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Hi! I'm Coach Margie
I'm glad you're reading the Brave Space newsletter. My newsletter is written to share information and support.

Unbinding Shame From Other Emotions

Happy Monday, all!

This week I'm writing about shame. Specifically, I want to explain how shame and how it connects with other emotions. Shame is a very heavy emotion and I want to be very careful to explain this well. I guess that's Margie code for I'm going to err on the side of oversimplifying.

This is personal for me and I'm learning through my coaching practice that I'm in no way unique when it comes to experiencing shame.

I gave up drinking alcohol almost two years ago after a not-so-storied drinking career that lasted five decades. I was elated to finally rid myself of the ball chained to me, but I was even more elated to have finally shed the heavy, painful beliefs and emotions I had adopted over those same five decades.

I didn't quit overnight, or even in 30 days. It took me the better part of a year to learn what I needed to learn and to unlearn things that weren't true. **I learned a lot about limiting beliefs, and hurtful emotions.** I also didn't quit on my own. I had the help of coaches, my This Naked Mind community, and some amazing content written by Annie Grace, founder of This Naked Mind.

I learned the root cause of why I drank to excess. I drank for emotional reasons. Alcohol helped me escape from feeling big emotions. **Big emotions like shame, guilt, worthlessness, low self-esteem, and a lack of self-love.** I carried a lot of shame from my past. Not just run-of-the-mill "Oh crap, what did I say and do last night?", blackout kind of shame. I'm talking about the deep-rooted shame that came from being told many hurtful and untrue things when I was young.

Let's take what I learned about grief and shame, for example. The action tendency of grief is to cry and grieve. We grieve for what happened and put it in the past. I

wanted so badly to put what happened to me in the past for good. **The action tendency of shame is to freeze and hide.** Someone in shame tends to circle in endless loops of rumination. Shame keeps everything in the present. No wonder I felt stuck.

I experienced shameful incidents, and I experienced traumatic incidents. I learned that **when shame is combined with other big emotions, it's as if the shameful and traumatic incidents are happening right now.** All the damn time.

According to scientific studies, children and adults are capable of experiencing two, three, or more feelings at the same time. This truth was super uncomfortable when I realized that **I wouldn't be free from alcohol unless I dealt with my feelings and limiting beliefs.**

A child, however, can experience multiple big emotions at the same time and they don't all have to make sense. They just are what they are.

Here's an example. Little Lala comes into the house crying and tells her mom that she hates Leon. Mom responds, "You don't hate Leon. Leon is your brother. You love Leon."

Of course, Lala loves Leon, but at that moment, she hates Leon, too. **Children are better than adults at processing emotions.** Lala doesn't worry that her temporary hatred for Leon will get in the way of her love for him.

Emotions are designed to move through us and then leave. The word *emotion* comes from the Latin word *emovere*, which means "move on," "move away," or "remove." **Adults have a hard time dealing with multiple complex emotions.** When shame is in the mix, it's extremely difficult to separate and process them. **To begin to process any emotion when shame is present, we need to separate it from shame.**

According to the book *Embracing Shame: How To Stop Resisting Shame and Turn It Into a Powerful Ally*: "One of the great insights of Silvan Tomkins, the father of modern shame theory, is that **shame is a *binding* emotion.** Shame works by binding with and interfering with other emotions. The fact that shame binds with emotions and feeling states is a major reason why shame is so powerful and so hard to track and heal."

Shame by design lowers the intensity of other emotions and hampers our ability to do the things we need to do to process the emotions (for example, grieving, reaching out to others, or setting boundaries). When my shame combined with my other emotions of anger, fear, grief, etc., the other emotions couldn't complete

themselves. So I got stuck in a cycle of feelings with no end. And I drank to dull the feelings.

I already shared my happy ending. With grace, compassion, expert help, and a lot of community, I was able to process my hurtful, big, painful emotions and ditch the booze. When I separated the shame and fully dealt with that, it was like the dominos started falling. The other emotions fairly easily processed like they're supposed to. And I found the joy and peace I had only dreamed of. And the cherry on top? I became a certified coach so I could pay forward what my coaches did for me.

Until next week, be brave and make space for yourself,

Margie

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