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P R E F A C E

"And they were not ashamed."

Genesis

Ten years ago I had one of those life-jolting discoveries that significantly changed everything. I named the core demon in my life. I named "shame". Naming shame means that I became aware of the massive destructive power that shame had exerted in my life. I discovered that I had been *bound* by shame all my life. It ruled me like an addiction. I acted it out; I covered it up in subtle and not so subtle ways; I transferred it to my family, my clients and the people I taught.

Shame was the unconscious demon I had never acknowledged. In becoming aware of the dynamics of shame, I came to see that shame is one of the major destructive forces in all human life. In naming shame I began to have power over it.

In itself, shame is not bad. Shame is a normal human emotion. In fact, it is necessary to have the feeling of shame if one is to be truly human. Shame is the emotion which gives us permission to be human. Shame tells us of our limits. Shame keeps us in our human boundaries, letting us know we can and will make mistakes, and that we need help. Our shame tells us we are not God. Healthy shame is the psychological foundation of humility. It is the source of spirituality.

What I discovered was that *shame as a healthy human emotion can be transformed into shame as a state of being. As a state of being shame takes over one's whole identity. To have shame as an identity is to believe that one's being is flawed, that one is defective as a human being. Once shame is transformed into an identity, it becomes toxic and dehumanizing.*

Toxic shame is unbearable and always necessitates a cover-up, a false self.

Since one feels his true self is defective and flawed, one needs a false self which is not defective and flawed. *Once one becomes a false self, one ceases to exist psychologically.* To be a false self is to cease being an authentic human being. The process of false self formation is what Alice Miller calls "soul murder". As a false self, one tries to be more than human or less than human. Toxic shame is the greatest form of learned domestic violence there is. It destroys human life. Toxic shame is the core of most forms of emotional illness. Gershen Kaufman writes:

"Shame is the affect which is the source of many complex and disturbing inner states: depression, alienation, self-doubt, isolating loneliness, paranoid and schizoid phenomena, compulsive disorders, splitting of the self, perfectionism, a deep sense of inferiority, inadequacy or failure, the so-called borderline conditions and disorders of narcissism."

Shame

Toxic shame so destroys the function of our authentic self that clear syndromes of shame develop out of the false self cover-ups. Each syndrome has its own characteristic pattern. Toxic shame becomes the core of neurosis, character disorders, political violence, wars and criminality. It comes the closest to defining human bondage of all the things I know.

\ The Bible describes shame as the core and consequence of Adam's fall. In Hebrew Adam is equivalent to mankind. Adam symbolizes all human beings. The Bible suggests that Adam was not satisfied with his own being. He wanted to be more than he was. He wanted to be more than human. He failed to accept his essential limitations. He lost his healthy shame. The Bible suggests that the origin of human bondage (original sin) is the desire to be other than who we are . . . to be more than human. In his toxic shame (pride), Adam wanted a false self. The false self led to his destruction.

After Adam alienated his true being, he went into hiding. "And the Lord God called unto Adam . . . where art thou?" And Adam said, "I heard thy voice in the garden and I hid myself (Genesis 3:9-10). Before the fall the man and the woman were both naked and "were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:25). Once they chose to be other than what they were, they became naked and ashamed.

Nakedness symbolized their true and authentic selves. They were who they were and they were okay with it. There was nothing to hide. They could be perfectly and rigorously honest.

This symbolic and metaphorical description of Adam and Eve is a description of the human condition. The unconditional love and acceptance of self seems to be the hardest task for all humankind. Refusing to accept our "real selves", we try to create more powerful false selves or give up and

become less than human. This results in a lifetime of cover-up and secrecy. This secrecy and hiding is the basic cause of suffering for all of us.

Total self-love and acceptance is the only foundation for happiness and the love of others. Without total self-love and acceptance, we are doomed to the enervative task of creating false selves. It takes tons of energy and hard work to live a false self. This may be the symbolic meaning of the Biblical statement that after the fall, the man and the woman would suffer in their natural activities: the woman in childbirth, the man in his work

How do we heal this shame that binds us? Wherein lies our hope? This is the matter of this book. In what follows I'd like to share with you my own journey in healing shame. This journey has been the most important issue in my life. Toxic shame is everywhere. Toxic shame is cunning, powerful and baffling. Its power resides in its darkness and secretiveness.

In Part I, I shall try to bring shame out of hiding by examining its many faces and by exposing its origins and major cover-ups. I shall show how shame creates hopelessness and spiritual bankruptcy.

Part II offers every way I know for reducing toxic shame, and transforming it back into healthy shame. My most sincere hope is that every reader who is bound by the ties of toxic shame will use this book to free himself from this menacing enemy.

CHAPTER

1

The Many Faces Of Shame

Because of its preverbal origins, shame is difficult to define. It is a healthy human power which can become a true sickness of the soul. There are two forms of shame: nourishing shame and toxic/life-destroying shame. As toxic shame, it is an excruciatingly internal experience of unexpected exposure. It is a deep cut felt primarily from the inside. It divides us from ourselves and from others. In toxic shame, we disown ourselves. And this disowning demands a cover-up. Toxic shame parades in many garbs and get-ups. It loves darkness and secretiveness. It is the dark secret aspect of shame which has evaded our study.

Because toxic shame stays in hiding and covers itself up, we have to track it down by learning to recognize its many faces and its many distracting behavioral cover-ups.

Shame As A Healthy Human Emotion

Recently I heard Broadway Joe Namath being interviewed. He spoke candidly of his failure to be used by the major network that had hired him as a sportscaster. His voice carried his disappointment. What struck me was his openness and honesty. He was expressing his healthy shame. He seemed totally aware that despite his many achievements, he had some real limitations.

Shame As Permission To Be Human*

What our healthy feeling of shame does is let us know that we are limited. It tells us that to be human is to be limited. Actually we humans are essentially limited. We are by definition limited. *Not one of us has or can ever have unlimited power.* The unlimited power that many modern gurus offer us is false hope. Their programs calling us to unlimited power have made them rich, not us. They touch our false selves and tap our toxic shame. We humans are finite. Limitation is our essential nature. Grave problems result from refusing to accept our limits.

Healthy shame is an emotion which signals us about our limits. Like all emotions, healthy shame is an energy-in-motion. Like all emotions it moves us to get our basic needs met.

One of our basic needs is structure. We insure our structure by developing a boundary system within which we safely operate. Structure gives our lives form. Boundaries and form offer us safety and allow a more efficient use of energy.

There is an old joke about the man who "got on his horse and rode off in all directions". Without boundaries we have no limits and easily get confused. We go this way and that, wasting a lot of energy. We lose our way. We become addicted because we don't know when to stop; we don't know how to say no.

Healthy shame keeps us grounded. It is a yellow light warning us that we are essentially limited. *Healthy shame is the basic metaphysical boundary for human beings.* It is the emotional energy which signals us that we are not God — that we have made and will make mistakes, that we need help. Healthy shame gives us permission to be human.

Healthy shame is pan of every human's personal power. It allows us to know our limits, and thus to use our energy more effectively. We have better direction when we know our limits. We do not waste ourselves on goals we cannot reach or on things we cannot change. Healthy shame allows our energy to be integrated rather than diffused.

Shame As A Developmental Stage

According to Erik Erikson, a sense of shame is part of the second stage of psychosocial development. In the first stage a child needs to establish a sense of basic trust. This basic trust must be greater than his sense of mistrust. We can understand healthy shame best by understanding this trust stage of psychosocial development.

We needed to know from the beginning that we could trust the world. The world came to us first in the form of our primary caretakers. We needed

to know that we could count on someone outside of us to be there for us in a humanly predictable manner. If we had a caretaker who was mostly predictable, and who touched us and minored all our behaviors, we developed a sense of basic trust. When security and trust are present, we begin to develop an interpersonal bond, which forms a bridge of mutuality. Such a bridge is crucial for the development of self worth. The only way a child has of developing a sense of self is through a relationship with another. We are "we" before we are "I".

In this earliest stage of life, we can only know ourselves in the minoring eyes of our primary caretakers. Each of us needed a relational bridge with our primary caretaker in order to grow.

The Interpersonal Bridge

The relationship between child and caretaker gradually evolves out of reciprocal interest along with shared experiences of trust. Actually trust is fostered by the fact that we come to expect and rely on the mutuality of response. As trust grows, an emotional bond is formed. The emotional bond allows the child to risk venturing out to explore the world. This bond becomes an interpersonal bridge between child and caretaker. The bridge is the foundation for mutual growth and understanding. The interpersonal bridge is strengthened by certain experiences we have come to accept and depend on. The other person, our primary caretaker, becomes significant in the sense that that person's love, respect and care for us really matters. We allow ourselves to be vulnerable in that we allow ourselves to need the other person.

Once basic trust has been established, the child is in a position to develop shame. The shame may be healthy or toxic.

The Development Of Healthy Shame

At about 15 months a child begins to develop musculature. He needs to establish a balance between "holding on and letting go". The earliest muscle development focuses on gaining balance when standing up and walking. This triggers the desire to roam and explore and in order to roam and explore, the child needs to separate from his primary caregivers.

In fact, Erikson says that the psychosocial task for this stage of development is to strike a balance between autonomy and shame and doubt. This stage (15 months to three years) has been called the terrible two's because children begin to explore by touching, tasting and testing. Two-year-olds are stubborn. They want to do it their way (always within eyesight of their caregiver). When two-year-olds are thwarted (like every three minutes), they have intense anger and temper tantrums. At this stage

the child needs to take possession of things in order to test them by purposeful repetition. The world is brand new — sights, sounds and smells all have to be assimilated through repeated experience.

The Child's Needs

What a child needs most is a firm but understanding caretaker, who needs to be getting her own needs met through her spouse. Such a caretaker needs to have resolved the issues in her own source relationships, and needs to have a sense of self-responsibility. When this is the case, such a caretaker can be available to the child and provide what the child needs.

The child needs good modeling of healthy shame and other emotions. The child needs the caretaker's time and attention. Above all the child needs good boundaries. A child needs to have a caretaker available to set limits. Outer control must be firmly reassuring. The child needs to know that the interpersonal bridge will not be destroyed by his new urge for doing things his own way — his new urge toward autonomy. Erikson writes:

"Firmness must protect him against the potential anarchy of his yet untrained sense of discrimination, his inability to hold on and to let go with discretion."

Childhood And Society

If a child can be protected by firm but compassionate limits; if he can explore, test and have tantrums without the caregiver's withdrawal of love, i.e., withdrawal of the interpersonal bridge, then the child can develop a healthy sense of shame. It may come as a moment of embarrassment over one's normal human failures or as timidity and shyness in the presence of strangers. This sense of shame is crucial and necessary as a balance and limit for one's new found autonomy. Healthy shame signals us that we are not omnipotent.

I can remember once beginning a lecture on the 'farther reaches of human nature'. As I started to approach the podium, someone gently pointed out that my fly was unzipped. My blush and momentary embarrassment was the voice of my good shame telling me not to get carried away.

Pascal once said, "He who would be an angel must become a beast."** Thomas Aquinas said that man is a spiritual being who in order to be truly spiritual needs a body. This is similar to George Santayana's statement, "It is necessary to become a beast if one is ever to be a spirit."** We need the boundary of our finitude — ever reminding us that we are human not divine.

Shame As Embarrassment And Blushing

In an embarrassing situation one is caught off guard — one is exposed when one is not ready to be exposed. One feels unable to cope with some situation in the presence of others. It may be an unexpected physical clumsiness, an interpersonal sensitivity or a breach of etiquette.

In such situations we experience the blush that accompanies the feeling of healthy shame. Blushing manifests the exposure, the unexpectedness, the involuntary nature of shame.

Helen Lynd writes,

"One's feeling is involuntarily exposed; one is uncovered."

On Shame And The Search For Identity

Blushing is the manifestation of our human limits. The ability to blush is the metaphor of our essentially limited humanity. With blushing comes the impulse to "cover one's face", "bury one's face", "save face", or "sink into the ground". With blushing we know we've made a mistake. Why would we have such a capacity, if mistakes were not part of our essential nature. Blushing as a manifestation of the healthy feeling of shame keeps us grounded. It reminds us of our core human boundary. It is a signal for us not to get carried away with our own excellence.

Shame As Shyness

Shyness is a natural boundary which guards us from being exposed or wounded by a stranger. Many of us feel shy when we are faced with the prospect of walking up to a stranger. We feel self-conscious, we stammer in speech or speak in an awkward manner. This may trigger embarrassment. Contained in the experience of shyness is the healthy feeling of shame, of a reluctance to expose oneself.

The stranger, by definition, is one who is un-family-iar. The stranger is not of our family. The stranger poses the threat of the unknown. Our shyness is our healthy shame in the presence of a stranger. Like all emotions shyness signals us to be cautious, to take heed lest we be wounded or exposed. Shyness is a boundary which guards our inner core in the presence of the unfamiliar stranger.

Shyness *can* become a serious problem, when it is rooted in toxic shame.

Shame As The Basic Need For Community

There is an ancient proverb which states, "One man is no man." This saying underscores our basic human need for community, which underscores our need for relationships, our need for social life. No one of

us could have made it without someone being there for us. We human beings need help. No one of us is so strong that he does not need love, intimacy and dialogue in community.

At birth we are symbiotically bonded to our mother. We are we before we are I. A great deal depends on that source relationship. After a year and a half of establishing the bond of mutual trust, we start to move out to test our autonomy. We need a sense of shame to remind us of our limits. We need our shame and doubt to balance our newly found autonomy.

We will need our parents for another decade before we are ready to leave home. We cannot get our needs met without depending on our primary caregivers. Our healthy feeling of shame is there to remind us that we need help. We cannot make it alone. No human beings can. Even after we have achieved some sense of mastery, even when we are undependent, we will still have needs. We will need to love and grow. We will need to care for another and we will need to be needed. Our shame functions as a healthy signal that we need help, and that we need to love and be in caring relationships with others.

Without the healthy signal of shame, we would not be in touch with our core dependency needs.

Shame As The Source Of Creativity And Learning

I once did a workshop with Richard Bandler, one of the founders of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). It was a very powerful experience. One aspect of that experience I've never forgotten. Richard asked us to think of a time in our lives when we knew we were right. After a few seconds, I remembered an incident with my wife. He asked us to go over the experience in our memory. Then he asked us to make a movie of the experience: to divide it into acts and to run it as a film. Then he asked us to run the film backwards. Then we were to run the acts out of sequence: the middle act first, the last act in the middle, etc. Then we were to run through the experience again as we had done it the first time. We were to pay exquisite attention to the details of the experience and to the feeling of tightness.

By the time I reran the experience, it no longer had the voltage it had the first time. In fact, I hardly felt anything of the initial intensity. Richard was introducing us to a form of internal remapping called submodality work. That was not what was important for me. What was important for me was a statement Richard made about creativity. For me the greatest human power is the creative power.

Richard Bandler suggested that one of the major blocks to creativity was the feeling of knowing you are right. When we think we are absolutely right, we stop seeking new information. To be right is to be certain, and to be eer-

tain stops us from being curious. Curiosity and wonder are at the heart of all learning. Plato said that all philosophy begins in wonder. So the feeling of absolute certainty and righteousness causes us to stop seeking and to stop learning.

Our healthy shame, which is a feeling of our core boundary and limitedness, never allows us to believe we know it all. Our healthy shame is nourishing in that it moves us to seek new information and to learn new things.

Shame As The Source Of Spirituality

Abraham Maslow, the pioneering Third Force Psychologist, once wrote,

"The spiritual life is . . . part of the human essence. It is a defining characteristic of human nature . . . without which human nature is not full human nature."

The Farther Reaches Of Human Nature

What is spirituality? I believe it has to do with our life-style. I believe that life is ever-unfolding and growing. So spirituality is about expansion and growth. It is about love, truth, goodness, beauty, giving and caring. Spirituality is about wholeness and completion. Spirituality is our ultimate human need. It pushes us to transcend ourselves, and to become grounded in the ultimate source of reality. Most call that source God.

Our healthy shame is essential as the ground of our spirituality. By signaling us of our essential limitations, our healthy shame lets us know that we are not God. Our healthy shame points us in the direction of some larger meaning. It lets us know that there is something or someone greater than ourselves. Our healthy shame is the psychological ground of our humility.

Shame As Toxic

Scott Peck describes both neuroses and character disorders as disorders of responsibility. Peck writes,

"The neurotic assumes too much responsibility; the person with a character disorder not enough. When neurotics are in conflict with the world, they automatically assume that they are at fault. When those with character disorders are in conflict with the world, they automatically assume the world is at fault."

The Road Less Traveled

All of us have a smattering of neurotic and character disordered personality traits. The major problem in all of our lives is to decide and clarify our responsibilities. To truly be committed to a life of honesty, love and discipline, we must be willing to commit ourselves to reality. This

commitment, according to Peck, "requires the willingness and the capacity to suffer continual self-examination." Such an ability requires a good relationship with oneself. This is precisely what no shame-based person has. In fact a toxically shamed person has an adversarial relationship with himself. Toxic shame — the shame that binds us — is the basis for both neurotic and character disordered syndromes of behavior.

Neurotic Syndromes Of Shame

What is the shame that binds you? How did it get set up in your life? What happens to healthy shame in the process?

Toxic shame, the shame that binds you, is experienced as the all-pervasive sense that I am flawed and defective as a human being. Toxic shame is no longer an emotion that signals our limits, it is a state of being, a core identity. Toxic shame gives you a sense of worthlessness, a sense of failing and falling short as a human being. Toxic shame is a rupture of the self with the self.

It is like internal bleeding. Exposure to oneself lies at the heart of toxic shame. A shame-based person will guard against exposing his inner self to others, but more significantly, he will guard against exposing himself to himself.

Toxic shame is so excruciating because it is the painful exposure of the believed failure of self to the self. In toxic shame the self becomes an object of its own contempt, an object that can't be trusted. As an object that can't be trusted, one experiences oneself as untrustworthy. Toxic shame is experienced as an inner torment, a sickness of the soul. If I'm an object that can't be trusted, then I'm not in me. Toxic shame is paradoxical and self-generating.

There is shame about shame. People will readily admit guilt, hurt or fear before they will admit shame. Toxic shame is the feeling of being isolated and alone in a complete sense. A shame-based person is haunted by a sense of absence and emptiness.

Toxic shame has been studied very little. It is easily confused with guilt. Freud studied anxiety and guilt but almost completely neglected shame.

In a recent New York Times article entitled "Shame Steps Out of Hiding and into Sharper Focus", Daniel Goleman writes,

"Psychologists, admittedly chagrined and a little embarrassed, are belatedly focusing on shame, a prevalent and powerful emotion, which somehow escaped rigorous scientific examination until now."

Shame As An Identity — Internalization Of Shame

Any human emotion can become internalized. When internalized, an emotion stops functioning in the manner of an emotion and becomes a

characterological style. You probably know someone who could be labeled "an angry person" or someone you'd call a "sad sack". In both cases the emotion has become the core of the person's character, her identity. The person doesn't have anger or melancholy, she *is* angry and melancholy.

In the case of shame, internalization involves at least three processes:

1. Identification with unreliable and shame-based models
2. The trauma of abandonment, and the binding of feelings, needs and drives with shame
3. The interconnection of memory imprints which forms collages of shame

Internalization is a gradual process and happens over a period of time. Every human being has to contend with certain aspects of this process. Internalization takes place when all three processes are consistently reinforced.

IDENTIFICATION WITH SHAME BASED MODELS

Identification is one of our normal human processes. We always have the need to identify. Identification gives one a sense of security. By belonging to something larger than ourselves, we feel the security and protection of the larger reality.

The need to identify with someone, to feel a part of something, to belong somewhere, is one of our most basic needs. With the exception of self-preservation, no other striving is as compelling as this need, which begins with our caregivers or significant others and extends to family, peer group, culture, nation and world. It is seen in lesser forms in our allegiance to a political party or our rooting for a sports team. *Our* team provides a way to experience the powerful emotions of winning or losing. In my own case, I've been a Notre Dame addict from childhood. Even though I've never been to South Bend, didn't attend that university, I'm still their avid and emotional fan. When they win, I win. When they lose, I go into a "funk".

This need to belong explains the loyal and often fanatic adherence people display to a group . . . ' their group.

When children have shame-based parents, they identify with them. This is the first step in the child's internalizing shame.

ABANDONMENT: THE LEGACY OF BROKEN MUTUALITY

* Shame is internalized when one is abandoned. Abandonment is the precise term to describe how one loses one's authentic self and ceases to exist psychologically. Children cannot know who they are without reflective mirrors. Mirroring is done by one's primary caretakers and is crucial in the first years of life. Abandonment includes the loss of mirroring. Parents who

are shut down emotionally (all shame-based parents) cannot mirror and affirm their children's emotions.

Since the earliest period of our life was preverbal, everything depended on emotional interaction. Without someone to reflect our emotions, we had no way of knowing who we were. Mirroring remains important all our lives. Think of the frustrating experience which most of us have had, of talking to someone who is not looking at us. While you are speaking, they are fidgeting around or reading something. Our identity demands a significant other whose eyes see us pretty much as we see ourselves.

In fact, Erik Erikson defines identity as interpersonal. He writes,

- "The sense of ego identity is the accrued confidence that the inner sameness and continuity. . . are matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others."

Childhood And Society ' "

Besides lack of mirroring, abandonment includes the following:

Neglect of developmental dependency needs

Abuse of any kind

Enmeshment into the covert or overt needs of the parents or the family system needs

Feeling Need And Drive Shame Binds

The shame binding of feelings, needs and natural instinctual drives, is a key factor in changing healthy shame into toxic shame. *To be shame-bound means that whenever you feel any feeling any need or any drive, you immediately feel ashamed.* The dynamic core of your human life is grounded in your feelings, your needs and your drives. When these are bound by shame, you are shamed to the core.

THE INTERCONNECTION OF MEMORY IMPRINTS WHICH FORM COLLAGES OF SHAME

As shaming experiences accrue and are defended against, the images created by those experiences are recorded in a person's memory bank. Because the victim has no time or support to grieve the pain of the broken mutuality, his emotions are repressed and the grief is unresolved. The verbal (auditory) imprints remain in the memory as do the visual images of the shaming scenes. As each new shaming experience takes place, a new verbal imprint and visual image attach to the already existing ones forming collages of shaming memories.

Children also record their parent's actions at their worst. When Mom and Dad, stepparent or whoever the caretaker, are most out of control, they are the most threatening to the child's survival. The child's survival alarm

registers these behaviors the most deeply. Any subsequent shame experience which even vaguely resembles that past trauma can easily trigger the words and scenes of said trauma. What are then recorded are the new experience and the old. Over time an accumulation of shame scenes are attached together. Each new scene potentiates the old, sort of like a snowball rolling down a hill, getting larger and larger as it picks up snow.

As the years go on, very little is needed to trigger these collages of shame memories. A word, a similar facial expression or scene, can set it off. Sometimes an external stimulus is not even necessary. Just going back to an old memory can trigger an enormously painful experience. Shame as an emotion has now become frozen and embedded into the core of the person's identity. Shame is deeply internalized.

Shame As Self-Alienation And Isolation

When one suffers from alienation, it means that one experiences parts of one's self as alien to one's self.

For example, if you were never allowed to express anger in your family, your anger becomes an alienated part of yourself. You experience toxic shame when you feel angry. This part of you must be disowned or severed. There is no way to get rid of your emotional power of anger. Anger is the self preserving and self-protecting energy. Without this energy you become a doormat and a people-pleaser. As your feelings, needs and drives are bound by toxic shame, more and more of you is alienated.

Finally, when shame has been completely internalized, nothing about you is okay. You feel flawed and inferior; you have the sense of being a failure. There is no way you can share your inner self because you are an object of contempt to yourself. When you are contemptible to yourself, you are no longer in you. To feel shame is to feel seen in an exposed and diminished way. When you're an object to yourself, you turn your eyes inward, watching and scrutinizing every minute detail of behavior. This internal critical observation is excruciating. It generates a tormenting self-consciousness which Kaufman describes as, "creating a binding and paralyzing effect upon the self." This paralyzing internal monitoring causes withdrawal, passivity and inaction.

The severed parts of self are projected in relationships. They are often the basis of hatred and prejudice. The severed parts of the self may be experienced as a split personality or even multiple personalities. This happens often with victims who have been through physical and sexual violation.

To be severed and alienated within oneself also creates a sense of unreality. One may have an all-pervasive sense of never quite belonging, of being on the outside looking in. The condition of *inner alienation and*

isolation is also pervaded by a low grade chronic depression. This has to do with the sadness of losing one's authentic self. Perhaps the deepest and most devastating aspect of neurotic shame is the rejection of the self by the self.

Shame As False Self

Because the exposure of self to self lies at the heart of neurotic shame, escape from the self is necessary. The escape from self is accomplished by creating a false self. The false self is always more or less than human. The false self may be a perfectionist or a slob, a family Hero or a family Scapegoat. As the false self is formed, the authentic self goes into hiding. Years later the layers of defense and pretense are so intense that one loses all awareness of who one really is.

It is crucial to see that the false self may be as polar opposite as a superachieving perfectionist or an addict in an alley. Both are driven to cover up their deep sense of self-rupture, the hole in their soul. They may cover up in ways that look polar opposite, but each is still driven by neurotic shame. In fact, *the most paradoxical aspect of neurotic shame is that it is the core motivator of the superachieved and the underachieved, the Star and the Scapegoat, the "Righteous" and the wretched, the powerful and the pathetic.*

Shame As Co-dependency

Much has been written about co-dependency. All agree that it is about the loss of selfhood. Co-dependency is a condition wherein one has no inner life. Happiness is on the outside. Good feelings and self-validation lie on the outside. They can never be generated from within. Pia Mellody's definition of co-dependency is "a state of disease whereby the authentic self is unknown or kept hidden, so that a sense of self... of mattering ... of esteem and connectedness to others is distorted, creating pain and distorted relationships." There is no significant difference in that definition and the way I have described internalized shame. It is my belief that internalized shame *is the essence of co-dependency.*

Shame As Borderline Personality

Kaufman sees many of the categories of emotional illness which are defined in DSM III as rooted in neurotic shame. It seems obvious that some of these types of disorders are related to syndromes of shame. These include dependent personality, clinical depression, schizoid phenomena and borderline personality. My own belief is that toxic shame is a unifying concept for what is often a maze of psychological definitions and distinctions. While I realize that there is clinical and psychotherapeutic value

in the kinds of detailed etiological distinctions offered by accurate and precise conceptualizing, I also think some of it is counterproductive.

My own study of James Masterson's work on borderline personalities, as well as my experience with watching his working films, convinces me that there is minimal difference in the treatment of some toxically shame-based people and his treatment of the Borderline Personality. I'm convinced that Masterson's Borderline Personality is a syndrome of neurotic shame. It is described as follows.

It is a syndrome of these roughly related complaints:

1. Self-image disturbance
2. Difficulty identifying and expressing one's own individuated thoughts, wishes and feelings and autonomously regulating self-esteem
3. Difficulty with self-assertion

Borderline Adolescent to Functioning Adult: The Test of Time

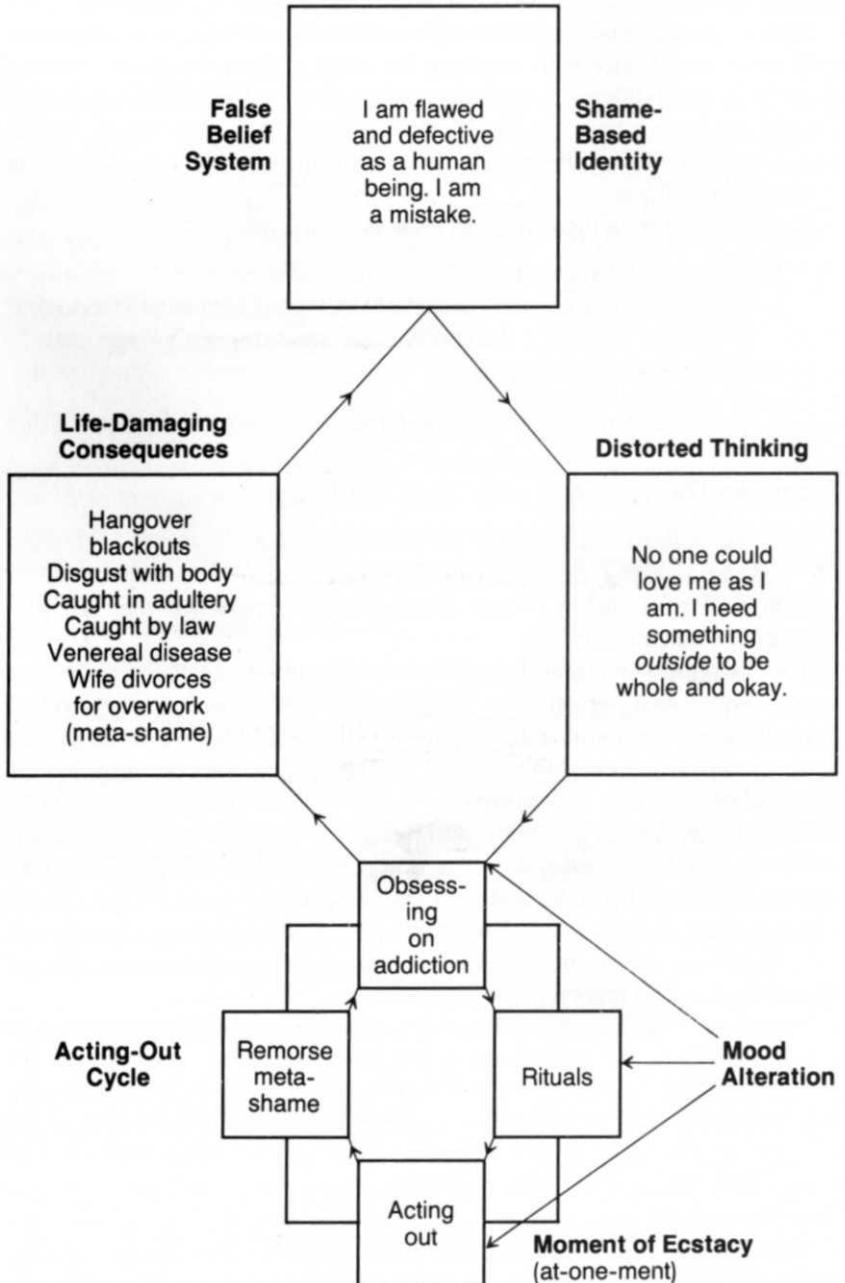
Shame As The Core And Fuel Of All Addiction

Neurotic shame is the root and fuel of all compulsive/addictive behaviors. My general working definition of compulsive/addictive behavior is "a pathological relationship to any mood-altering experience that has life-damaging consequences".

The drivenness in any addiction is about the ruptured self, the belief that one is flawed as a person. The content of the addiction, whether it be an ingestive addiction or an activity addiction (like work, buying or gambling) is an attempt at an intimate relationship. The workaholic with his work, or the alcoholic with his booze, are having a love affair. Each one mood alters to avoid the feeling of loneliness and hurt in the underbelly of shame. Each addictive acting out creates life-damaging consequences which create more shame. The new shame fuels the cycle of addiction. Figure 1.1 gives you a visual picture of how internalized shame fuels the addictive process, and how addictions create more shame, which sets one up to be more shame-based. Addicts call this cycle the squirrel cage.

I used to drink to solve the problems caused by drinking. The more I drank to relieve my shame-based loneliness and hurt, the more I felt ashamed. Shame begets shame. The cycle begins with the false belief system that all addicts have, that no one could want them or love them as they are. In fact, addicts can't love themselves. They are an object of scorn to themselves. This deep internalized shame gives rise to distorted thinking. The distorted thinking can be reduced to the belief that I'll be okay if I drink, eat, have sex, get more money, work harder, etc. The shame turns one into what Kellogg has termed a "human doing", rather than a human being.

Figure 1.1. The Compulsive/Addictive Cycle Fueled by and Regenerating Shame



Worth is measured on the outside, never on the inside. The mental obsession about the specific addictive relationship is the first mood alteration, since thinking takes us out of our emotions. After obsessing for a while, the second mood alteration occurs. This is the "acting out" or ritual stage of the addiction. The ritual may involve drinking with the boys, secretly eating in one's favorite hiding place or cruising for sex. The ritual ends in drunkenness, satiation, orgasm, spending all the money or whatever.

What follows is the feeling of shame over one's behavior, and the life-damaging consequences — the hangover, the infidelity, the demeaning sex, the empty pocketbook. The meta-shame is a displacement of affect, a transforming of the shame about self into the shame about "acting out" and experiencing life-damaging consequences. This meta-shame intensifies the shame-based identity.

"I'm no good; there's something wrong with me," plays like a broken record. The more it plays, the more one solidifies one's false belief system. The toxic shame fuels the addiction and regenerates itself.

Shame And Guilt

Toxic shame needs to be sharply distinguished from guilt (guilt can be healthy or toxic). Healthy guilt is the emotional core of our conscience. It is emotion which results from behaving in a manner contrary to our beliefs and values. Guilt presupposes internalized rules and develops later than shame. According to Erikson, the third stage of psychosocial development is the polar balance between initiative and guilt. This stage begins after age three. Guilt is developmentally more mature than shame. Guilt does not reflect directly upon one's identity or diminish one's sense of personal worth. It flows from an integrated set of values. Fossum and Mason write,

"A person with guilt might say, 'I feel awful seeing that I did something which violated my values.' Or the guilty person might say, 'I feel sorry about the consequences of my behaviors.' In so doing *the person's values are reaffirmed The possibility of repair exists and learning and growth are promoted.* While guilt is a painful feeling of regret and responsibility for one's actions, shame is a painful feeling about oneself as a person. *The possibility for repair seems foreclosed to the shameful person* because shame is a matter of identity . . . not of behavioral infraction. There is nothing to be learned from it and no growth is opened by the experience because it only confirms one's negative feelings about oneself." (Italics mine)

Facing Shame

Figure 1.2 offers a composite contrast between toxic shame, healthy shame, toxic guilt and healthy guilt. The main point of focus is that toxic

complicated than what I present. But it clearly suggests a different treatment design for shame and guilt.

My chart offers some general guidelines for the treatment of toxic shame. The restoration of the "interpersonal bridge" is the sine quo non in treating shame-based people. This may be the key.

Martin Buber said long ago that what heals in any model of therapy is the "I and Thou" relationship. Once the interpersonal bridge is established, the client will accept the therapist's nonjudging acceptance. I recommend that toxically shamed people be directed into groups as soon as possible. The group is crucial, no matter what the specific syndrome of shame happens to be. The group seems to provide a sense of mattering and of being important in a way that a one-to-one alliance cannot provide.

Cermak has pointed out the advantages of group psychotherapy. His belief is that it provides "a setting in which the issues of co-dependency emerge spontaneously." People will behave in the group much as they do in real life. They will be distrustful, controlling, people-pleasing, critical, etc. As they come to understand that those behaviors reflect unconscious patterns of defense against toxic shame, the group can become a laboratory for alternative behaviors. (Diagnosing and Treating Co-dependence.)

The 12-Step programs are the therapist's greatest ally. I hope my chapter on the power of the 12 Steps to reduce toxic shame sheds some light on the subject. I believe it would be useful to develop 12-Step programs for all the syndromes of toxic shame.

There are already jokes circulating about such an idea. For example, "They tried to start a paranoids anonymous meeting but no one would tell where it was being held!" In all seriousness, 12-Step groups would be difficult for character disordered "shamies". But aren't all approaches difficult in treating the character disorders? I guarantee that there are plenty of alcoholics who are character disordered and they are making it in AA.

I believe that people with shame based identities must work on changing both the collages of visual shame memories and the auditory imprints that store the internal voices which triggered shame spirals. I'm excited about the powerful methods used in NLP for achieving these ends.

Finally, I would offer a word to those clinicians who wince at the word "spiritual". The 12-Step programs have had incomparable success in healing addictions. The 12th Step makes it crystal-clear that one has not healed his addiction until he has had a "spiritual awakening". The millions of recovering addicts using that step are raw data enough to compel any scientist worth his salt to investigate this spirituality. Toxic shame is spiritual bankruptcy in the sense I've defined. Healing this shame requires spiritual awakening in the sense I've defined.

Figure 1.2. Shame - Guilt Contrast

	Toxic Guilt	Healthy Guilt	Toxic Shame	Healthy Shame
Origins and Description	Abortive development due to superego distortion; results from perfectionism, family enmeshment	Develops later than shame (age 3-6); Erikson's 3rd psychosocial stage; initiative versus guilt; conscience former	Abortive development a. shame-based models b. abandonment trauma c. shame images interconnected	Develops early, 15 months-3 years; Erikson's 2nd psychosocial stage
Responsibility* and Power	Grandiose responsibility; way to be powerful in a powerless system	Adequate responsibility; accountability; exercise of power choice	No responsibility; lack of power; failure of choice; incapacity	Limited power and responsibility; power comes by knowing limits; I need help
Felt Sense	Somber-serious; no place for mistakes; I can't make a mistake – it would be terrible	I made a mistake; transgressed my values; I feel bad – sense of wickedness	I'm a mistake; It's hopeless; I'm no good; I'm worthless	I can and will make mistakes; it's normal and mistakes can be remedied
Fault *	Fault of role rigidity; fault of thought distortion (belief you are responsible for <i>other's</i> life)	Fault of action; about doing; remedial	Fault of Being; about being defective and flawed as person – irremedial	Limite of being; fault of natural finitude
Morality Goodness	I can be good if I'm perfect if I follow all rules (legalistic) and do my duty (my role)	What I did was not good; I'm adequate to repair the damage	I'm bad; I'm no good; I'm inadequate, pre-moral	I'm good but limited - permission to be human
Boundary	No right to a boundary, except through my rigid role or performance	Transgressed moral boundaries (values)	No boundary; nothing about me is okay	Core boundary
Sports Analogy *	Violation of a simple rule – like being off-side; with excessive penalty, like expulsion from game	Violation of a restraining boundary like running out of bounds on a football field	Violation of the game itself; failure to attain goal – like never reaching the end zone	Violation of the rules; simple infraction; too much time – 5 yds

* The ideas about responsibility and fault aspects of healthy guilt and toxic shame, as well as the idea about sports analogy are adapted from *SHAME*, Hazelden, 1981.

shame is about being flawed as a human being. Repair seems foreclosed since no change is really possible. In its ultimate essence, toxic shame has the sense of hopelessness.

Character Disorder Syndromes Of Shame

NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY DISORDER

According to James Masterson, the main clinical characteristics of the narcissistic personality disorder are:

"Grandiosity, extreme self-involvement and lack of interest and empathy for others, in spite of the pursuit of others to obtain admiration and approval."

The Narcissistic And Borderline Disorders

The Narcissist is endlessly motivated to seek perfection in everything he does. Such a personality is driven to the acquisition of wealth, power and beauty, and to find others who will mirror and admire his grandiosity. Underneath this external facade there is an emptiness filled with envy and rage. The core of this emptiness is internalized shame.

PARANOID PERSONALITY

The paranoid defense is a posture developed to cope with excessive shame. The paranoid person becomes hypervigilant expecting and waiting for the betrayal and humiliation he knows is coming. The paranoid person interprets innocent events as personally threatening and lives constantly on guard.

Harry Stack Sullivan described the self of the paranoid as "feeling hopelessly defective". The sources of the paranoid's own sense of deficiency are blamed elsewhere. It's as if the inner eyes of shaming, contempt and disdain are projected outward. Wrongdoings, mistakes and other instances of personal failure cannot be owned by the paranoid-type personality. They are disowned and transferred from the inner self to others.

OFFENDER BEHAVIOR

Criminality In General

Alice Miller has shown convincingly that much criminal behavior is "acting out" behavior. "Acting out" is also called reenactment. What this means is that a criminal offender was once victimized in much the same way as he criminalizes. Children from violently abusing families, children from

families where high voltage abandonment takes place, suffer terrible victimization. They generally either take on a victim role and reenact it over and over again, or they identify with their offender and reenact the offense on helpless victims (as they once were). This reenactment is called "repetition compulsion" — the urge to repeat.

In Alice Miller's book, *For Your Own Good*, she outlines in detail the reenactments of a teenage drug addict and a child murderer. While no one can or has proven that every criminal is acting out his own abandoning shame, I believe there is enough data to support the hypothesis that this is most often the case. Surely no one has offered any other solution to the everlasting problem of crime and criminality. Without any doubt, criminals feel like social outcasts and bear enormous toxic shame.

Physical

Abuse

^

The physical offender was once a victim who was powerless and who was humiliated. Parents who physically humiliate and abuse their own children were typically abused when they were young. They have never resolved the internalized shame in their own lives. Their own childhood traumas are embedded in a series of inter-related memories. These original scenes become reactivated by their own children and compel reenactment like a Pavlovian trigger. The NIP people refer to these scenes as "anchors" (see Chapter 6 of Part II). Kaufman suggests,

"Parents who are about to abuse their own children are simultaneously reliving scenes in which they were also beaten, but they relive the scene from the perspective of their own parent as well. They now play their parents' role."

Why would parents, who were once abused and beaten children, want to play their parents' role? This answer lies in the dynamic of identification. Offender identification was clearly defined by Bettelheim with the phrase "identification with the aggressor". When children are physically hurt and in psychological pain, they want out of it as quickly as possible. So they cease identifying with themselves, and identify with their shaming oppressor in an attempt to possess that person's power and strength. In forming the identification with the parent, one becomes at once the weak bad child *and* the strong transgressor parent. The internal image of the abusive parent triggers the old scene and mediates the process. Physical abuse can trigger compulsive reenactment of the abuse either toward oneself, one's spouse or one's children. Internalized shame maintains the process. It compels the reenactment.

The victims of physical violence may also remain victims. Martin Seligman has done extensive studies on what is called "learned helplessness". In

essence, arbitrary, random and unpredictable beatings create a state of passivity in which the victim no longer feels that there is anything that she can do. A negative belief system is adhered to. The person no longer believes she has a choice.

A simpler explanation for the bonding to violence is the fact that as one is beaten more and more, one is shamed more and more. The more internalized shame, the greater is the belief in oneself as defective and flawed. The more one believes one is defective and flawed, the more one's choices diminish. Internalized shame destroys one's boundaries. Without boundaries one has no protection.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abusers are most often sex addicts. Sometimes they are reenacting their own sexual or physical violation. Sexual abuse generates intense and crippling shame, which more often than not, results in a splitting of the self. Incest and sexual abuse offenders are fueled by internalized shame. Kaufman writes,

"The perpetrator of the assault or violation also is shame-based. Such acts are acts of power and revenge, born of impotence and fueled by shame . . . that scene of forcible violation is a reenactment, a transformation of a scene of equal powerlessness and humiliation experienced by the perpetrator at the hands of a different tormentor . . . The victim, the target of revenge, is confused with the source of the perpetrator's shame. By defeating and humiliating the victim, the perpetrator is momentarily freed of shame."

The victimization could be incest, molestation, rape, voyeurism, exhibitionism, indecent liberties or phone calls. In every case there is an acting out of shame and a victimization of the innocent.

GRANDIOSITY – THE DISABLED WILL

Toxic shame also wears the face of grandiosity. Grandiosity is a disorder of the will. It can appear as narcissistic self-enlargement or wormlike helplessness. Each extreme refuses to be human. Each exaggerates: one is more than human; the other is less than human. It's important to see that the less than human, the hopeless one, is also grandiose. Hopelessness says that nothing and no one could help me. I'm the sickest of the sick . . . I'm the "best/worst" there ever was.

Grandiosity results from the human will becoming disabled. *The will is disabled primarily through the shaming of the emotions.* The shamed and blocked emotions stop the full integration of intellectual meaning. When an emotional event happens, emotions must be discharged in order for the

intellect, reason and judgment to make sense out of it. Emotions bias thinking. As emotions get bound by shame, their energy is frozen, which blocks the full interaction between the mind and the will.

The human will is intensity of desire raised to the level of action. The will is an appetite. It is dependent on the mind (reasoning and judgment) for its eyes. Without the mind, the will is blind and has no content. Without content the will starts willing itself. This state of disablement causes severe problems. Some of which are:

- The will wills what can't be willed.
- The will tries to control everything.
- The will experiences itself as omnipotent or when it has failed as "wormlike".
- The will wills for the sake of willing (impulsiveness).
- The will wills in absolute extremes — all or nothing.

Toxic Shame As Spiritual Bankruptcy

The problem of toxic shame is ultimately a spiritual problem. I call it "spiritual bankruptcy". I suggested earlier that spirituality is the essence of human existence. We are not material beings on a spiritual journey; we are spiritual beings who need an earthly journey to become fully spiritual.

Spirituality is life-style — that which enhances and expands life. Therefore, spirituality is about growth and expansion, newness and creativity. Spirituality is about being. Being is that victorious thrust whereby we triumph over nothingness. Being is about why there is something, rather than nothing. Being is the ground of all the beings that are.

OTHERATION AND DEHUMANIZATION

Toxic shame, which is an alienation of the self from the self, causes one to become 'other-ated'.

Otheration is the term used by the Spanish philosopher Ortega Y. Gasset to describe dehumanization. He says that man is the only being who lives from within. To be truly human is to have an inner self and a life from within. Animals live in constant hypervigilance, always on guard, looking outside themselves for sustenance and guarding against danger. When humans no longer have an inner life, they become otherated and dehumanized.

Toxic shame with its more than human, less than human polarity is dehumanizing. The demand for a false self to cover and hide the authentic self necessitates a life dominated by doing and achievement. Everything spends on performance and achievement rather than on being. Being

requires no measurement; it is its own justification. Being is grounded in an inner life which grows in richness.

The kingdom of heaven is within,' says the scripture. Toxic shame looks to the outside for happiness and for validation, since the inside is flawed and defective. Toxic shame is spiritual bankruptcy.

SHAME AS HOPELESSNESS — THE SQUIRREL CAGE

Toxic shame has the quality of being irremedial. If I am flawed, defective and a mistake, then there is nothing that can be done about me. Such a belief leads to impotence. How can I change who I am? Toxic shame also has the quality of circularity. Shame begets shame. You saw in Figure 1.1 how addicts act out internalized shame and then feel shame about their shameful behavior.

FUNCTIONAL AUTONOMY

Once internalized, toxic shame is functionally autonomous, which means that it can be triggered internally without any attending stimulus. One can imagine a situation and feel deep shame. One can be alone and trigger a shaming spiral through internal self-talk. The more one experiences shame, the more one is ashamed and the beat goes on.

It is this dead-end quality of shame that makes it so hopeless. The possibility for repair seems foreclosed if one is essentially flawed as a human being. Add to that the self-generating quality of shame, and one can see the devastating, soul-murdering power of neurotic shame.

The reader can begin to see how dramatic it was for me to discover the dynamics of shame. By being aware of the dynamics of shame, by naming it, we gain some power over it.

- See SHAME, Hazeldon, 1981.

I'm indebted to the Hazeldon publication on SHAME for the quotations of Pascal and Santayana.

CHAPTER

2

The Sources Of Toxic Shame

The Family System

Introduction

Toxic shame is primarily fostered in *significant* relationships. If you do not value someone, it's hard to imagine being shamed by what he says or does. The possibility of toxic shame begins with our source relationships. If our primary caregivers are shame-based, they will act shameless and pass their toxic shame onto us. There is no way to teach self-value if one does not value oneself.

Toxic shame is multigenerational. It is passed from one generation to the next. Shame-based people find other shame-based people and get married. As a couple each carries the shame from his or her own family system. Their marriage will be grounded in their shame-core. The major outcome of this will be a lack of intimacy. It's difficult to let someone get close to you if you feel defective and flawed as a human being. Shame-based couples maintain non-intimacy through poor communication, nonproductive circular fighting, games, manipulation, vying for control, withdrawal, blaming and confluence. Confluence is the agreement never to disagree. Confluence creates pseudo-intimacy.

When a child is born to these shame-based parents, the deck is stacked from the beginning. The job of parents is to model. Modeling includes how to be a man or woman; how to relate intimately to another person; how to

acknowledge and express emotions; how to fight fairly; how to have physical, emotional and intellectual boundaries; how to communicate; how to cope and survive life's unending problems; how to be self-disciplined; how to love oneself and another. Shame-based parents cannot do any of these. They simply don't know how.

Children need their parents' time and attention. Giving one's time is part of the work of love. It means being there for the child, attending to the child's needs rather than the parent's needs.

For example, I used to spend lots of time with my son. Often it consisted of my watching a football game, while my son played in the room. If he made too much noise, I scolded him. We spent time together but it was quantitative rather than qualitative.

Part of the work of love is listening. Children are clear about what they need and will tell us in no uncertain terms. We need to listen to them. This requires a fair amount of emotional maturity. To listen well, one must have one's own needs met. If one is needy, it's hard to listen. Our neediness is like a toothache. When we are shame-based, we can only focus on our own ache.

Needy, shame-based parents cannot possibly take care of their children's needs. The child is shamed whenever he or she is needy because the child's needs clash with the parents' needs. The child grows up and becomes an adult. But underneath the mask of adult behavior there is a child who was neglected. This needy child is insatiable. What that means is that when the child becomes an adult, there is a "hole in his soul". He can never get enough as an adult. Adults make what they get be enough and work harder to get more the next time. An adult child can't get enough because it's really a child's needs that are in question.

For example, in my beginning relationships I always went too far and wanted too much. If I met a girl and we hit it off, I immediately began talking about her in terms of marriage, *even after one date!* Once she was in love with me, I expected her to take care of me like a mother. Needy children need parents. So adult children turn lovers into parents, someone to take care of their needs.

The bottom line is that shame-based needy marriages create shame-based needy families. The children grow up in the soil of shame rather than the nurturing arms of love.

Shame-based families operate according to the laws of social systems. When a social system is dysfunctional, it is rigid and closed. All the individuals in that family are enmeshed into a kind of trancelike frozenness. They take care of the system's need for balance.

Children then go to school, to church or synagogue and grow up to live in society. Each of these social systems adds its own unique contribution to the toxic shame induction process.

Max's Story*

Max was perhaps the most tragic figure I encountered over a 20-year period of counseling. He came to me at age 44. I liked him instantly. Everyone seemed to like him. His problem was one I had never heard of before. Max ran away. He had done it nine times. At certain points in his life, most often when he was doing very well and the pressures of success were mounting, he would just pack up his car with a few necessities and start driving. He would leave everything — clothes, furnishings, family and job. Max was a Sales Engineer.

On the ninth runaway, he left his five children, all under 17. They had come to live with Max after he divorced his third wife. Three children were from his first marriage, the fourth from his second, the fifth from his third. As I talked to Max, the deep hurt and pain of his life was apparent. His shame was more apparent. In fact, Max's life was a metaphor of internalized shame.

He embodied many of the faces of shame and was the product of the major sources of shame. He also acted out many of the major cover-ups of shame.

He broke eye contact continually when he talked. He frequently blushed. He was painfully self-conscious and hypervigilant. Sometimes he would defiantly look me in the eyes and make matter of fact statements about the things he had done, severely condemning himself. And then he would follow this with long delusional descriptions of how he had been responsible and successful. When I gently confronted his denials, he would become energetically reactive and defensive and sometimes go into a rage. What became clear to me was his despair, his desperate loneliness and his shame-based hopelessness. Although he was gifted intellectually and evidently a skilled salesman and engineer, he would subject himself to the most demeaning jobs during his runaways. He had been a janitor, a dishwasher, a garbageman's helper, a lumberjack, a stagehand, a short-order cook and on his last "trip", as he referred to it, he collected and sold aluminum cans.

Max, although quite attractive to women, always stayed alone and celibate on his trips. He was tall, 6'3" and handsome. By the time he saw me, he was impotent with women. This was partly due to years of isolation, marijuana smoking and sexualizing.

Max was what Pat Games, in his book *Out Of The Shadows*, calls a Level I and II sex addict.

***Max is a composite symbol — a sort of Everyman of Toxic Shame. I have taken bits and pieces from the tragic lives of actual shame-based people. One of them is now dead — a tragic victim of toxic shame.**

Level I sexual addiction involves the following:

- Multiple affairs or sex partners
- Compulsive masturbation with or without pornography
- Chronic cruising of either a homosexual or heterosexual nature
- Fetish behavior, bestiality and prostitution

Level II involves voyeurism, exhibitionism, indecent liberties and lewd phone calls.

Carnes also speaks of **Level III** sexual addiction which includes incest, rape and molestation. The levels refer to the level of victimization and legal punishment accompanying the sexual act. Levels II and III always have a victim and are punishable by law.

In Max's case he had multiple affairs during his three marriages. During the early part of his second marriage he had engaged in voyeurism. He described the voyeurism with a great feeling of degradation and shame. On one occasion he hid in the branches of a tree for three hours to get a two-minute glimpse of a young woman in her bra and panties.

Max also cruised shopping malls, engaging in subtle forms of indecent liberties. By the time Max came to me for counseling, he had completely given up any relationship with women. He was isolated, and without any real relationships of any kind. He had resigned himself to a menial job as a bookkeeper in a hardware store.

Max's children were all addicts. His oldest was already in her second marriage at 26 years of age. She was a severe caretaker co-dependent who confused love with pity. She found men who were down and out and nourished them back to health. Her second husband was an ex-European drug dealer who had served time for drug dealing in France. Max's two sons and the daughter from his second marriage were all serious drug addicts and had major problems with sex and relationships. The youngest, a male child from his third marriage, had been arrested and jailed four times for violent alcohol and drug-related behavior by age 13.

I saw Max off and on for almost seven years. Just when I thought we were making progress, Max would quit (run away from me). I became more involved with Max than any counselor should. Max hooked my own shame and co-dependency. I wanted to help Max so much that I was overly invested in the outcome of our work. In September of 1974, Max died at the age of 52. This was the exact age his own father had died.

Max had a grandiose melodramatic quality to his personality. At the same time, there was true generosity and nobleness about him. His compassion for the suffering of others was boundless. He died of emphysema in the back ward of a public county hospital. At his funeral, I wept in a way I could not have imagined.

Max represented all of us shame-based people. I said he died of emphysema. What he really died of was toxic shame. His internalized shame was the source of his co-dependency, chemical and sex addictions. Max was the Everyman of Toxic Shame. His life, from beginning to end, illustrated the sources and the demonic power of toxic shame.

I shall use the elements of Max's life to outline these sources of toxic shame: his dysfunctional family of origin, his shame-based parental models, his multigenerational family history, his abandonment issues, his schooling, his religious background and the shaming culture which we all share with him.

Dysfunctional Families

Toxic shame originates interpersonally, primarily in significant relationships. Our most significant relationships are our source relationships. They occur in our original families.

As Judith Bardwick says so well,

"Marriage and thus family are where we live out our most intimate and powerful human experiences. The family is the unit in which we belong, from which we can expect protection from uncontrollable fate, in which we create infinity through our children and in which we find a haven. The stuff that family is made of is bloodier and more passionate than the stuff of friendship, and the costs are greater, too."

In Transition

Our families are where we first learn about ourselves. Our core identity comes first from the mirroring eyes of our primary caretakers. Our destiny depended to a large extent on the health of our caretakers.

In Max's case, his father, Jerome, was a full-fledged alcoholic and womanizing sex addict. Jerome was shame-based. He had been abandoned by his own father and raised by an emotionally incesting alcoholic mother. Max's description of his grandmother was frightening.

By the time Max was eight, his mother Felicia had divorced his father Jerome. From eight years on, Max was neglected emotionally and financially. His older brother Ralph took over the role of being Max's father. His older sister Maxine also took on a parenting role. They were his Little Parents.

Max's mom and dad married at ages 17 and 18. They married because they were pregnant with Max's older sister Maxine. Felicia came from a staunchly religious Christian family. The family demanded that Jerome marry Felicia. Felicia was extremely prudish and shut down emotionally. She carried her mother's repressed sexuality. Her mother had been sexually violated by her own father (also an alcoholic) and two of her nine brothers.

Felicia's mother had never dealt with her incest issues and carried them as her shame secret. Felicia, while ostensibly proper and prudish, had "acted out" the sexual shame of her mother by getting pregnant at 17. Felicia had also been sexually violated by her maternal grandfather.

Felicia was her father's emotional spouse. She became his little woman and confidante after her mother withdrew with hypochondria.

Jerome was also the emotional caretaker of *his* mother. He was her little man and became her Surrogate Spouse. Both of Max's parents were Surrogate Spouses. This means they both were emotional incest victims. Both were severely shame-based, co-dependent and addicted. Max's mother was dutiful but cold and nonsensual. Max was born five years after Jerome and Felicia were married. He was not planned and not really wanted. He was an accidental pregnancy. Max was what is called the Lost Child in family systems theory (Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse).

FAMILIES AS SOCIAL SYSTEMS

You noticed that I've capitalized the words Lost Child, Surrogate Spouse, Little Parents. I capitalize these words to show that they are rigid roles necessitated by the needs of the family system. In my book, *Bradshaw On: The Family*, and my PBS TV series by the same name, I outlined a newly emerging understanding of families as social systems.

Families are social systems which follow organismic laws. The first law of social organisms is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. A family is defined by the interaction and inter-relationships of its parts, rather than the sum of its parts.

A way to illustrate this holistic principle is to think of the human body. Our body is a whole organic system composed of many subsystems. There are the nervous system, the circulatory system, the endocrine system, etc. The human body as an organism is not the sum of its parts, but rather the inter-relationship of the parts. My body is not my body if it is cut into parts. For example, if you cut my legs from my body, you'd hardly look at them and think of me. In a system every part is related to every other part. Each part is wholly a part and partly a whole . . .

In a family, the whole family as an organism is greater than any individual in the family. The family is defined by the relationship between the parts, rather than the sum of the parts. As social systems families have components, rules, roles and needs that define the system.

The chief component in the family as a system is the marriage. If the marriage is healthy and functional, the family will be healthy and functional. If the marriage is dysfunctional, then the family is dysfunctional.

In Max's case, his parents' marriage was extremely dysfunctional. When

the chief component of a system is dysfunctional, the whole system is thrown out of balance. When the system is out of balance, another law comes into play, the law of dynamic homeostasis. This is the law of balance.

Dynamic homeostasis means that whenever a part of the system is out of balance, the rest of the members of the system will try to bring it back into balance.

I used a mobile on my TV series to illustrate this. If you touch one part of the mobile, the rest of it is affected. If one part moves, all the parts move. The mobile will always return to a state of rest. In a healthy functional family, the mobile will be in gentle motion. In a dysfunctional family, the mobile will tend to become frozen and static.

The children in a dysfunctional family take on rigid roles necessitated by the family's need for balance. For example, if a child is not wanted, he or she will try to balance the family by not being any trouble, by being helpful, perfect, super-responsible or invisible. This is the Lost Child role. I capitalize it to show that it is a dysfunctional role.

Both Max and his older sister Maxine were Lost Children. Max's brother, Ralph, was a family Star or Hero, i.e., he superachieved to give his shame-based alcoholic family a sense of dignity. Max's older brother and sister became Max's Little Parents.

As Jerome became more and more alcoholic, he abandoned all his children. Since the family system had no father, Ralph took on that role and became Max's Little Father. Since the family had no Marriage (chief component), Ralph took on the role and became Felicia's Surrogate Spouse. The system had no money earner, so Ralph and Maxine became Super-responsible Caretakers.

As a child, Max was sheltered from his father's drinking by being taken to the homes of relatives. He was The Protected One. He experienced this as abandonment. It's crucial to see that all these roles are cover-ups for shame.

Ralph covered up his shame by playing his Star Hero role. He also acted shameless towards Max by demanding that Max be perfect. He tried to over-discipline Max, continually measuring him with shoulds and oughts. Ralph was a constant source of shame for Max. Max loved and admired his older brother. He willingly accepted his brother's interpersonal transfer of shame. Ralph was also extremely religious. He studied to be a Christian minister. He used religious righteousness as a cover-up for his shame and dumped it on Max by moralizing and making judgments of him.

When the fear, hurt and loneliness of the shame in a dysfunctional family reaches high levels of intensity, one person, often the most sensitive, becomes the family Scapegoat. The function of this role is to lessen the pain all the members are in. At first Maxine took on this role for Felicia. She became Mom's Scapegoat. Later Ralph became the Scapegoat due to his

active alcoholism in his teenage years. Ralph repented and went into the ministry. This left the job for Max. Max started his drinking and running away at age 15. His first major disappearance was for four days, winding up on a beach in New Orleans. As his bizarre runaways continued, the family focused more and more on him. By discussing and obsessing on Max, everyone in the family system could avoid his own pain.

Max became like the sacrificial goat in the Jewish Atonement Ritual. In that Ritual the goat is smeared with blood and is sent into the desert. In this way the scapegoat atones for the people's sins. Max became the sacrificial goat. He literally went to his death carrying the shame of several generations of his family.

All of the roles in Max's family system were played as a way to control the distress of Jerome's alcohol addiction and Felicia's co-dependent addiction. In functional families the roles are chosen and are flexible. The members have the choice of giving up the roles. In dysfunctional families the roles are RIGID. Figure 2.1 outlines the various roles in Max's family of origin. I've added a few from my notes on Max. Notice that all the roles cover up the shame-based inner core. As each member of the system plays his rigid role, the system stays frozen and unchanging. Dysfunctional families are frozen in a trancelike state. The shame-core keeps the system frozen. Everyone is in hiding. The roles cover up each person's true and authentic self.

SHAME BASED FAMILIES AND MULTIGENERATIONAL ILLNESS

One of the devastating aspects of toxic shame is that it is multigenerational. The secret and hidden aspects of toxic shame are the wellsprings of its multigenerational life. Since it is kept hidden, it cannot be worked out. *Families are as sick as their secrets.* The secrets are what they are ashamed of. Family secrets can go back for generations. They can be about suicides, homicides, incest, abortions, addictions, public loss of face, financial disaster, etc. All the secrets get acted out. This is the power of toxic shame.

The pain and suffering of shame generate automatic and unconscious defenses. Freud called these defenses by various names — denial, idealization of parents, repression of emotions and dissociation from emotions. What is important to note is that we can't know what we don't know. Denial, idealization, repression, dissociation once formed are unconscious survival mechanisms. Because they are unconscious, we lose touch with the shame, hurt and pain they cover up. *We cannot heal what we cannot feel.* So without recovery, our toxic shame gets carried for generations.

I've already suggested that Max's mother and father had both come from shame-based families. Figure 2.2 gives you a visual picture of Felicia's

Figure 2.1. Max's Dysfunctional Family of Origin

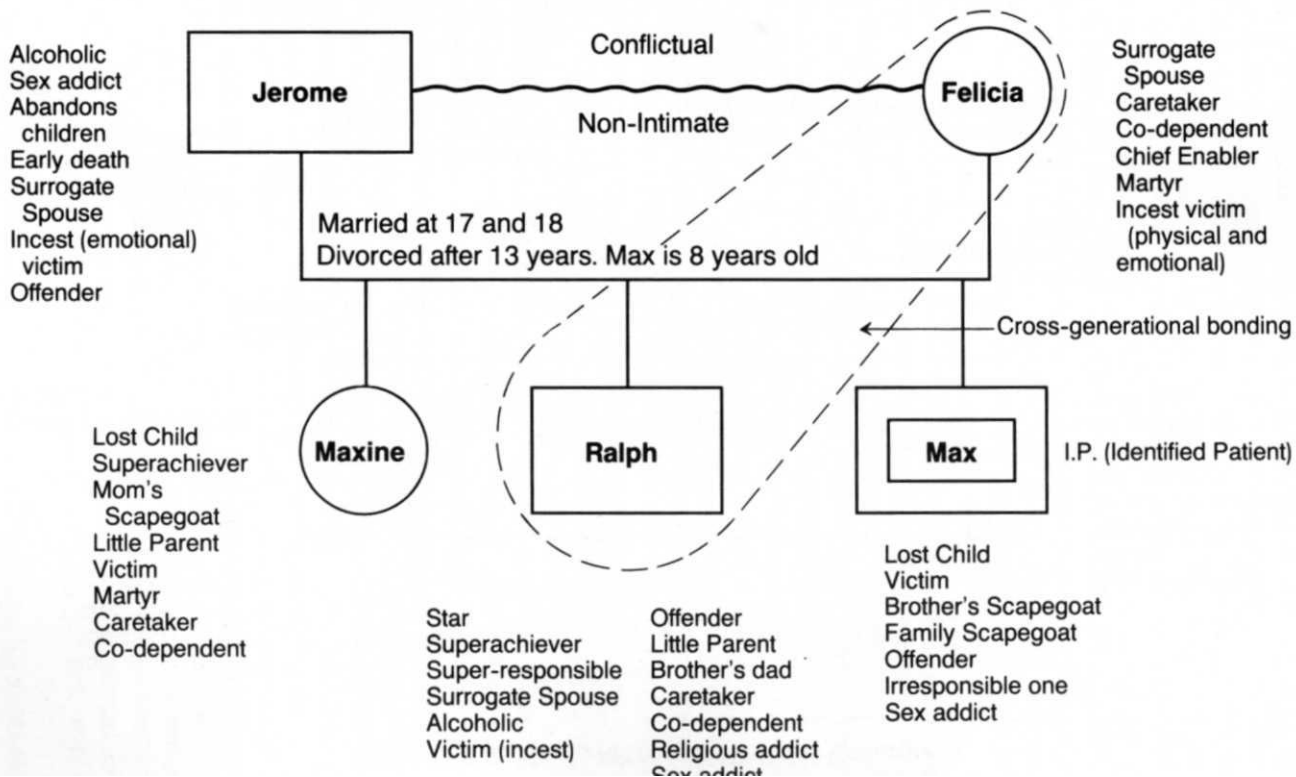
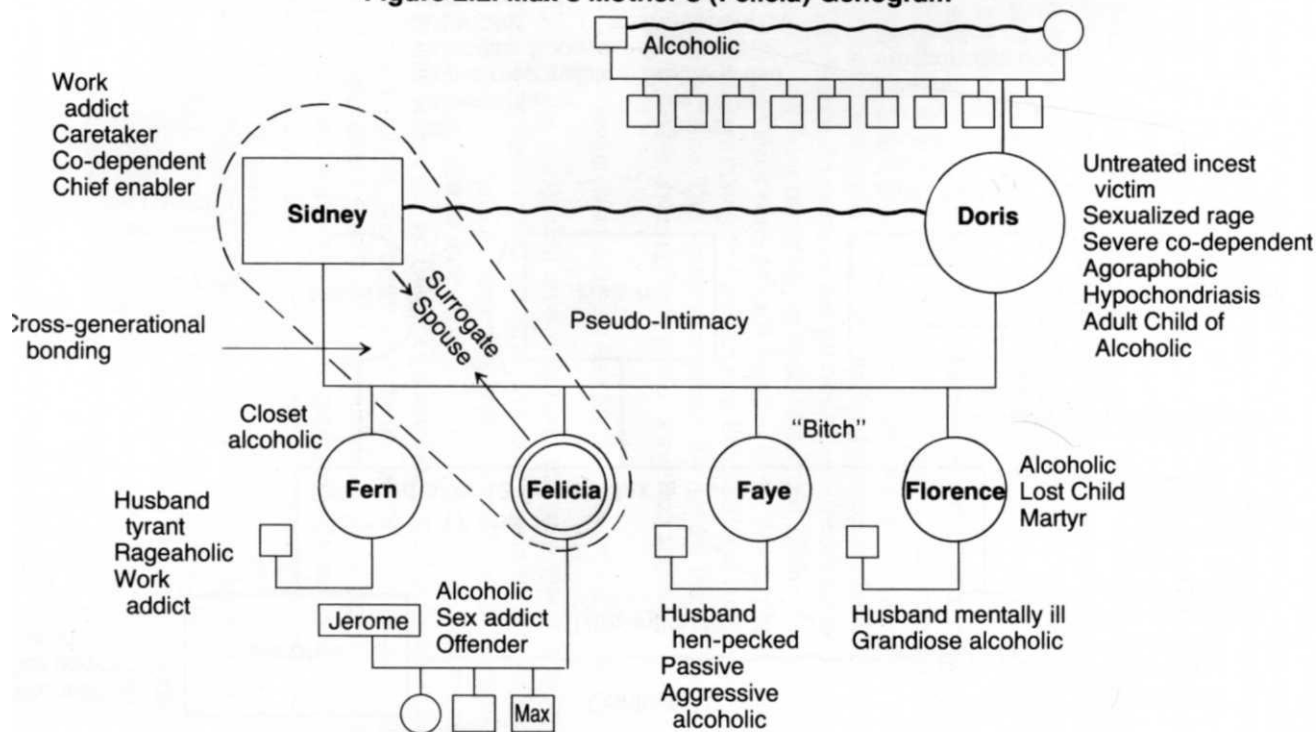


Figure 2.2. Max's Mother's (Felicia) Genogram



genogram. Her mother came from an alcoholic incestuous family. Felicia's mother was an untreated shame-based co-dependent in acute stages of her addiction. She was agoraphobic and a hypochondriac. Felicia's father enabled her mother's shame by allowing her to be sick. He also set Felicia up in the Sunogate Spouse role. Felicia was an untreated emotional and physical incest victim, who repressed her sexuality and carried her mother's unresolved incest issues. She unconsciously acted it out by being seductive to both Ralph and Max. Ralph, as oldest son, became Felicia's Surrogate, repeating the incest. Felicia idealized her dad and enabled his severe co-dependency and work addiction. Felicia's three sisters all married dysfunctional men. Each daughter carried her mother's unresolved sexualized rage.

Felicia's mother continuously bad-mouthed men from her sick bed. Max reported that as a boy he remembered that one of her favorite sayings was, "Men only want one thing. They think with their penis." This statement, said in the presence of a young male, is sexually abusive. Ralph and Max were both victimized by Felicia's unconscious sexual rage and contempt for men.

When Felicia got pregnant with Jerome, she was "acting out" her mother's unresolved sexual shame. Max reenacted Felicia's acting out by getting his first wife Bridget pregnant when he was 17. Ralph also married pregnant.

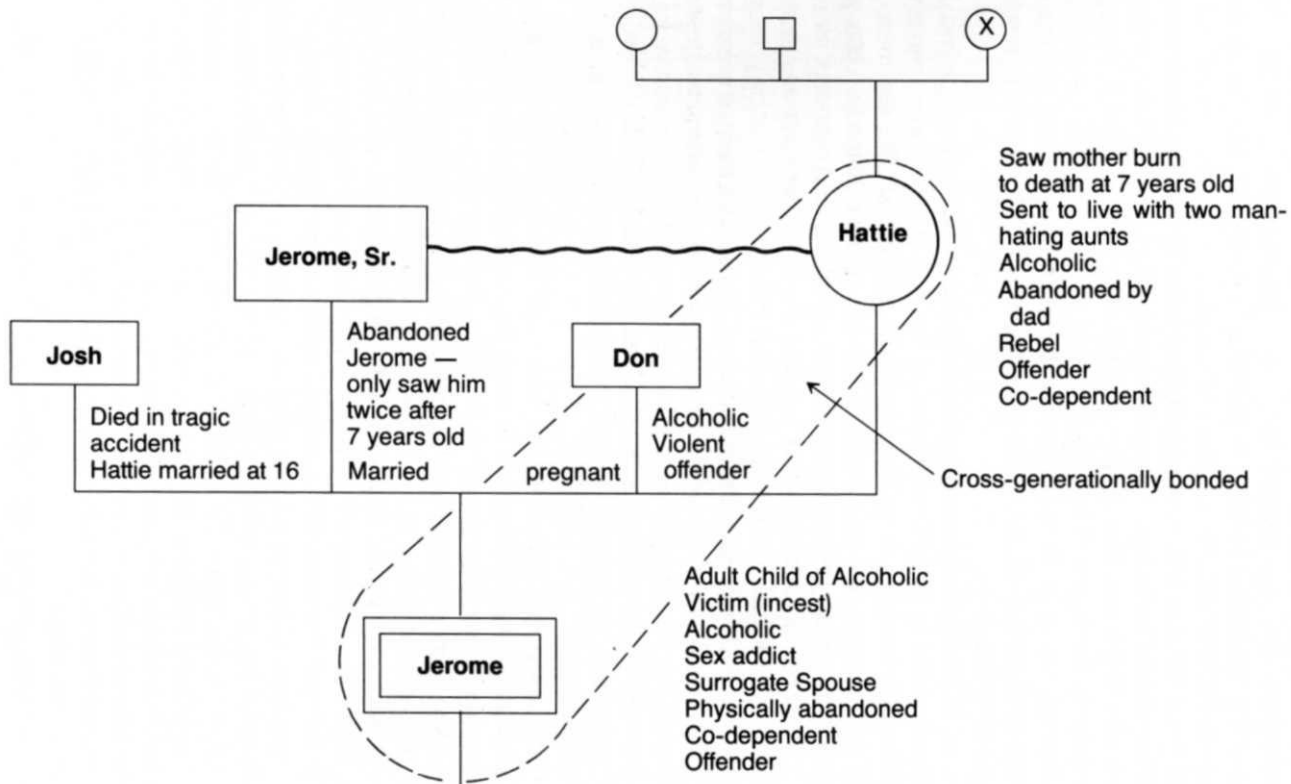
In Figure 2.3 I've outlined the major parts of Jerome's genogram. Jerome's mother saw her own mother burn to death when she was seven years old. She was abandoned by her father. He sent her to live with her two man-hating aunts. She rebelled against this situation by continually getting into trouble.

She acted out sexually at an early age. I always suspected that her promiscuity was an acting out of some form of sexual abuse. Max had no data on her side of the family. So I was never able to verify this. Max greatly disliked his grandmother and had never even seen his grandfather. Jerome's mother married at age 16. Her husband died a tragic death before age 30. He was electrocuted while working at a power plant. Jerome's mother received a large amount of money as the surviving widow. She boozed and partied for the next few years. She seemed to have been genetically alcoholic.

She manied Jerome's father pregnant, and after a stormy seven years, he divorced her. Jerome was eight years old. He only saw his father twice from that point on. Once he hitchhiked 300 miles to see him, only to be disappointed by being put on a bus and sent home. The other time was a chance run in. Jerome read of his father's death in a newspaper. He went to the funeral and was asked to leave, being told that it was too awkward for him to be there. His father had remarried, and had three children by his second marriage.

So Jerome grew up with no father, and was enmeshed with his alcoholic

Figure 2.3. Max's Father's (Jerome) Genogram



sex addict mother. He was her emotional incest victim. Max would *"act out" these multigenerational abandonment patterns in his runaways*. Both his parents, Jerome and Felicia, had been abandoned by their parents of the same sex. Both were used for their parents' needs, rather than their parents being there for them.

Max met his first wife, Bridget, in college. She was an Adult Child of an Alcoholic (ACoA) and the apple of her dad's eye. An only child, she was beautiful and smart. She was the family Star and was cross-generationally bonded with both her parents.

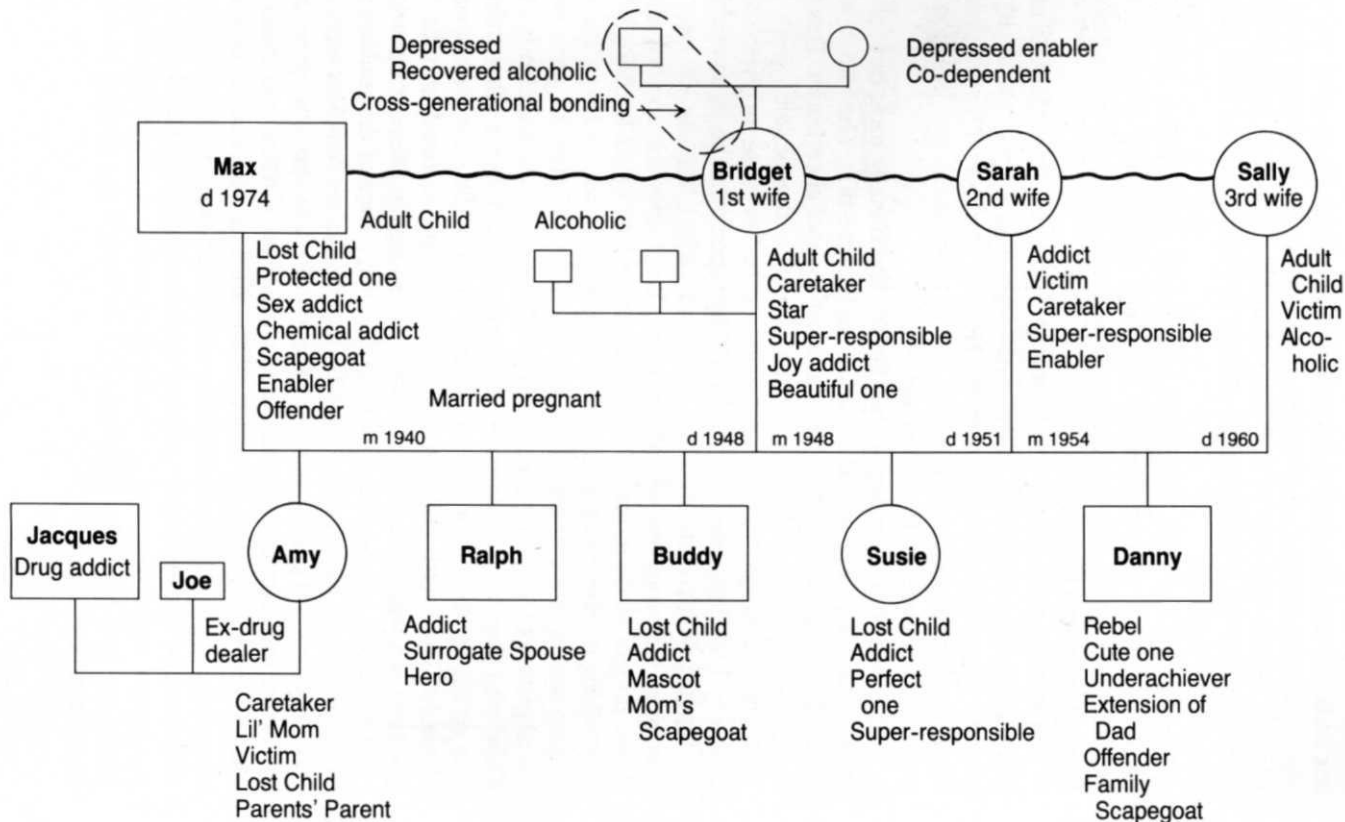
Max was the third child in the birth order position. Third children often carry the dynamics of their parent's marriage. Max literally reenacted his parents' pregnancy and early marriage. He later abandoned his children as his father had abandoned him. Max felt the loneliness and isolation his parents experienced in their marriage.

Bridget was the Caretaker in her family. She literally took care of her father's sadness, deep-seated isolation and depression. She did this by always being up and cheerful. She was a high school cheerleader. This role became so chronic, she lost any contact with her authentic self.

On one occasion Max asked me to see her because of their oldest daughter. I had suggested to Max that Bridget seemed to be in an enabling relationship with their daughter. She had bailed her out of jams on numerous occasions and was always giving her money she couldn't afford. When Bridget spoke to me, I had the uneasy feeling of not knowing who I was talking to. She had a parrotlike vocabulary and was "acting". The role was so sealed, she had no idea she was in an act. Figure 2.4 gives you a visual picture of Max's own family system. The oldest child was clearly a Lost Child who gave her all to take care of everybody. Each of the other children was acting out the family system's shame. The middle sons were severely alcoholic. The fourth child was also alcoholic and hooked on pills. The youngest son was acting out Max's internalized rage in offender behavior.

In summary, I hope the reader can feel the power of the multigenerational patterns in Max's background. I hope you can see how Max reenacted those patterns and passed them on to his children. In Max's five generation genogram there are five generations of alcoholism, physical and emotional abandonment and co-dependency. There are four generations of sexual abuse and sexual addiction. There are early pregnancies, multiple marriages and divorces. Max was abandoned by his father Jerome at exactly the same age Jerome was abandoned by his father. Max died at exactly the same age his father died. Max's five-generation family map is not atypical of shame-based families.

Figure 2.4. Max's Genogram (Immediate Family)



SHAME-BASED MARRIAGE AND PARENTAL MODELS

From what you have seen so far it should be obvious that a major source of toxic shame is the family system and its multigenerational patterns of unresolved secrets.

More specifically these families are created by the shame-based people who find and marry each other. Each looks to and expects the other to take care of and parent the child within him or her. Each is incomplete and insatiable. The insatiability is rooted in each person's unmet childhood needs. When two adult children meet and fall in love, the child in each looks to the other to fill his or her needs. Since "in-love" is a natural state of fusion, the incomplete children fuse together as they had done in the symbiotic stage of infancy. Each feels a sense of oneness and completeness. Since "in-love" is always erotic, each feels "oceanic" in the sexual embrace. "Oceanic" love is without boundaries. Being in love is as powerful as any narcotic. One feels whole and ecstatic.

Unfortunately this state cannot last. The ecstatic consciousness is highly selective. Lovers focus on sameness and are intrigued by the newness of each other. Soon, however, real differences in socialization begin to emerge. The two families of origin rear their shame-based heads. Now the battle begins! Who will take care of whom? Whose family rules will win out? The more shame-based each person is, the more each other's differences will be intolerable. "If you loved me, you'd do it my way," each cajoles the other. The Hatfields and the McCoys go at it again.

SHAME-BASED FAMILY RULES

Each family system has several categories of rules. There are rules about celebrating and socializing; rules about touching and sexuality; rules about sickness and proper health care; rules about vacations and vocations; rules about household maintenance and the spending of money. Perhaps the most important rules are about feelings, interpersonal communication and parenting.

Toxic shame is consciously transferred by means of shaming rules. In shame-based families, the rules consciously shame all the members. Generally however, the children receive the major brunt of the shame. Power is a cover-up for shame. Power is frequently hierarchical. Dad can yell at anyone. Mom can yell at anyone but Dad. The oldest can yell at anyone but Mom and Dad, etc. The youngest tortures the cat.

The Dysfunctional Family Rules

1. Control — One must be in control of all interactions, feelings and personal behavior at all times . . . control is the major defense strategy for shame.

2. **Perfectionism** — Always be right in everything you do. The perfectionist rule always involves a measurement that is being imposed. The fear and avoidance of the negative is the organizing principle of life. The members live according to an externalized image. No one ever measures up.
3. **Blame** — Whenever things don't turn out as planned, blame yourself or others. Blame is another defensive cover-up for shame . . . Blame maintains the balance in a dysfunctional system when control has broken down.
4. **Denial Of The Five Freedoms** — The five freedoms, first enunciated by Virginia Satir, describe full personal functionality. Each freedom has to do with a basic human power . . . the power to perceive; to think and interpret; to feel; to want and choose; and the power to imagine. In shame-based families, the perfectionist rule prohibits the full expression of these powers. It says you shouldn't perceive, think, feel, desire or imagine the way you do. You should do these the way the perfectionistic ideal demands.
5. **The No-Talk Rule** — This rule prohibits the full expression of any feeling, need or want. In shame-based families, the members want to hide their true feelings, needs or wants. Therefore, no one speaks of his loneliness and sense of self-rupture.
6. **Don't Make Mistakes** — Mistakes reveal the flawed vulnerable self. To acknowledge a mistake is to open oneself to scrutiny. Cover up your own mistakes and if someone else makes a mistake, shame him.
7. **Unreliability** — Don't expect reliability in relationships. Don't trust anyone and you will never be disappointed. The parents didn't get their developmental dependency needs met and will not be there for their children to depend on. The distrust cycle goes on.

These rules are not written on the refrigerator door. However, they are the operative principles that govern shame-based families in their interpersonal relationships. They continue the cycle of shame for generations.

The parenting rules used in most western world families create massive shame. Add alcoholism, incest, physical abuse to these systems, and you get major dysfunctionality. Alice Miller has summed up these rules under the title **Poisonous Pedagogy**. These rules state:

1. Adults are the masters of the dependent child.
2. They determine in godlike fashion what is right and what is wrong.
3. The child is held responsible for the parents' anger.
4. The parents must always be shielded.
5. The child's life-affirming feelings pose a threat to the autocratic adult.
6. The child's will must be "broken" as soon as possible.

7. All this must happen at a very early age so that the child "won't notice" and will therefore not be able to expose the adult.

For Your Own Good

Such beliefs about the parents' absolute power stem from the time of monarchs and kings. They are pre-democratic and pre-Einsteinian. They presuppose a world of eternal laws, a *Deus Ex Machina* view of the world. This was the world of Newton and Descartes. Such a worldview has been refuted many times over.

The poisonous pedagogy justifies highly abusive methods for suppressing children's vital spontaneity: physical beatings, lying, duplicity, manipulation, scare tactics, withdrawal of love, isolation and coercion to the point of torture. All of these methods are toxically shaming.

SHAME AS A STATE OF BEING

When healthy shame is transformed into toxic shame, it is called the 'internalization process'. The healthy feeling of shame is lost, and a frozen state of being emerges, whereby a person believes himself to be flawed and defective as a human being. This transformation involves three dynamics: first, the identification with shame-based models; second, the trauma of abandonment and the shame binding all one's feelings, needs and drives; and third, the interconnection and magnification of visual memories or scenes; and the retaining of shaming auditory and kinesthetic imprints.

The Abandonment Trauma

The word abandonment, as used here, goes far beyond the ordinary understanding of that word. I include the notion of physical desertion, which is the most common usage of the word. In naming our demons, we have to stretch the old meanings of our words.

I want to expand the meaning of the word abandonment to include various forms of emotional abandonment: stroke deprivation, narcissistic deprivation, fantasy bonding, the neglect of developmental dependency needs and family system enmeshment. My definition of abandonment also includes all forms of abuse.

Alice Miller, in her powerful book, *The Drama Of The Gifted Child*, has described the paradoxical fact that many good, kind, devoted parents abandon their children. She also outlines the equally paradoxical fact that many highly gifted superachieving and successful people are driven by a deep-seated chronic depression, resulting from their true and authentic selves being shamed through abandonment in childhood. I referred to this earlier as the "hole in your soul" phenomena. Alice Miller's work has

expanded my understanding of the abandonment trauma. She does not use shame as a major organizing principle of her work. However, it is easy to see that the loss of authentic selfhood with its accompanying depression is another way to describe toxic shame.

When one is abandoned, one is left alone. This can happen through physical absence as well as physical presence. In fact to be abandoned by someone who is physically present is much more crazymaking.

ACTUAL PHYSICAL ABSENCE

Max began his life with two strikes against him. He was not planned or really wanted. He was an accidental pregnancy in an ever intensifying dysfunctional marriage. Jerome's drinking had escalated so that Felicia had attempted separation on several occasions in an attempt to control his drinking. Four separations occurred during Max's first eight years of life.

Max was also separated from his brother and sister during three of these separations. He and Felicia lived with two of her sisters while Ralph and Maxine lived with Felicia's mother. A child needs structure and predictability. He needs to be able to count on someone.

I remember when my son was about three years old, he would ask me to read him a story at night. His favorites were *The Little Engine That Could* and *Peter Rabbit*. After a few readings, these stories became rather boring to me. I used to try and turn two pages simultaneously (the old two-pages-at-a-time trick). I was rarely able to do this without getting caught. To my son's young mind if a piece of that story were missing, it was disastrous. It would put his world out of order. In a more dramatic way, for a child to be continuously moved from his family causes severe upset.

A child needs the presence of both parents. For a boy child to break his mother bonding, he needs a father to bond with. Bonding involves spending time together, sharing feelings, warmth, touching and displaying desire to be with one another.

Max's dad was hardly ever around. When he was not working, he was drinking. He gave Max very little of his time. A very young child cannot understand that his dad is a sick alcoholic. Children are limited in logical ability. Their earliest way of thinking is through feelings (felt thought). Children are also egocentric. This doesn't mean they are selfish in the usual meaning of that word. They are not morally selfish. They are not even capable of moral thinking until about seven or eight (the so-called age of reason). Even at that age their thinking still has definite egocentric elements in it. Children are not capable of pure altruistic behavior until about age 16.

Egocentric thinking means that a child will take everything personally. Even if a parent dies, a child can personalize it. A child might say something

like — "If Mommie had really loved me, she would not have gone to God's house; she would have stayed with me."

We give time to those things that we love.

The impact of not having one's parents' time creates the feeling of being worthless. The child is worth less than his parents' time, attention or direction. The young child's egocentricity always interprets events egocentrically. If Mom and Dad are not present, it's because of me. There must be something wrong with me or they would want to be with me.

Children are egocentric because they have not had time to develop ego boundaries. An ego boundary is an internal strength by which a person guards her inner space. Without boundaries a person has no protection. A strong boundary is like a door with the doorknob on the inside. A weak ego boundary is like a door with the doorknob on the outside. A child's ego is like a house without any doors.

Children are egocentric by nature (not by choice). Their egocentricity is like a temporary door and doorknob, in use until strong boundaries can be built. Strong boundaries result from the identification with parents who themselves have strong boundaries and who teach their children by modeling. Children have no experience; they need their parents' experience. By identifying with their parent, they have someone whom they can depend on outside themselves. As they internalize their parent, they form a dependable guide inside themselves. If their parent is not dependable, they will not develop this inner resource.

EMOTION ABANDONMENT AND DEPRIVED NARCISSISM

Children need mirroring and echoing. These come from their primary caretaker's eyes. Mirroring means that someone is there for them and reflects who they really are at any given moment of time. In the first three years of our life each of us needed to be admired and taken seriously. We needed to be accepted for the very one we are. Getting these minoring needs is what Alice Miller calls our basic Narcissistic Supplies.

These supplies result from good minoring by a parent with good boundaries. When this is the case, the following dynamics take place-

1. The child's aggressive impulses can be neutralized because they do not threaten the parent.
2. The child's striving for autonomy is not experienced as a threat to the parent.
3. The child is allowed to experience and express ordinary impulses, such as jealousy, rage, sexuality, defiance, because the parents have not disowned these feelings in themselves.

4. The child does not have to please the parent and can develop his own needs at his own developmental pace.
5. The child can depend on and use his parents because they are separate from him.
6. The parent's independence and good boundaries allow the child to separate self and object representation.
7. Because the child is allowed to display ambivalent feelings, he can learn to regard himself and the caregiver as "both good and bad", rather than splitting off certain parts as good and splitting them from the bad.
8. The beginning of true object love is possible because the parent's love the child as a separate object.

Drama Of The Gifted Child

What happens if the parents are shame-based and needy? What happens if they are unable to take over the mirroring narcissistic function for the child. Furthermore, the fact that the parents are shame-based is a clear signal that *they never got their own narcissistic supplies*. Such parents are adult children who are still in search of a parent or an object who will be totally available to them. For such parents, the most appropriate objects of narcissistic gratification are their *own children*. Again Alice Miller writes,

"A newborn baby is completely dependent on his parents and since their caring is essential for his existence, he does all he can to avoid losing them. From the very first day onward, he will muster all his resources to this end, like a small plant that turns toward the sun in order to survive."

Drama Of The Gifted Child

What the shame-based mother was unable to find in her own mother she finds in her own children. The child is someone who is always at her disposal. A child cannot run away as her own mother did. A child can be used as an echo; is completely centered on her; will never desert her; can be totally controlled and offers full admiration and absorbed attention.

Children have an amazing ability to perceive this need in the parent(s). A child seems to know it unconsciously. By taking on the role of supplying his shame-based parents narcissistic gratification, the child secures love and a sense of being needed and not abandoned. *This process is a reversal of the order of nature. Now the child is taking care of the parents' needs, rather than the parents taking care of the child's needs.* This caretaker role is strangely paradoxical. In an attempt to secure parental love and avoid being abandoned, the child is in fact being abandoned. Since the child is there for the parent, there is no one there to mirror the child's feelings and drives and

to nurture the child's needs. Any child growing up in such an environment has been mortally wounded by this narcissistic deprivation. This phenomenon can happen in the best of families.

Alice Miller writes,

"There are large numbers of people who suffer from narcissistic disorders, who often had sensitive and caring parents from whom they received much encouragement; yet these people are suffering from severe depressions. They enter analysis in the belief, with which they grew up, that their childhood was happy and protected."

Drama Of The Gifted Child

More often than not, these narcissistically deprived are talented, gifted, highly successful superachievers who have been praised and admired for their talents and achievements. Anyone looking at them on the outside would believe that these people have it made. They are strong and stable and full of self-assurance. The exact opposite is the case. Narcissistically deprived people do well in every undertaking and are admired for their gifts and talents but to no avail.

"Behind all this," writes Alice Miller, "there lurks depression, the feeling of emptiness and self-alienation, and a sense that life has no meaning."

Once the drug of grandiosity is taken away, as soon as they are no longer the stars and superachievers, they are plagued by deep feelings of shame and guilt.

I have worked with many individuals of this type. I am one myself. It is so difficult for anyone looking at our success to know how shame-based we really are. As children we were loved for our achievements and our performance, rather than for ourselves. Our true and authentic selves were abandoned.

In my own case it has taken me years to be able to connect with my own true feelings — my anger, jealousy, loneliness or sadness. This disconnection with feelings is a result of the abandonment. No one was there to affirm our feelings through minoring. A child can only experience his feelings when there is someone there who accepts them fully, names them and supports them.

Another consequence of this emotional abandonment is the loss of a sense of self. When used as another's narcissistic supplies, a person develops in such a way as to reveal only what is expected of him and ultimately fuses with his own act or performance. He becomes a "human doing" without any real sense of his authentic self. According to Winnicott, his true self remains in a "state of noncommunication". I described this earlier as no longer being in me. Such a person feels emptiness, homelessness and futility.

Perhaps the most devastating consequence of emotional abandonment is what Robert Firestone calls the Fantasy Bond and what Alice Miller calls "Bond Permanence". A child who has been denied the experience of connecting with his own emotions is first consciously and then unconsciously (through the internal identification with the parent) dependent on his parents. Alice Miller writes,

"He cannot rely on his own emotions, has not come to experience them through trial and error, has no sense of his own real needs and is alienated from himself to the highest degree."

Drama Of The Gifted Child

Such, a person cannot separate himself from his parents. He is fantasy bonded with them. He has an illusion (fantasy) of connection, i.e., he really thinks there is a love relationship between himself and his parents. Actually he is fused and enmeshed. This is an entrapment rather than a relationship. Later on this fantasy bond will be transferred to other relationships.

This fantasy-bonded person is still dependent on affirmation from his partner, his children, his groups. He is especially dependent on his children. A fantasy-bonded person never has a real connection or a real relationship with anyone. There is no real authentic self there to relate to. The real parents, who only accepted the child when he pleased them, remain as introjected voices. The true self hides from these introjected voices just as the real child did. The loneliness of the parental home' is replaced by 'isolation within the self.

Grandiosity is often the result of all this. The grandiose person is admired everywhere and cannot live without admiration. If his talents fail him, it is catastrophic. He must be perfect, otherwise depression is near. Often the most gifted among us are driven in precisely this manner. Many of the most gifted people suffer from severe depression. It cannot be otherwise because depression is about the lost and abandoned child within.

"One is free from depression," writes Alice Miller, "when self-esteem is based on the authenticity of one's own feelings and not on the possession of certain qualities" (*Drama Of The Gifted Child*).

Emotional abandonment is multigenerational. The child of the narcissistically deprived parent becomes an adult with a narcissistically deprived child and will use his children as he was used for his narcissistic supplies. That child then becomes an adult child and the cycle is repeated.

Max's parents were narcissistically deprived. Jerome used fantasy bonds with alcohol and sex for his narcissistic supplies. Felicia used Ralph as her main narcissistic gratification. He became the family Star, the moralistic superachieving righteous minister. Maxine and Max were both Lost Children. Felicia, although dutiful, was never really there to mirror and affirm their

emotions. Max reenacted this same pattern on his children, using them for his narcissistic supplies. He would immediately run to them for nurturing and solace after his runaways. His daughters especially were a source of nurturing. Never once did I see any of his children express anger, hurt or resentment to Max. They had never connected with their own feelings.

Max would become enraged when I spoke of his reenactment of his abandonment on his own children. His children also thought they had a good childhood. This is the delusional nature of deprived narcissism.

When emotionally abandoned people describe their childhood, it is always without feeling. Alice Miller writes,

"They recount their earliest memories without any sympathy for the child they once were. Very often they show disdain and irony, even derision and cynicism. In general there is a complete absence of real emotional understanding or serious appreciation of their own childhood vicissitudes and no conception of their true need — beyond the need for achievement. The internalization of the original drama has been so complete that the illusion of a good childhood can be maintained."

Drama Of The Gifted Child

Max's children idolized and idealized him. They continued the delusion of their happy childhood. Max himself showed no real anger toward his parents. Only when he was drunk would the rage toward his father come out. He had no overt anger toward his mother.

ABANDONMENT THROUGH ABUSE

All forms of child abuse are forms of abandonment. When parents abuse children, the abuse is about the parents' own issues not the child's. This is why it is abuse.

Abuse is abandonment because when children are abused, no one is there for them. What's happening is purportedly for the child's own good. But it isn't about the child at all, it's about the parent. Such transactions are crazymaking and induce shame. In each act of abuse the child is shamed. Young children, because of their egocentricism, make themselves responsible for the abuse.

"My caretakers couldn't be crazy or emotionally ill; it must be me," the child says to himself.

A child must maintain this idealization. Children's minds are magical, egocentric and nonlogical. They are completely dependent upon their parents for survival. The idealization ensures survival. *If my parents are sick and crazy, how could I survive? It must be me. I am crazy.* There's something wrong with me or they wouldn't treat me this way.

The child doesn't have a chance. All abuse contributes to the internalization of shame. Some kinds of abuse are more intensely shaming than others.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is the most shaming of all abuse. It takes less sexual abuse than any other form of abuse to induce shame. Sexual abuse is widespread. It is estimated that there are currently some 60 million victims of sexual violence. Our awareness of this problem has grown tremendously over the past 30 years.

In the past our understanding was limited to a kind of "honor story" incest victim. Such stories involved physical hands-on sexual abuse. Today we've greatly expanded our understanding of such abuse. In *Bradshaw On: The Family*, I presented material on sexual abuse adapted from the work of Pia Mellody at the Meadows, a treatment center in Wickenburg, Arizona.

The following is from *Bradshaw On: The Family*.

Sexual abuse involves whole families. It can be divided as follows:

1. **Physical Sexual Abuse** — This involves hands on touching in a sexual way. The range of abusive behaviors that are sexual include sexualized hugging or kissing; any kind of sexual touching or fondling; oral and anal sex; masturbation of the victim or forcing the victim to masturbate the offender; sexual intercourse.
2. **Overt Sexual Abuse** — This involves voyeurism, exhibitionism. This can be outside or inside the home. Parents often sexually abuse children through voyeurism and exhibitionism. The criteria for in-home voyeurism or exhibitionism is whether the parent is being sexually stimulated. Sometimes the parent may be so out of touch with their own sexuality that they are not aware of how sexual they are being. The child almost always has a kind of icky feeling about it.

One client told me how her father would leer at her in her panties coming out of the bathroom. Others speak of having no privacy in the house, much less the bathroom. I've had a dozen male clients whose mothers bathed their genital parts up through eight or nine years old.

Children can feel sexual around parents. This is not sexual abuse unless the parent originated it. It all depends upon the parents. Here I'm not talking about a parent having a passing sexual thought or feeling. It's about a parent using a child for his own conscious or unconscious sexual stimulation.

3. **Covert Sexual Abuse**

(a) **Verbal** — This involves inappropriate sexual talking: Dad or any significant male calling women "whores" or "cunts" or

objectified sexual names; or Mom or any significant female depreciating men in a sexual way. It also involves parents or caretakers having to know about every detail of one's private sexual life, asking questions about a child's sexual physiology or questioning for minute details about dates. Covert sexual abuse involves not receiving adequate sexual information.

I've had several female clients who didn't know what was happening when they began menstruating. I've had three female clients who did not know that their vaginas had an opening in it until they were 20 years old!

An overt kind of sexual abuse occurs when Dad or Mom talk about sex in front of the children when the age level of the children is inappropriate. It also occurs when Mom or Dad make sexual remarks about the sexual parts of the children's bodies. I've worked with two male clients who were traumatized by their mother's jokes about the size of their penises, also female clients whose fathers and stepfathers teased about the size of their breasts or buttocks.

(b) Boundary Violation — This involves children witnessing parents in sexual behavior. They may walk in on it frequently because parents don't provide closed or locked doors. It also involves the children being allowed no privacy. They are walked in on in the bathroom. They are not taught to lock their doors or given permission to lock their doors. Parents need to model appropriate nudity, i.e., need to be clothed appropriately after a certain age. Children are sexually curious. Beginning at around age three or between ages three to six, children start noticing parents' bodies. They are often obsessed with nudity.

Mom and Dad need to be careful walking around nude with young children. If Mom is not being stimulated sexually, the nudity is not sexual abuse. She simply is acting in a dysfunctional way. She is not setting sexual boundaries.

The use of enemas at an early age can also be abusive in a way that leads to sexual dysfunction. The enemas can be a body boundary violation.

4. Emotional Sexual Abuse — Emotional sexual abuse results from cross-generational bonding. I've spoken of enmeshment as a way that children take on the covert needs of a family system. It is very common for one or both parents in a dysfunctional marriage to bond inappropriately with one of their children. The parents in effect use the child to meet their emotional needs. This relationship can easily become sexualized and romanticized. The daughter may become

Daddy's Little Princess, or the son may become Mom's Little Man. In both cases the child is being abandoned. The parents are getting their needs met at the expense of the child's needs. The child needs a parent not a spouse.

Pia Melody gives the following definition of emotional sexual abuse. She says that when "one parent has a relationship with the child that is more important than the relationship they have with their spouse, there is emotional sexual abuse."

Sometimes both parents emotionally bond with a child. The child tries to take care of both parents' feelings. I once worked with a female client whose father would come and get her in the middle of the night and put her in bed with him in the guest bedroom. He would do this mainly to punish his wife for sexually refusing him. The daughter has suffered greatly with confused sexual identity.

Cross-generational bonding can occur with a parent and a child of the same sex. A most common form of this in our culture is mother and daughter. Mother often has sexualized rage, i.e., she fears and hates men. She uses her daughter for her emotional needs and also contaminates her daughter's feelings about men.

This issue is whether the parent is there for the child's needs, rather than the child being there for the parent's needs. And while children have the capacity to be sexual in a way appropriate to their developmental level, *whenever an adult is being sexual with a child, sexual abuse is going on.*

Some sexual abuse comes from older siblings. Generally sexual behavior by same-age children is not sexually abusive. The rule of thumb is that when a child is experiencing sexual "acting out" at the hands of a child three or four years older, it is sexually abusive.

Physical Abuse

Spare the rod and you spoil the child has been quoted forever as a Biblical justification or injunction for corporal punishment. Physical violence against children (and women) is part of an ancient and pervasive tradition.

Physical violence is second only to sexual violence in the toxic shame it creates. Furthermore, physical violence is highly addictive. I've already shown it to be a form of the character disordered syndrome of shame. Offenders are literally addicted to the violence and fueled by the toxic shame they feel in performing physical violence. Violent offenders are shame-based.

The profile of physically abusing parents includes the following: isolated; poor self-image; lack of sensitivity to others' feelings; usually physically abused themselves; deprived of basic mothering; unmet needs for love and comfort;

in denial of problems and the impact of the problems; feel there is no one to turn to for advice; totally unrealistic expectations of children; expect the children to meet their needs for comfort and nurturing; when children fail to meet their needs, they interpret this as rejection and respond with anger and frustration; deal with the children as if they were much older than they are.

There is no good data on the extent of physical abuse. The usual data covers those cases which are reported. It excludes those not treated by a physician, those cases treated by a physician but not identified as abuse and those cases identified as abuse but not reported. It's estimated that there are 200 unreported cases for every case reported.

The ownership of children by parents, and the belief that children are willful and need their wills broken accounts for the rationale of spanking children.

The victim of the physical violence is also bonded to the violence out of shame. In the beginning the victims bond out of sheer terror. But as the abuse continues, their self-worth is diminished. As the self-worth is diminished, the victims lose the ability to choose. They become like starving children looking for morsels and crumbs of love.

Because violence is irrational and impulsive, it is often random and unpredictable. The random quality of the violence sets up what Seligman calls "learned helplessness". Learned helplessness is a kind of mental confusion. The people can no longer think or plan. They become passively accepting of their abuse. I can't imagine a more soul-murdering destruction of human life.

Physical violence is common in family life because the tenets of the poisonous pedagogy promote and support corporal punishment. It's still endorsed as a way to teach children about life. Our common nursery rhyme about the old woman who lived in a shoe attests to the common acceptance of physical punishment.

Physical violence is the norm in many dysfunctional families. This includes actual physical spankings; having to go get your own weapons of torture (belts, switches, etc.); being punched, slapped, slapped in the face, pulled on, yanked on, choked, shook, kicked, pinched, tortured with tickling; being threatened with violence of abandonment; being threatened with being put in jail or having the police come; witnessing violence done to a parent or sibling.

This last is a major issue in homes where wives are battered. A child witnessing his mother being battered is equivalent to the child being battered. A witness to violence is a victim of violence.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse is universal. I believe that everyone has been shamed by emotional abuse. The poisonous pedagogy is quite clear about the fact that

emotions are weak. We are to be rational and logical and not allow ourselves to be maned by emotions. All emotions must be controlled, but anger and sexual feelings are especially to be repressed. I can't imagine many people in modem American life who were affirmed and nurtured in expressing their sexual and/or angry feelings.

EMOTIONAL SHAME BINDS

Our emotions are part of our basic power. They serve two major functions in our psychic life. They monitor our basic needs, telling us of a need, a loss or a satiation. Without our emotional energy, we would not be aware of our most fundamental needs.

Emotions also give us the fuel or energy to act. I like to hyphenate the word "Emotion". An Emotion is an energy in motion. This energy moves us to get what we need. When our basic needs are being violated, our *anger* moves us to fight or run. Our *angeris* the energy that gives us strength. The incredible hulk becomes the huge powerful hulk when he needs the energy and power to take care of others.

Our *sadness* is an energy we discharge in order to heal. As we discharge the energy over the losses relating to our basic needs, we can integrate the shock of those losses and adapt to reality. Sadness is painful. We try to avoid it. Actually discharging sadness releases the energy involved in our emotional pain. To hold it in is to freeze the pain within us. The therapeutic slogan is that grieving is the "healing feeling".

Fear releases an energy which warns us of danger to our basic needs. Fear is an energy leading to our discernment and wisdom.

Guilt is our conscience former. It tells us we have transgressed our values. It moves us to take action and change.

Shame warns us not to try to be more or less than human. Shame signals our essential limitations.

Joy is the exhilarating energy that emerges when all our needs are being met. We want to sing, run and jump with joy. The energy of joy signals that all is well.

When our Emotions are not minored and named, we lose contact with one of our vital human powers. Parents who are out of touch with their own emotions cannot model those emotions for their children. They are out of touch and shut down. They are psychically numb. They are not even aware of what they are feeling. Hence they stop their children's emotions.

This is actually sanctified by our most sacred traditions of parenting rules. These rules especially shame children by denying emotions. Emotions are considered weak.

Religion endorses the poisonous pedagogy. Anger is especially

considered bad. Anger is one of the Seven Deadly Sins. These sins send you to hell. In its most accurate teaching, the deadly sin is not really the emotion of anger, but the behaviors resulting from the judgment often occasioned by anger. Behaviors often linked to anger are screaming, cursing, hitting, publically criticizing or condemning someone and physical violence. These behaviors are certainly prohibitive. They are behaviors based on judgment, rather than Emotions.

, Many children are shamed for their anger. Children often see parents angry and rageful. The message is all too often that it's okay for parents to be angry, but it's not okay for children.

Shame Parfaits

As anger is shamed, two things happen. First the anger is shame-bound. Every time the person feels angry, he feels shame. Second, as anger is shamed, it is repressed. Repression is a primary ego defense. Once it is set in motion, it operates automatically and unconsciously. As the anger energy goes unconscious, it clamors to be expressed. As more and more anger is repressed, it grows more and more.

Virginia Satir once compared this to keeping hungry dogs in the basement. The hungrier they get, the more they try to get out. The more they try to escape, the more we must guard them. The repressed energy grows and grows and finally it has a life of its own. One day there is just no more room to stuff the energy. One day the anger energy erupts. The person who has been repressing it, finds herself "out of control". After the stormy outburst is over, she says, "I don't know what came over me today. Boy, I really lost it."

Repressed, unresolved shame-bound anger energy turns into rage. Rage is the outcome of shame-bound anger.

When sorrow is shamed, it builds its energy into inconsolable grief and despair. Sometimes it is the basis of suicidality. In our culture, children are shamed for crying. If not shamed, the crying discharge is stopped with bribes and rewards. Sometimes there is a magic timetable so that after crying for a designated number of minutes, one is told, "Okay, that's it, you've cried long enough." Often children are condemned and ridiculed for crying. Sometimes they are hit or spanked for crying as in, "I'll give you something to cry about!"

Likewise with fear — children are shamed for being afraid. Shamed and denied, fear splits off and grows into full-fledged terror or paranoia. The permission to have sadness and fear is often connected with gender and sex roles. Little boys are supposed to be strong and not cry or be afraid. Little girls are given more permission for sorrow and fear. However, I don't like

to take this too far as I believe all feelings are shamed in our present cultural parenting forms.

Even joy is shamed. When we are happy, excited and rambunctious, we are curtailed. We are told things like, "Don't get too puffed up; pride comes before a fall." Or "Just remember — there are starving children in Latin America." This comes out later in the experience of feeling shame every time you feel really happy, or in feeling shame when you're very successful.

Sex Drive Shame Binds

Perhaps no aspect of human activity has been as dysfunctionally shamed as much as our sexuality. Sexuality is the core of human selfhood. Our sex is not something we have or do, it is who we are. It's the first thing we notice about each other. Sexuality is a basic fact in all created things. If we shut off this drive, we would annihilate the human race in 120 years. Our sexual energy (libido) is our own unique incarnation of the life force itself. To have our sex drive shamed is to be shamed to the core.

All children naturally have sexual curiosity. I can remember vividly when my next-door neighbor told me that the man's penis went into the woman's vagina. I was awestruck. It seemed unbelievable! Sexuality is somewhat awesome and confusing to a child. And children naturally explore their genitals, and at certain ages, engage in childhood sex play.

I have often outlined the following scenario to illustrate how our sexuality is shamed. One day little three-year-old Farquahr, while exploring his body, names his nose. He points to it and names it. Mom is exhilarated and calls Grandma to report Farquahr's brilliant achievement. Grandma comes over and asks Farquahr to perform his new found ability; which he does with grandiose pride. On each occasion when he names his nose, he receives great praise. Later on he finds other parts of his body, ears, eyes, elbows, navel . . . And then one day, one Sunday with all the family in the livingroom (receiving the preacher), Little Farquahr finds his penis!!! He's pretty excited. He thinks, if the nose got them, this will really get them. So he wanders into the living room and proudly displays his penis!

. . . Never has little Farquahr seen such action! Mom has him by the ear and he's moving faster than he's ever moved before. Her face is contorted. She is visibly shaken and tells him in no uncertain terms never to show himself off again. He's told that what he did was bad! Children internalize their parents at their worst. The more out of control the parent is, the more the child's security is threatened.

Variations of this scenario happen in the best of families. Parents who have had their own sexuality shamed cannot handle their children's natural sexuality. When their child explores his sexuality, the parent reacts with

disapproval or worse, disgust. Global comments such as "That's bad" or "Don't ever touch yourself there", "Go get decent — put on your clothes" or "Cover your privates" link sexuality to something bad, dirty and disgusting. This part of us must be disowned. The shame becomes linked to sexuality.

A child growing up in such a family (probably most of us) comes to believe and feel that sexuality is shameful.

Generally speaking, most of our vital spontaneous instinctual life gets shamed. Children are shamed for being too rambunctious, for wanting things and for laughing too loud. Much dysfunctional shame occurs at the dinner table. Children are forced to eat when they are not hungry. Sometimes children are forced to eat what they do not find appetizing. Being exiled at the dinner table until the plate is cleaned is not unusual in modern family life. The public humiliation of sitting at the dinner table all alone, often with siblings jeering, is a painful kind of exposure.

I've had clients who have to eat standing up or on the run because of shameful scenes at the dinner table when they were children. When our instinctual life is shamed, the natural core of our life is bound up. It's like an acorn going through excruciating agony for becoming an oak, or a flower feeling ashamed for blossoming. What happens is that because our instincts are part of our natural endowment, they cannot be repressed. Once our instincts are shame-bound, they become like the hungry dogs which must be watched.

Shame — The Master Emotion

Shame has been called the master emotion because as it is internalized all the other emotions are bound by shame. Emotionally shame-bound parents cannot allow their children to have emotions because the child's emotion triggers the parents' emotions. Repressed emotions often feel too big, like they would completely overwhelm us if we expressed them. There is also the fear of the shame that would be triggered if we expressed our emotions.

The shaming and binding of emotions were core parts of Max's internalized shame. Max had never been physically abused. But he was certainly sexually abused. As the third child he carried his mother's and father's sexual issues. Both were unresolved incest victims. Jerome was a womanizer, although this was always a family secret. Max reported on several occasions that he felt his mother Felicia often acted seductively. Felicia certainly was emotionally abusing. She name-called, compared, yelled and did it with contempt and disgust. Most of all she continually made Max take care of her feelings. She criticized and scorned his feelings. According to Max she said things like, "What are you angry about?" or "There's nothing to be afraid of. "Stop that crying or I'll give you something

to cry about." Max was profoundly sad. He could have cried for ages. I came to believe that his whole family system carried generations of unresolved grief. I could feel the sadness when I sat across from him.

ABANDONMENT THROUGH THE NEGLECT OF DEVELOPMENTAL DEPENDENCY NEEDS

As children, we had needs that depended on others for fulfillment. Children are dependent and needy. They need their parents for 15 years. Their dependency needs can only be satisfied by a caretaker. Figure 2.5 outlines these needs. Children need someone to hold them and touch them. They need a face to mirror and affirm their feelings, needs and drives. Children need a structure with limits; they need predictability. They need a mutually trusting relationship; they need to know there is someone they can count on. Children need to have space and be different. They need security; they need to have enough nutritional food, clothing, shelter and adequate medical care. Children need their parents' time and attention. Children need direction in the form of problem-solving techniques and strategies.

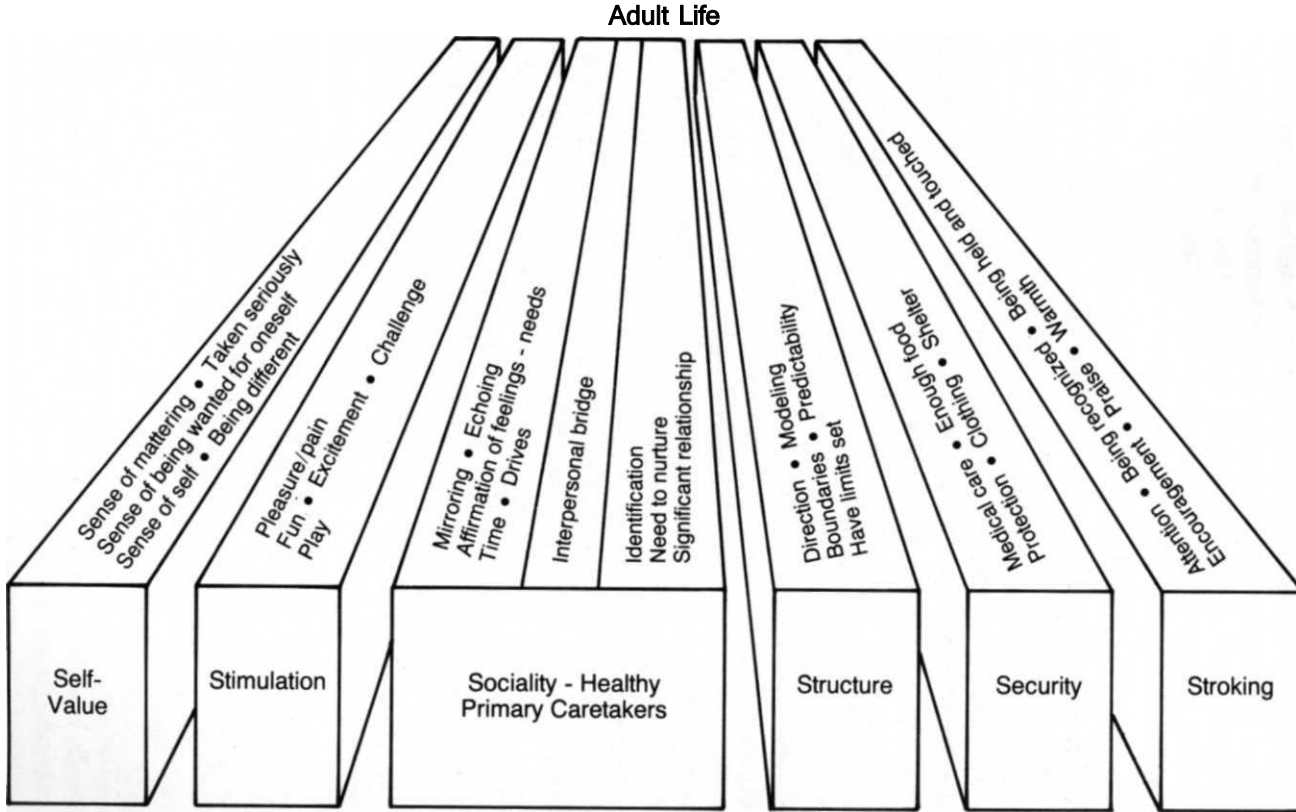
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Need Shame Binds

When these needs are neglected, children are given the message that their needs are not important, and they lose a sense of their own personal value. They are not worth someone being there for them. They get the feeling that they do not matter. As their needs are chronically rejected, children stop believing that they have the right to depend on anyone. These dependency needs depend on the interpersonal bridge and the bond of mutuality for their fulfillment. It is the interpersonal bridge that is broken when one is abandoned through neglect. Since we have no one to depend on, we come to believe that we have no right to depend on anyone. We feel shame when we feel needy. Since these needs are basic needs, i.e., needs we cannot be fully human without, we have to get them met in abortive ways.

A neglected child may learn to get attention by getting into trouble or by annoying his parents. One will drink muddy water when he is dying of thirst. I know of children who get their touch and stimulation needs met by getting spanked. Much has been written about abortive adaptation. Suffice it to say, when one's basic dependency needs are not met at the proper time and in the proper sequence, the personality is arrested at those developmental stages. The child learns adaptive ways to get his needs met. Over the course of time, as one experiences need-deprivation, one loses awareness of these needs. Ultimately one does not even know what one needs.

Figure 2.5. Basic Dependency Needs



Being abandoned through the neglect of our developmental dependency needs is the major factor in becoming an adult child. We grow up; we look like adults. We walk and talk like adults, but beneath the surface is a little child who feels empty and needy, a child whose needs are insatiable because he has a child's needs in an adult body. This insatiable child is the core of all compulsive/addictive behavior.

In Max's case most all his needs were converted into sexual feelings. This is what accounted for his severe sexual addiction. It is also the core dynamic of all sexual addiction. Once a person is abandoned, especially through abuse, he is made into an object.

Max was used by his brother to alter his brother's shame. He was physically abandoned by his father. He was used by the family system. To be used is to be made into an object. By being objectified, Max objectified himself.

Through his internalized shame, Max became an object of his own contempt, criticism, judgment and scorn. He was his own object of rejection. To objectify self and others is to lose personhood. Since Max could no longer experience himself as a whole person, he could no longer experience anyone else as a whole person.

Max spent hours hustling women. He was obsessed by women's breasts. He had no regard for women as persons. He risked family and reputation to touch women's breasts in shopping malls or get glimpses of them through voyeuristic activities.

Another dynamic aspect of the sexual conversion of basic needs is the pleasure of sexual orgasm itself. When one is shamed through abandonment, the pain is deep and profound. One feels worth-less; one feels painfully diminished and exposed. When one experiences sexual stimulation and climax, one has available an all-encompassing and powerful pleasure. This pleasure can take the place of any other need. In a poignant passage, Kaufman sums up the process of converting all needs into sexuality. He writes,

"A young boy who learns never to need anything emotionally from his parents ... is faced with a dilemma whenever he feels young, needy or otherwise insecure. If masturbating has been his principle source of good feeling ... he may resort to masturbation in order to restore good feelings about self at times when he is experiencing needs quite unrelated to sexuality." 1 1

The ego defense of conversion transforms any of the developmental needs into the need for something else. This could be food, money or excessive attention. In Max's case it was sex. Over the course of his childhood, the experience of his developmental needs became associated

with his sex drive. This eventually resulted in the conversion of emotional needing into sexuality. Whenever Max felt insecure, anxious or needy, the inner event registered as sexual desire. Max turned continuously to sex to meet needs that sex cannot provide.

ABANDONMENT THROUGH ENMESHMENT IN THE OVERT AND COVERT NEEDS OF THE FAMILY SYSTEM

I have already described the family as a social system — its components, rules, roles and its law of dynamic homeostasis. You have seen how a dysfunctional family uses the members to maintain its balance. The more dysfunctional the system, the more closed and rigid are the roles it assigns. In families which are chemically, sexually or violently dysfunctional, the needs of the system are overt. The system dispenses its roles for the members to play in order to keep balance.

All the rigid roles set up by family dysfunction are forms of abandonment. To be a family Hero, I had to be strong — never showing the scared vulnerable part of me. Heroes are not supposed to be scared. The roles are like scripts given out for a play. They proscribe what feelings you can or cannot have. After playing my Hero role for years, I no longer really knew who I was. In recovery I had to learn how to give up that role. To do so I had to learn to be vulnerable. I had to learn how to be a member of a group rather than the leader, to follow rather than lead. Because the roles maintain the balance of the system, they exist for the system. The children give up their own reality to take care of the family system — to keep it whole and balanced . . .

Each form of abandonment breaks the interpersonal bridge and the mutual-intimacy bond. A child is precious and incomparable. Unless treated with value and love, this sense of preciousness and incomparability diminishes. In toxic internalized shame, it disappears completely.

Interconnection Of Imagery

The third way that internalization occurs is by internalizing images. These internal images can be of a shaming person, of a place or of an actual experience. They can also be word images, i.e., sound imprints. Hearing someone say certain words may trigger old experiences of shame. Individual shame experiences are fused together by means of language and imagery. Kaufman says, "Scenes of shame become interconnected and magnified." As the language, imagery and scenes associated with shame are fused together, the meaning of shame is transformed. "I feel shame" comes to mean "I am shameful, deficient in some vital way as a human being." Shame is no longer one feeling among many, but comes to constitute the

core of oneself. Internalized shame creates a frozen state of being. Shame is no longer an emotional signal that comes and goes. It is a deep abiding, all-pervasive sense of being defective as a person. This core of defectiveness forms the foundation around which other feelings about the self will be experienced. Gradually over a period of time, this frozen feeling of belief recedes from consciousness. In this way shame becomes basic to one's sense of identity. One becomes a shame-based person.

FUNCTIONAL AUTONOMY

Once internalized, shame can be activated without any external stimuli. There is no longer any need for an interpersonal shame-inducing event. I can remember experiencing painful shame as I went to pay for a speeding ticket. As I walked up to the police station clerk, the occasion forced me to expose my mistake. The clerk was warm, pleasant and smiling. The shame feeling occurred irrespective of the clerk.

INTERNAL SHAME SPIRALS

A last consequence of internalized shame is what Kaufman terms, *the internal shame spiral*. He describes it as follows:

"A triggering event occurs. Perhaps it is trying to get close to someone and feeling rebuffed. Or a critical remark by a friend . . . a person suddenly is enmeshed in shame, the eyes turn inward and the experience becomes totally internal, frequently with visual imagery present. The shame feelings flow in a circle, endlessly triggering each other. The precipitating event is relived internally over and over, causing the sense of shame to deepen, to absorb other neutral experiences . . . until finally the self is engulfed. In this way shame becomes paralyzing."

The spiral is one of the most devastating aspects of dysfunctional shame. Once in motion, it can cause the reliving of other shameful experiences and thereby solidifies shame further within the personality.

After shame is internalized, the fear of exposure is magnified intensely. Exposure now means having one's essential defectiveness as a human being seen. To be exposed, now means to be seen as irreparably and unspeakably bad. One must find a way to defend against such exposure. As the defenses and strategies of transference are developed, internalized shame becomes less and less conscious.

To sum up, shame internalization has four major consequences. A shame-based identity is formed; the depth of shame is magnified and frozen; autonomous shame activation or functional autonomy results; and finally internal shame spirals are made operative.

The School System

Max went to private church school through the eighth grade. He then went to a public high school. His school experience itself was fairly typical of most modern schools. Shaming has always been an integral part of the school system. Sitting in the corner with a dunce cap on is a common association with schooldays. Even though most modern forms of education no longer use dunce caps, there are powerful sources of toxic shame still operating in the school system.: I taught in three high schools and four universities. I found the educational system to be a major force in solidifying the internalization process of shame-based people.

Perfectionism

Perfectionism is a family system rule and is a core culprit in creating toxic shame. We will see it also in both the religious and cultural systems. *Perfectionism denies healthy shame. It does so by assuming we can be perfect. Such an assumption denies our human finitude because it denies the fact that we are essentially limited.* Perfectionism denies that we will make mistakes often and that it's natural to make mistakes.

Perfectionism is involved whenever we take a negative norm or standard and absolutize it. Once absolutized, the norm becomes the measure of everything else. We compare and judge according to that standard.

In school we were compared to the perfect mark of **100**. As we failed to make that mark, we were graded on a descending scale, the lowest mark being an F. Think for a moment of the symbolism of the "F" as a mark. It is associated in mental imagery with the "F" word. When a child becomes a failure in school, it's not long before there is an association with being a failure as a person — a fuck-up. Children get this association very quickly in school. They also associate "bad" grades with being a bad or defective person. And most often the children who are failing, are already shame-based when they come to school. In fact, their shame base often causes their school failure. As they fail in school, their internalized shame deepens. Toxic shame begets toxic shame.

Max exemplifies another route taken by shame-based children in school. Max followed the lead of his shame-based brother and sister. He became a superachiever in school. He was a straight A student. Superachievement and perfectionism are two of the leading cover-ups for toxic shame. As paradoxical as it may seem, the straight A student and the F student may both be driven by toxic shame.

I was a straight A student. I was also the president of my class from the 7th grade on. In my senior year of high school, I was the editor of the school

paper and number six academically. These were parts of my Hero role. How many high school principals would take a student who is senior class president, editor of the school paper, and number six academically, and tell him he needs help for his internalized shame problems? I was also a card-carrying alcoholic by my senior year in high school.

I had started drinking at age 14, and had had several blackouts by my senior year. High achievement is often the result of being driven by toxic shame. Feeling flawed and defective on the inside, I had to prove I was okay by being exceptional on the outside. Everything I did was based on getting authenticated on the outside. My good feelings depended upon achievement.

Toxic shame creates "human doings", people who must do to be okay. Only by accomplishmenfcan they feel okay about themselves.

I remember a shame-based client bragging to me that he was worth one million, two hundred thousand dollars. This guy was obnoxious. He was brutally abusing his wife by flaunting affairs in front of her. His self-worth was his worth. This was the only way he had to gauge it. Since he felt flawed on the inside, he had to have verification on the outside.

The school system promotes a shame-based measure of grading people's intelligence. It would be only half bad if such a system really did measure intelligence. I believe with John Holt that the true test of intelligence is not what you know or can regurgitate from memory on an exam. It's not what you know how to do, but "what you do when you don't know what to do."

Perfectionism also spawns destructive competition. Certainly there is a nurturing form of competitiveness. Such competition moves us to do better and to expand and grow. But a perfectionistic system like the cunent school system encourages cheating and creates high levels of distress. Grades are often posted publicly for all eyes to see. And there is shaming exposure when one gets "bad" grades. Even the adjective "bad" lends itself to characterological shame. Each person is pitted against the next in a warfare of endeavor. The communal sense of joint venture and cooperation are lost.

Rationalism

Our schools display an enormous bias in educating the mind rather than the whole person. We place major emphasis on reasoning, logic and math, with almost no concern for emotions, intuition and creativity. Our students become memorizing mimics and dull conformists, rather than exciting and feeling creators.

Much work has emerged over the last few decades in studying the right hemisphere of the brain. This side of the brain is the source of "felt thought". Felt thought is the core of music and poetry. The right hemisphere is holistic and intuitive. It uses imagination rather than memory. Students

who have a natural propensity for this side of the brain are penalized.

I know of brilliant students who were painfully shamed because of their intuitive and felt ways of knowing. Our rationalistic bias causes the shaming rejection of imagination and emotion. I remember once giving a teacher my "hunch" about a presented problem. I was told that guessing was not the mark of an educated mind. I was sent to the library to get the correct data. All in all our schools shame some of the most vibrant and creative aspects of the human psyche.

Peer Group Shaming

I remember Arnold. He was a brilliant accountant. He had been viciously shamed in high school. His presenting problem was his criticalness of women. No woman was ever good enough. As his relationship with a woman would intensify, Arnold would start finding fault. He was a nit-picker of great expertise. The outcome of all this was that he was 40 years old, fairly successful financially, but painfully alone.

Arnold had had some shaming in early childhood from an authoritarian and military-type father. But this was tempered with enough love from his mother to save him from being trembly shame-based during early and middle childhood. Later on his family moved to a small town and Arnold had to start the second semester of his sophomore year in a new high school. The town and the high school were cliquish and monied. Arnold was from a rather poor family. He rode the bus to a school where 95% of the kids had new cars. Arnold was scapegoated from the moment he set foot in the school. He was laughed at, made fun of, and ridiculed by one group of girls. Some days he was hit with waterbombs and sacks of horseshit as he waited for the bus. This treatment continued until the middle of his senior year. For two years Arnold suffered almost chronic shaming. This was an excruciating experience.

High school is the time of puberty. And puberty is a time of feeling intense exposure and vulnerability. Whatever toxic shame a person carries from childhood will be tested in high school. Often teenage groups look for a scapegoat. Someone everyone can dump and project their shame onto. This was Arnold's fate. He was viciously shamed by his female peer group. This accounted for his problem with women.

The peer group becomes like a new parent. Only this parent is much more rigid, and has several sets of eyes to look you over. Physical appearance is crucial. Acne and poor sexual development can be excruciating. Conforming to the peer group dress standards is a must if one wants to avoid being shamed. All in all, it can be disastrous if one is not physically or financially endowed.

The elementary school years can also be a source of shame. Children can be terribly cruel. Any child with deformities is especially vulnerable to ridicule. Children will shame other children the way they've been shamed. And if a child is being shamed at home, he will want to pass the hot potato by shaming others. Children like to tease. And teasing is a major source of shaming. Teasing is often done by shame-based parents, who interpersonally transfer their shame by teasing their children. Older siblings can deliver some of the crudest teasing of all. I have been horrified listening to clients' accounts of being teased by older siblings.

School was perhaps the only place in Max's life where he was not shamed. His toxic shame motivated him to be an achiever. He put himself through graduate school by working at night. He endured tremendous hardships in order to get his degree. It was a place in his life that he felt like he accomplished something. Unfortunately, accomplishments do not reduce internalized shame. In fact, the more one achieves, the more one has to achieve. Toxic shame is about being; no amount of doing will ever change it.

The Religious System

Max's religious upbringing was rigid and authoritarian. He was taught at any early age that he was born with the stain of sin on his soul, and that he was a miserable sinner. He was also taught that God knew his innermost thoughts and was watching everything he did.

An early traumatic experience of shaming occurred when Max was nine years old. A young religious fanatic in his congregation caught Max touching himself in the church bathroom, and made an awful scene. He dragged Max into the church and asked him to prostrate himself before the altar and beg God's forgiveness.

Many religious denominations teach a concept of man as wretched and stained with original sin. Original sin as taught by some religious bodies means you are bad from the moment you are born. The teaching of original sin accounts for a lot of the child-rearing practices which are geared toward breaking a child's unruly will and natural propensity toward evil.

God As Punitive

Max often told me he hoped God would forgive him for the evils he had done. And although he had a rather brilliant intellect, he still clung to some rather childish religious beliefs. God somehow kept score, and Max could never catch up. With original sin you're beat before you start.

I often ask myself how anyone could really believe in the fires of hell. Here was Max, whose life was a continuous torment, whose inner voices

never stopped their incessant shame spirals, so what more could hell possibly be? Why would a just and loving God want to burn someone like Max for all eternity? Well, Max believed it, and that's what a therapist has to work with. His shame was greatly intensified by his belief that God knew all his inner thoughts and would punish him for his sins.

DENIAL OF SECONDARY CAUSALITY

One of the most insidious and toxically shaming distortions of many religions is the denial of secondary causality. What this means is that according to some church doctrines, the human will is inept. There is *nothing* man can do that is of any value. Of himself, man is a worm. Only when God works through him does man become restored to dignity. But it's never anything that man does of himself.

The theology here is abortive of any true doctrine of Judeo/Christianity. Most mainline interpretations see man as having true secondary causality. Thomas Aquinas, in the prologue to the second part of his *Summa Theologia* writes, "After our treatise on God, we turn to man, who is God's Image, insofar as man, too, *like God, has the power over his works*" (italics mine).

This is a strong statement of human causality. Man's will is effective. In order to receive grace, man must be willing to accept the gift of faith. After acceptance, man's will plays a major role in the sanctification process.

The abortive interpretation sees man as totally flawed and defective. Of himself, he can only sin. Man is shame-based to the core.

DENIAL OF EMOTIONS

The religious system in general has not given human emotions much press. There are denominations and sects that are highly emotional. And from time to time charismatic renewal groups spontaneously arise to bring vitality and new vigor into the life of a church group. But in general, there's not a lot of permission to show emotions.

I see two basic types of religious structures — one I call the Apollonian and the other the Dionysian. Neither really permits a true and healthy expression of emotion.

The Apollonian type religion is very rigid, stoic and severe. It can also be very intellectual. In either case, outpouring of emotions are not acceptable.

The Dionysian is the charismatic or cultic type of enthusiastic worship. These types of worship seem to favor free emotional expression, but, in reality, only certain types of emotions can be shown. There are emotional outbursts, but they have no true connection with feelings. The outburst type of religiosity is often a way to get the emotions over with. They are poured out, but the subject does not experience them for long. Honest emotions,

especially anger, are not permitted anywhere. The same is true of sexual feelings. Religion has added its voice to sexual shame. Some interpretations of the Protestant Reformers actually imply that Original Sin was concupiscence or sexual desire. Some religious interpretations equate desire and sexuality with the result that any kind of strong desire is prohibited.

PERFECTIONISM — THE RELIGIOUS SCRIPT

Religion has been a major source of shaming through perfectionism. Moral shoulds, oughts and musts have been sanctioned by subjective interpretations of religious revelation. The Bible has been used to justify all sorts of blaming judgment. Religious perfectionism teaches a kind of behavioral righteousness. There is a religious script, which contains the standards of holiness and righteous behavior. These standards dictate how to talk (there is a proper God voice), how to dress, walk and behave in almost every situation. Departure from this standard is deemed sinful.

What a perfectionistic system creates is a 'how to get it right' behavioral script. In such a script one is taught how to act loving and righteous. It's actually more important to *act* loving and righteous *than to be* loving and righteous. The feeling of righteousness and acting sanctimoniously are wonderful ways to mood alter toxic shame. They are often ways to interpersonally transfer one's shame to others.

REUGIOUS ADDICTION

Mood alteration is an ingredient of compulsive/addictive behavior. Addiction has been described as "a pathological relationship to any mood-altering experience that has life-damaging consequences." Toxic shame has been suggested as the core and fuel of all addiction. Religious addiction is rooted in toxic shame, which can be readily mood-altered through various religious behaviors. One can get feelings of righteousness through any form of worship. One can fast, pray, meditate, serve others, go through sacramental rituals, speak-in-tongues, be slain by the Holy Spirit, quote the Bible, read Bible passages, say the name of Jahweh or Jesus. Any of these can be a mood-altering experience. If one is toxically shamed, such an experience can be immensely rewarding.

The disciples of any religious system can say we are good and the others, those not like us, the sinners, they are bad. This can be exhilarating to the souls of toxically shamed persons.

Righteousness is also a form of *shameless behavior*. Since healthy shame says we can and will inevitably make mistakes (the Bible says the just man will fall 70 times seven), then righteousness becomes a kind of shameless behavior.

All in all the religious system has been a major source of toxic shame for many people.

The Cultural System

T.S. Eliot wrote, "This was a decent godless people. Their only monument the asphalt road and a thousand lost golf balls." In this quote, *The Waste-Land*, and *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, Eliot made a strong indictment on the hopelessness of modern man.

In *Bradshaw On.- The Family* society itself is seen as a sick family system built on the rules of the poisonous pedagogy. These rules deny emotions. This sets us up for the psychic numbing that leads to addiction. These rules come from the time of Kings. They are non-democratic and are based on a kind of master-slave inequality. They promote obsessive orderliness and obedience. They are rigid and deny vitality. Good children are defined as meek, considerate, unselfish and perfectly law-abiding. Such rules allow no place for vitality, spontaneity, inner freedom, inner independence and critical judgment. These rules cause parents, even well-intentioned ones, to abandon their children. Such abandonment creates the toxic shame I've been describing.

Society As Compulsive And Addicted

Our society is highly addictive. We have 60 million sexual abuse victims. Possibly 75 million lives are seriously affected by alcoholism, with no telling how many more through other drugs. We have no idea of the actual impact on our economy resulting from the billions of tax free dollars that come from the illegal drug traders. Over 15 million families are violent. Some 60% of women and 50% of men have eating disorders. We have no actual data on work addiction or sexual addictions. I saw a recent quotation that cited 13 million gambling addicts. If toxic shame is the fuel of addiction — we have a massive problem of shame in our society.

Another indicator of the hopelessness that is rooted in and results from our shame is our feverish overactivism and compulsive lifestyle. Erich Fromm made an extensive diagnosis of this in his book *The Revolution Of Hope*. He saw our overactivism as a sign of the restlessness and lack of inner peace that flows from the core of our shame. We are human doings because we have no inner life. Our toxic shame won't let us go inward. It is too painful for us in there. It is too hopeless in there. As Sheldon Kopp says, "We can change what we are doing, but we can't change who we are." If I am flawed and defective as a human person, then there's something wrong with me. I am a mistake. I am hopeless.

THE SUCCESS MYTH

Someone once said, "Success is different at different stages of development — from not wetting your pants in infancy, to being well liked in childhood and adolescence, to getting laid in young adulthood, to making money and having prestige in later adulthood, to getting laid in middle age, to being well-liked in old age, to not wetting your pants in senility." What's right about that description is the emphasis on making money, having prestige and being well-liked.

Perhaps the greatest modern American literary tragedy was the play, *The Death Of A Salesman* by Arthur Miller. Miller was able to create a great Aristotelian tragic hero out of an ordinary common man. Willy Loman is a symbol of the American success myth. He lives his life based on the belief that success is being well-liked and making money. Willy dies lonely and destitute, taking his own life in order to get the insurance money which would prove he was successful. In his *Poetics* Aristotle states that the power of a great tragic hero results from the combination of his nobleness coupled with some tragic flaw. Willy is noble. He is willing to die for his faith. It is his faith that is the tragic flaw. He truly believes that if a man makes money and is well-liked, he will be a success. This is what it means to make it.

The success myth also preaches a kind of rugged individuality. One is to make it on his own. One is to be self-made and to be one's own man. In this myth money and its symbols become the measure of how well you make it. A man in his 50s with a low income, has to feel the shaming pinch of this belief system. And as much as one might protest all this, money and the fame that goes with it, still have enormous power in our lives.

RIGID SEX ROLES

The rigid sex roles still espoused by our society are measuring symbols of perfection. There are real men and real women. Before we were born, there was a blueprint of how to be a man and how to be a woman.

Real men are rugged individuals. They act rather than talk. They are silent and decisive. A real man never shows weakness, emotion or vulnerability. Real men win. They never give their opponent an advantage.

Real women are the helpmates of real men. They are the caretakers of the domestic scene. They are emotional, vulnerable and fragile. They are the peacemakers. In return they look for everlasting "romantic love". They look for a prince who will come and reward them for all they have given up, the reward being that they will be taken care of for the rest of their lives.

Many believe these roles are a thing of the past. But I suggest that you watch the way parents take care of little boys and little girls. Notice the way

we dress the sexes and above all notice children's toys. Child's play is the precursor of the adult world of work. Children's toys are still highly sexist. Watch the way a liberated mother and father handle their girlchild, and then watch the way they handle their boychild. They won't even touch them the same way.

Our sex role scripts are rigid and divisive. They are also shaming in that they are caricatures of maleness and femaleness. They are overidentifications with parts of us, but fail to allow for completion and wholeness. Each of us is the offspring of a male and a female. Each of us has both male and female hormones. Each sex is determined by the majority hormones it possesses. And each sex needs to integrate its contrasexual opposite side in order to be complete and be whole. The rigid sex roles set standards which disallow wholeness and completion. Such standards shame our contrasexual opposite parts. A man is shamed for seeking to embrace his vulnerability. A woman is designated a bitch for becoming assertive and actualizing her maleness.

THE MYTH OF THE PERFECT "10"

Our culture presents a physical perfectionistic system which is cruelly shaming to the physically unendowed. The perfect woman or man is a "10". The movie "10" with Bo Derek gave great impetus to this mythology.

The perfect "10" has very definite attributes that enhance the sexual shaming which occurs in our society. The perfect "10" woman has perfectly round breasts, size 38D, with matching hips and buttocks. The perfect "10" man has a muscular, tanned and proportionately perfect physical body. His penis is eight inches plus.

These physical ideals have caused untold suffering and shame to an incredible number of people. I have file after file of men and women who have suffered intense shame over the size of their genitals. Small to flat chested women with histories of high school pain and isolation have peopled my counseling office over the last 20 years. Males worried about the size of their penises are commonplace in counseling annals. Sex is either secretive or banal. As banal, the bantering about genital sizes is orchestrated on the late night talk shows and in the comic routines of club comedians.

Max was obsessed with the idea that his penis was too small. He also thought himself very unattractive because of a slight harelip resulting from being hit in the mouth with a baseball. Max also had acne as an adolescent. All of this physical data added greatly to his pain and shame. And all of this was in spite of the medical data, which Max knew, that the average male genital is five to six inches erect and the absolute fact that women found

Max enormously attractive.

Comparing ourselves to the perfect "10" mythical standard is a major source of sexual shame in our society.

DENIAL OF EMOTIONS

Our culture does not handle emotions well. We like folks to be happy and fine. We learn rituals of acting happy and fine at an early age. I can remember many times telling people "I'm fine" when I felt like the world was caving in on me. I often think of Senator Muskie who cried on the campaign trail when running for president. From that moment on he was history. We don't want a president who has emotions. We would rather have one that can act! Emotions are certainly not acceptable in the workplace. True expression of any emotions that are not "positive" are met with disdain.

THE MYTH OF THE GOOD OL BOY AND THE NICE GAL

The good of boy myth and the nice gal are a kind of social conformity myth. They create a real paradox when put together with the "rugged individual" part of the Success Myth. How can I be a rugged individual, be my own man and conform at the same time? Conforming means "Don't make a wave", "Don't rock the boat". Be a nice gal or a good ol' boy. This means that we have to pretend a lot.

"We are taught to be nice and polite. We are taught that these behaviors (most often lies) are better than telling the truth. Our churches, schools, and politics are rampant with teaching dishonesty (saying things we don't mean and pretending to feel ways we don't feel). We smile when we feel sad; laugh nervously when dealing with grief; laugh at jokes we don't think are funny; tell people things to be polite that we surely don't mean."

Bradshaw On: The Family

Playing roles and acting are forms of lying. If a person acts like they really feel and it rocks the boat, they are ostracized. We promote pretense and lying as a cultural way of life. Living this way causes an inner split. It teaches us to hide and cover up our toxic shame. This sends us deeper into isolation and loneliness.