

#15

Identifying Shame

A helpful first step in managing shame is learning to identify when it influences different areas of our lives, such as how we think and feel about ourselves, how we interact with others, and how we cope during times of stress.



Each Saprea Support Group meeting begins with 'Group Leader A' reading the script while participants follow along. The script will be the same for every group meeting. **To find the script, visit saprea.org/support-groups.** Below are the additional meeting materials for this course.



To watch the intro video for this lesson, scan the QR code or go to <https://vimeo.com/showcase/10293739>.

Group Activity

IDENTIFYING SHAME

As discussed in the video, when we have a better understanding of what shame can look like, feel like, and sound like, we can more easily identify how we experience it in our own lives. This awareness can help us to not only recognize when a certain thought, emotion, action, or physical sensation is tied to shame, but also how to apply healing tools, like Mindfulness and self-compassion, to help counteract that shame. In other words, when we are able to “name it” we can more easily “tame it.” It may also be helpful to note that just as our thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations are interconnected (oftentimes in ways we aren’t even aware of), so too is shame’s effects in the different areas of our lives. For example, a thought rooted in shame, such as “I don’t deserve to heal” may contribute to (or coincide with) feelings of despair, a physical sense of heaviness, and/or the decision to isolate from others. This activity is designed to help you identify the different ways you may experience shame so that you can better name it and challenge it in the future.

ACTIVITY STEPS

- 01** Draw the following chart onto a piece of paper. Take a few minutes to fill out the chart by answering each question.

What is a thought I have that might be rooted in shame?

I thought I was unworthy.

Emotions	When I have this thought, what emotion(s) do I experience? <i>I felt threatened and anxious.</i>
Body	When I have this thought, what physical sensations do I experience? <i>I felt a tightness in my chest and a heaviness in the rest of my body.</i>
Behavior	When I have this thought, what do I do? <i>I lay in bed and scroll through social media for a long time, sometimes hours.</i>
Relationships	When I have this thought, how do I view and interact with others? <i>I feel I need to hide.</i>

- 02** After completing the chart, take a moment to reflect on your answers. Are there any other ways that the thought you wrote down may impact the different areas of your life?
- 03** Next, create in your mind a kind and loving inner companion. Perhaps you want to use the same inner companion you selected during the “Fostering Self-Kindness” activity from Group Meeting 4.
- 04** Explore what your inner companion would say to you while you were experiencing the thought from your chart. What words of comfort and understanding would they offer? How would their response impact your thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and actions?
- 05** Remind yourself that as you continue identifying the ways in which you experience shame, you can more easily counteract that shame by looking at it through a more compassionate lens. We’ll look at more ways that you can challenge thoughts like the one you wrote down today at our next group meeting.

Grounding Exercise

POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

Positive affirmations are sentences you say to yourself to remind you of your value, how far you've come, and how capable you are of continuing your healing journey. They can serve as an anchor to this moment, as well as a tool to nurturing self-compassion.

So let's begin.

Activity Steps

- 01** Select an affirmation from this list or choose one of your own.
 - I am enough.
 - I am learning to love myself.
 - I choose happiness.
 - I am moving forward on my healing journey one choice at a time.
 - I have strength and power to take whatever comes my way.
 - I can do challenging things.
 - I am grateful for this day and the many possibilities it affords.
 - I deserve compassion, kindness, and understanding.
- 02** Repeat the affirmation in your mind as you inhale and exhale, envisioning the words as your anchor to the present.
- 03** As your mind wanders, gently redirect it back to the affirmation, noting your attention with patience and curiosity.
- 04** Continue this exercise for 1–2 minutes. As you do so, you might choose a new affirmation to focus on or stick with the same one—whatever works best for you.
- 05** When you are finished, allow yourself a few paced breaths, imagining feelings of warmth and compassion flowing through you.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

If you are interested in learning more, we invite you to explore the following articles in the Online Healing Resources section of our website at saprea.org.

- **SHAME AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**
- **FEELINGS OF SHAME**
- **SELF-COMPASSION**

NEXT TOPIC:

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PRACTICING ASPIRATION

Practicing Aspiration can help us identify thoughts that are rooted in shame and gently reframe those thoughts through a lens of kindness and self-compassion.