

# INTIMACY FROM THE INSIDE OUT

SHAME + REACTIVE PARTS

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BASIC TRAINING: MODULE 9



## Shame across cultures

- > Of course cultures are different and handle issues of shamefulness differently
- > Some theories believe in the universality of shame though contexts and challenges may differ
- > As always we ask, don't tell. We help people become curious and listen to what their parts tell them. Then we follow.



# Shame and Reactivity in Couple Therapy

## TAKE AWAYS:

- > How shame and shaming shows up in intimate relationships
- > A working definition
- > Shame as a verb, not a noun
- > Recognize that a negative identity reinforced over time can be present with “BIG T” or “little t” events
- > Ideas of how we work with it in IFIO



# A working definition of shame:

- > A global sense of un-worthiness
- > Universal
- > Becomes toxic
- > Repairable
- > A bad thing happened = I am bad=I am alone



# Shame and the Autonomic Nervous System

Shame and shaming in relationship can create chronic feelings of unsafety which leads to chronic ANS dys-regulation

## When exiles get a voice they say:

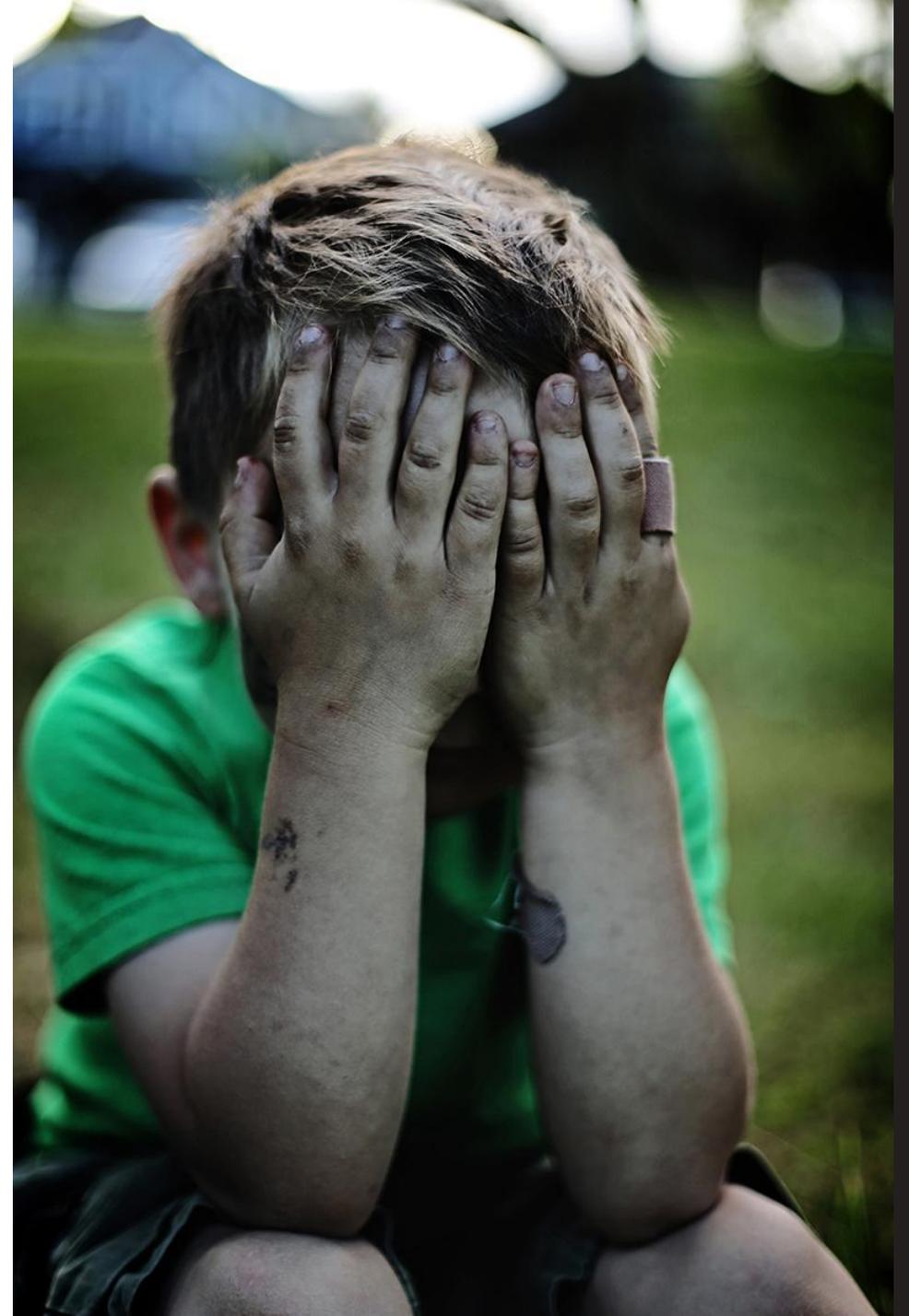
- > “I am worthless and unlovable”
- > How do they know?
  - Someone told them?
    - Who told them?
    - Someone else
- > And then what happened?



# Exiles and Protectors

**Exiles accept the message and Protectors turn inward to continue the cycle of shaming**

- Shame and shaming originates interpersonally in childhood
- Shaming ourselves quickly becomes a strategy to reduce shameful feelings from getting bigger and more intense
- Shaming others to mitigate shameful feelings follows





# The Cycle

**What was done to me,  
I do to myself**

**What I do to myself,  
I do to others**

## The IFIO perspective

**Shame is not a  
“thing”**

**Shame is an  
“action”**





# When people are in a loop of shame and shaming, their protectors become:

- > Self-focused
- > Prone to disconnect
- > Apt to become relationally dangerous

# The language of shame in relationship:

**TOO  
MUCH**



**NOT  
ENOUGH**

# Behaviors of some common shame protectors

- Anger, blame and, shame
- Withdrawing or avoiding
- Perfectionistic
- Chronic criticism (self and other)
- Over-doing (substances, work, etc)
- Caretaking and attempts to rescue
- Can you think of more?





## When protectors feel safe, they say:

- > I have failed where once I succeeded
- > Everyone hates me
- > I have to live in the shadows
- > I am in a life and death situation

# OUR GOAL

In IFIO therapy we can reverse the message

**FROM:  
“I AM BAD”**



**TO:  
“A BAD THING  
HAPPENED”**

## WE DO THIS BY:

- > Slowing down
- > Working first with affect regulation to create some safety
- > Help couples understand how the ANS works related to shame and shaming
- > Practice unblending
- > Get to know the protective system relationally
- > Link vulnerability with protection
- > Name and work with current trauma, cultural and legacy burdens
- > Encourage people to find safe community to self-disclose outside of therapy

# Shame Regulation

- Shame and shaming begets shame and shaming
- Compassion, self-compassion, self-forgiveness is the antidote
- Therefore IFIO can provide significant healing





“The process, in which we hold  
in **tenderness, respect and  
compassion** a person’s  
**suffering** and **help them**  
access a **mindful,**  
**self-compassionate** stance  
**toward themselves** is the  
paradigm in IFIO that makes  
**deep healing** possible  
inside and out”

—TONI HERBINE-BLANK, MSN, RN

# Healing is facilitated when:

- > The therapist's sensitivity and courage to name the cycle
- > Inviting shame into conscious awareness; differentiation of disowned parts
- > Internal security, listening and witnessing to the stories of exiles and protectors
- > Unburdening; individual, cultural and systemic
- > Self-compassion, self-forgiveness
- > Safe self-disclosure

**Sometimes  
relationship therapy  
is NOT indicated**





# Countertransference

WHAT PARTS OF THE THERAPIST  
EASILY BLOCK THE PROCESS OF  
HEALING THE CYCLE OF SHAME?

- > Rescuers and caretakers
  - If I name your shame,  
you will feel more shame*
- > Anxious parts that bypass or try to hurry the process
- > Too hard to sit with the shame of others



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