SHAMELESS GRIEF

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&

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Medical Model

Grief is a pathology.

Creates shame ABOUT grief.

Grief needs to be removed in order to let new love in.

Shameless Grief Model

Grief is normal, natural and healthy.

Shame creates pathology.

We need to develop “shame resilience” in order to let new love in.
1) What is shame?

2) What is shame trying to do for us?

3) Prevalence of shame in grieving?

4) Impact of shame?

5) Tools for developing shame resilience.
What is shame?

“Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging.”

(Brown, 2007, p.5)

Shame is comprised of:
• An intensely painful feeling.
• The belief that you’re flawed.
• Feeling that you’re unworthy of acceptance and belonging.
• The desire to cover up and not be seen.

(Lewis, 1971; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Brown, 2007; Blum, 2008)
Shame is not guilt!

Guilt: “I DID something wrong.”  
(but I still belong)

vs.

Shame: “I AM something wrong.”  
(and I’m unworthy of belonging)

(Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Brown, 2006; Blum, 2008)
Shame is about “not-belonging”

If we could see our flaws (we all have them!) but still feel worthy of acceptance and belonging then it wouldn’t be painful, and it wouldn’t be shameful.
What have you found most difficult since your loss?

“I don't want others to define me by what happened to me, but it's hard not to as I've changed so drastically. I have severe anxiety about telling people, but I know some of them judge me for how I've changed if I don't tell them.”

“The grief is compounded by my guilt at being unable to "get over it" and do what I need to do.”

“Other people’s reactions when I don't grieve like I am ‘supposed’ to.”


“It's difficult to face the feelings of failure. The feeling that I let my children down…”

“Grief, shame, guilt, like it was my fault, crazy mood swings, hopelessness, fear, lack of safety net.”
Other lenses for shame

1) Characterological Self-blame (Janoff-Bulman, 1979)

2) Internal, stable and global attributions (Gilbert, & Proctor, 2006)

3) Low Self-esteem (Lewis, 1987; Blum, 2008)

4) Self-conscious emotion (Tangney & Dearing, 2002)
Other lenses for shame

1) Shyness  (Brown, 2007; Blum, 2008)
2) Embarrassment  (Brown, 2007; Blum, 2008)
3) Humiliation  (Brown, 2007; Blum, 2008)
4) Disenfranchised grief  (Hazen, 2003; Kauffman, 2010)
5) Stigma  (Harris, 2009)
What is shame trying to do for us?

- **Shame is universal.** (Balcom, 1995; Gilbert, 2001; Brown, 2007)
- **Learn the social rules.** (Bradshaw, 1988; Gilbert, 2001; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Dickerson et al, 2004)
- **Avoid rejection and stay in community.** (Lewis, 1971; Gilbert, 2001; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Mills, 2004; Dickerson et al, 2004)
- **Self-reflect and grow.** (Bradshaw, 1988; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Mills, 2004)
Explanations For Shame in Bereavement

1) Existential psychology (Kauffman, 2010)
2) Attachment theory (Kauffman, 1989; Schermer, 2010)
3) Identity/ Self-concept (Cacciato, Wonch Hill & Schreffler, 2012)
4) Search for meaning (Hsu et al, 2002)
5) Preserving attachment with the deceased (Field & Bonanno, 2001)
6) Death circumstances (Fiegleman et al, 2011)
7) Societal and cultural factors (De Pison Liebanas, 2002; Kauffman, 2010; Cacciato et al, 2011)
8) Silence and disenfranchised grief (Harris, 2009; Kauffman, 2010; Cacciato et al, 2011)
Prevalence of Shame in Bereavement

Gould (1999) found that:

• Bereaved people had significantly more internalized shame than non-bereaved control group.
• Bereaved participants scored high for shame, not guilt.
• Participants with highest shame scores also had highest scores for grief intensity (people with the greatest amount of shame struggle most with grief).
• Participants who denied grief scored moderate to high on the grief scales. (Denial of grief may be due to being ashamed of grief.)
• Highest shame scores were bereaved men.
• People who experienced unanticipated losses had experienced more shame.
• The loss of a child correlated with the highest shame scores.

“Overall, the strongest impact of loss is with males having high levels of internalized shame, who unexpectedly experience the death of a child.”
Shame Amongst Bereaved Parents

• Themes of self-blame, guilt, and shame in qualitative studies of bereaved parents. (DeFrain, et al, 1996; Hsu et al, 2003; Frost & Condon, 2006; Cacciatore, 2009)

• Shame- and guilt-proneness responsible for 45% of variance in grief in mothers and 63% variance in fathers (13 months after loss of child). Bereaved fathers more shame-prone than mothers. (Barr, 2004)

• Shame- and guilt-proneness showed significant correlations with maternal grief intensity. (Barr & Cacciatore, 2007)

• Self-esteem lower among women who have experienced the death of a baby to stillbirth or the death of a child than for women with no losses or miscarriage only. (Cacciatore, Wonch Hill & Schreffler, 2012)
The Impact of Shame

Health

• Increased cortisol stress responses
• Lowered immunity
• Poorer health

(Dickerson et al, 2004; Gilbert & Proctor, 2006)
The Impact of Shame

**Mood**

- **Lowered resilience and motivation after a setback**  
- **Anger**  
  (Tangney, 1992; Kauffman, 2010)
- **Low self-esteem**  
  (Tangney & Dearing, 2002)
- **Anxiety**  
  (Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Dickerson et al, 2004; Fergus, et al, 2010; Thomas et al, 2010)
- **Depression**  
- **More intense grief**  
  (Weingberg, 1994; Barr, 2004; Barr & Cacciareore, 2007)
The Impact of Shame

Relationships


• “Closed-heartedness” (anger arousal, suspiciousness, resentment, irritability, a tendency to blame others for negative events, & indirect expressions of hostility.) (Tangney, 1992; Tangney & Dearing, 2002)

The Impact of Shame

Mental Disorder

• Borderline Personality Disorder  (Crowe, 2004)
• Somatization  (Tangney & Dearing, 2002)
• Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder  (Tangney & Dearing, 2002)
• Paranoia  (Tangney & Dearing, 2002)
• Psychotic episodes  (Tangney & Dearing, 2002)
• Depression  (Janoff-Bulman, 1979; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Dickerson et al, 2004; Wilson, et al, 2006; Brown, 2006; Kauffman, 2010; Kim et al, 2011)
• Anxiety  (Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Dickerson et al, 2004; Fergus, et al, 2010; Thomas et al, 2010)
• Post Traumatic Stress Disorder  (Leskela et al, 2002; Wilson, et al, 2006; Budden, 2009.)
The Impact of Shame

Addictions/ distractions/ Self-harm

• Alcohol and drugs (Bradshaw, 1988; Mason, 1991; Wilson, et al, 2006; Kauffman, 2010)
• Sex addiction and sexual abuse (Sabatino, 1999; Wilson, 2000)
• Shopping and overspending (Yi, 2012)
• Suicide attempts (Lester, 1997; Hastings, Northman & Tangney, 2002; Dickerson et al, 2004; Wilson et al, 2006)
Bereaved Parents: The Impact of Shame

• Guilt- and shame-proneness related to more intense grief reaction. (Barr, 2004; Barr & Cacciatore, 2007)

• “Self-criticism was significantly related to women’s difficulty coping, intensity of grief reactions and despair.” (Franche, 2001)

• Self-blame related to somatic problems, anxiety, and depression. (Hazzard, Weston, Gutterres, 1992; Cacciatore, Froen & Killian, 2012)
### The Impact of Shame

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<th>Psychological abuse, bullying, violence &amp; sexual abuse. Borderline Personality Disorder</th>
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| Increased cortisol stress responses |
| Lowered immunity                    |
| Poorer health                       |
| Lowered resilience and motivation after a setback |
| Anger                               |
| Low self-esteem                     |
| More intense grief                  |
| Impaired interpersonal problem-solving |
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“Much of what clinicians perceive as unresolved prolonged grief reaction may, in fact, be an extended shame reaction, appearing as a prolonged inability to reconnect, motivated by a sense of decreased self or other worth.”

- Gould, 1999
Belonging is a natural, universal need. (Baumeister & Leary, 1995)

Oxytocin, is generated when we experience belonging. Oxytocin lowers cortisol, which improves immunity and digestion and overall health. (Gilbert & Proctor, 2006)

Social support is one of the most important factors in helping bereaved families deal with a child’s death. (Cacciatore, 2009)

Connection creates shame resilience. (Brown, 2006)

Bereaved families want to connect. (Cacciatore, 2009)

Self-isolation is by far the best predictor of psychosocial distress for bereaved parents. (Dyregrov, et al. 2003)
1. Awareness

“Shame is the master emotion of everyday life but is usually invisible in modern societies.”
(Thomas Scheff, 2011)

“Felt shame” versus “bypassed shame”
(Lewis, 1971)

The negative effects of shame are dissolved when we’re aware of our shame.
(Balcom, 1995; Brown, 2006)
1. Awareness

1) “Shoulds”, “ought to’s,” etc.

2) Creative process; noticing themes of self-criticism and lack of self-trust.

3) “Not good enough” themes in narratives.

4) Notice what you try to cover up from others.

5) Notice what you think other people “should” cover up.
1. Awareness

**Direct expressions of shame:**
humiliated, chagrined, embarrassed, degraded, self-conscious, low self-esteem, shy, feeling ridiculous, sheepishness, discomfort, disconcerted, abasement, abashed, disgraced, ignominy, dishonor, mortified.

**Less direct indications of shame:**
Guilt, ought to, and should. Nonverbal expressions of shame include downcast eyes, not making eye contact, changes in skin tone, and frozen facial expressions.

**Even more subtle expressions of shame:**
Verbal and nonverbal interactions characterized by one of the following: rage, contempt, striving for perfection, striving for power, transfer of blame through projection, internal withdrawal, humor, or denial.

(Balcom et al, 1995.)
2. Belonging

“As one cannot grieve in isolation, one cannot overcome shame in isolation.”

2. Belonging, and then...

1) Tell your stories (Bradshaw, 1998; Brown, 2006)
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3) Learn about grief and shame (Balcom, 1995; Gilbert & Proctor, 2006; Brown, 2006; Cacciatore, Froen & Killian, 2012)
Learn about the healthy nature of grief

Grief is not a disease, it is not an illness, it is not depression. It is, in fact, an expression of love. Grief can only be a disease if love is.

- Dr. Joanne Cacciatore
2. Belonging, and then...

1) **Tell your stories** (Bradshaw, 1998; Brown, 2006)
2) **Examine social rules about grief** (Brown, 2006; Harris, 2009)
3) **Learn about grief and shame** (Balcom, 1995; Gilbert & Proctor, 2006; Brown, 2006; Cacciatore, Froen & Killian, 2012)
4) **Remembering conversations** (Hedtke & Winslade, 2004)
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5) **Apology**  (Balcom, et al, 1995; Cacciatore, Froen & Killian, 2012; Weinberg, 1995)
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6) **Service**  (Cacciatore, Froen & Killian, 2012)
Questions?

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rememberingforgood.com
griefcoachingcertification.com

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drjoanne.blogspot.com
missfoundation.org
References

• Brown, B. (2007). I thought it was just me (but it isn’t). Telling the truth about perfectionism, inadequacy and power. Penguin Group, New York.
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