pornography

___ Spending and saving compulsions

- e.g. shopping, gambling, shoplifting, hoarding

___ Compulsive behaviors related to playing video games; the use of the internet, cell phones, and tablets; and watching television

SOME OTHER IMPORTANT SIGNALS THAT SHAME IS PRESENT:

___ Depression

- experiencing low self-esteem; continual self-doubt; feeling worthless; having thoughts about being helpless, hopeless, and powerless; often believing that you are a “bad” person and are doing “bad” things

___ Anxiety

- feeling nervous, agitated, fearful, timid, insecure, panicky, and apprehensive

___ Rage and explosive anger

- feeling and acting irritable, hostile, cynical, and vengeful

___ Intimidating and threatening behavior

- “getting in someone’s face;” violating others’ personal space and boundaries; physical threats

___ Isolation (avoiding others) and ongoing feelings of loneliness and estrangement

___ Controlling attitudes and behaviors

- “all or nothing”/”right or wrong”/”good or bad” thinking that leads to attempts to control what others think, say, or do and to dominate situations around you

___ Power struggles and difficulty resolving conflict

- arising from reactivity, defensiveness, argumentativeness, rigidity, and an unwillingness to compromise

___ Perfectionistic attitudes and behaviors

- believing that you or others need to be “right” or excel at everything you do and viewing yourself and others as “failures” whenever you or they are unable to do so

___ Self-righteousness, grandiosity, arrogance, and contempt for others

- thinking that you are “better”/”smarter”/more competent and capable than other people and “entitled” to special treatment by those around you
...this can include holding prejudiced and bigoted attitudes toward people who are different from you

___ Being self-absorbed and self-centered

- having little real interest in or empathy and compassion for other people

- ___ Being preoccupied or obsessed with your “image,” “appearances,” how you present yourself to others, and how others think and feel about you
- ___ Powerful and unrealistic fears about being rejected and abandoned by those who are close to you
- ___ People-pleasing attitudes and behaviors that lead to an over-dependency on others and the belief that you need to take care of and “protect” those around you
 - having a strong desire to get others’ approval, attention, good will, and affection “at any cost” and focusing primarily on others and their wants and needs rather than on your own
- ___ Great difficulty talking honestly about your thoughts and feelings and intense fears about being emotionally close and intimate with others
 - e.g. withholding important parts of who you are in order to avoid potential conflict, rejection, or abandonment
- ___ An unwillingness to take responsibility for your thoughts, feelings, wants, needs, actions, and inaction and a tendency to blame others for who you are, what you do, and what happens to you
- ___ Fears about speaking up and asserting yourself honestly and openly with others
- ___ Developing and using “sneaky” and manipulative ways to get what you want and to get others to take care of you
 - e.g. trying to “guilt” or “shame” others into being who you want them to be and doing what you want them to do
- ___ Taking on too much responsibility for everything that happens around you and then experiencing despair when situations don’t work out as you had planned, hoped for, and expected
- ___ Extreme mood swings in an ongoing way where your vacillation about how you feel means that you are frequently negative about yourself and others and are thus unable to provide consistency in your relationships with those around you