

Symptoms of shame

PHYSIOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS OF SHAME

Shame produces many of the physical conditions associated with embarrassment. When we encounter situations that reveal the "horrible secret" we work to hide, eg our imperfection, we may experience some or all of these physical symptoms:

- Increased body temperature - a warm flush or even a "hot flash"
- Nausea
- Heaviness in the chest - perhaps to the point of feeling panicky
- Poor eye-contact and hesitant speech patterns
- Body minimizing posture - trying to hide shape of body or look invisible
- Low energy levels - shame-based people often work hard to excel, leaving themselves exhausted most of the time

COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS OF SHAME

Shame-shaped thinking patterns contain most of these following features:

- Demeaning self-labeling - like "I'm an idiot, bad person, rotten Christian"
- Guilt-proneness, seeing oneself as the cause of any difficulty or disturbance within any relational group such as family, church or work
- Personalization, every interaction is a commentary on one's worth
- All-or-Nothing thinking, All issues are extremes, "I'm perfect or garbage"
- Perfectionism, is potentially life shackling. Perfectionist are always disappointed with themselves & those around them & may give up trying

RELATIONAL SYMPTOMS OF SHAME

We feel ineligible for mutually respectful relationships if we believe that we are worth less than other people. These traits may be seen in shame-bound people:

- Rescuing, or "needing to be needed". Doubting that any healthy person would freely choose to relate to us, we find needy to people to relate to. (We may even become counselors to insure this.)
- Tolerating disrespect & abuse - abusive relationships are better than none
- Trust problems created by childhood betrayals of trust
- Hypersensitivity to rejection based of fear of abandonment
- Approval addiction, will sacrifice personal standards, work past the point of exhaustion,etc because we must get approval from significant people
- Fear of criticism and anger - since it means withdrawal of approval
- Controlling or subtly manipulating people and situations to compensate for feeling the out-of-controlness and chaos often experienced as a child

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