

Group: What is the DIFFERENCE between SHAME and GUILT?

1. Shame means “I am wrong.”

- Shame hurts our self-image.
- We learn to believe that there is “no way” we could be better or change things.

Guilt means “I did something wrong.”

- Guilt builds up our humility and self esteem – self image.
- Guilt means that I feel badly about what I did.
- Guilt means that I intend to make amends or “fix” my mistakes.

2. Shame does not lead to positive change or healing.

- When we experience shame we will try to ignore or avoid whatever causes us the sense of shame.
 - Example:
 - When we feel shame about our weight, we will avoid the gym or physical activity to avoid the feeling of shame.

Guilt leads to positive change.

- Guilt is feeling badly about something and can inspire us to act differently in the future.
 - Example:
 - Coming in late for work. I will get up earlier to stop doing this.

3. Shame always leads to disconnection from others.

- Shame prevents us from feeling strong enough to confess our mistakes or making us defensive when others point them out.

Guilt can often lead to healing behaviors – change.

- Confessing our errors allows us to be vulnerable with others.
- Guilty feelings can prompt us to build a connection through communication or changed behavior.

4. Shame is internalized and deeply connected to our sense of who we are.

- Shame stays in our memories and will haunt us

Guilt is often “passing” or time limited.

- Guilt will fade with time or after corrective action is taken.

5. Shame is never healthy or useful.

- Shame will never cause us to change. It is too deep.
- Shame will shut us down and cause considerable internal pain.

Guilt can be healthy and useful.

- Guilt can be very useful in developing:
 - o Humility
 - Making Amends
 - Improving our relationships

6. Shame is about causing “pain” for an individual.

- Shame is about making someone feel unworthy, different, or less than the speaker.
- Shameful comments are meant to hurt another.

Guilt is all about asking for accountability/responsibility for an individual.

- Guilt is about communicating or sharing our disappointment in certain behaviors – rather than the person as a whole.

7. Shame underlies a host of psycho-social problems:

- Depression – feeling worthless
- Substance abuse – stop the pain, avoid the shame
- Infidelity – who cares?
- Isolation
- Self abuse – punish myself.

Guilt expressed to others is very healthy:

- Indicates growth in humility
- Indicates a healthy sense of reality
- Indicates an ability to have a positive relationship with another (trust)

Ticket:

Welcomed Freedom group this morning and opened session with the Serenity Prayer.

Continued discussion/process of looking at shame and guilt. Group came to understand that “shame” is an internalized feeling of being unworthy, not of value, etc. Guilt is the awareness that what we did was wrong – and guilt remains external to our person. Looked at many examples of this in everyday life. Shame cripples our spirit and can lead to depression and addiction. Guilt, if managed in a positive manner can lead to making amends in our lives and gaining the virtue of humility. Good group discussion.

Plan:

- Next sessions have clients name areas of shame in their lives and estimate how deep and encompassing the shame is.
- Continue to encourage honest expression of thoughts and feelings.

very attentive and willing to risk speaking up and questioning the “myths” they have been raised with in regard to worthiness and shame.