

# Resolving Shame

by Steve and Connirae Andreas

We first wrote about shame over 12 years ago.<sup>1</sup> Shame is often called “the secret emotion,” because most people who are ashamed are also ashamed of feeling ashamed, so they seldom talk about it, or bring it up as a problem to be solved. The videotaped session below<sup>2</sup> occurred in a Master Practitioner training in 1990. The transcript is presented verbatim, except for deleting repetitions, some “OK”s, and a few other very small changes in order to make it more readable.

## Shame Pattern Demonstration

Steve: First, I presume you already have in your mind something that causes you to feel shame.

Woman: Yes, it's ah—

Steve: And don't tell them any content. They will get nosy and their brains will get derailed, and they won't notice we're doing anything. OK, you got one? (Uhuh.) Is this a specific time or is it a period of time?

Woman: Period of time.

Steve: OK. How about just taking a—because we will apply it to the whole period of time, I guarantee you, before we are done. But for right now, how about thinking about a specific incident. It will make it easier for us to explore what the situation is, OK? (Uhuh.) Good. Now, put that one on a shelf for a minute, and think of some other situation in which you violated someone else's standards, or you didn't meet someone else's standards, but for whatever reasons, you *didn't* feel shame. (OK.) You got one? (Umhm.)

Steve: How come you didn't feel shame there?

Woman: Um, because I was . . . I was doing what I wanted to do.

Steve: OK. Well, how come you *did* feel shame in the other one?

Woman: Because it seemed like it had more to do with my personage, with myself.

Steve: OK. This is an important distinction, the distinction between whether a certain situation reflects on your *self*, your self-concept, your *being*, or whether it reflects only on your behavior. And this is something that Leslie Cameron-Bandler was doing—it seems like a million years ago!—Making the distinction between self and behavior. And it's a very nice first step in general, when you are doing a lot of work, to make the distinction that if someone insults you, or they say you did wrong or something like that, that they are only commenting on your behavior. It makes it a lot easier to deal with. However, when you are young and you are in a family of perhaps less than total resources, it is hard to know that—but we can go back and fix it. (Good.) Now, if you compare those two experiences, the one of shame, and the one of . . . we'll just say “not shame,” where again you knew you were not meeting someone's standards in some way, but you didn't experience shame. What are the differences—submodality differences in particular?

Woman: OK. Well, the shame one's over here. (She gestures a little to her left, hands about two feet apart.) And it's round, oval. It's—the brightness is a little less than normal brightness.

Steve: OK, it's a little dim.

Woman: Umhm. It's 3-D.

Steve: Which way is it oval, by the way? You said it was—

Woman: Like this.

Steve: And then you're tilting a little bit. (Her right hand is about six inches higher than her left.)

Woman: Umhm.

Steve: Kind of like that?

Woman: Yeah, except the people in it are standing up, but the part of it that I see is like this.

Steve: OK. So it's kind of like that. OK. And so there are people in there?

Woman: Umhm. I'm one of the people.

Steve: You're one of the people, so you see yourself in this. (Umhm.) So it's dissociated. That's a wise move, by the way. Just for a moment, just for their edification, what would happen if you stepped in? ...

Woman: (shaking her head emphatically) I couldn't!

Steve: No way! OK, that's fine, that's enough. You understand the difference? Now, let's think about the other one for a moment. So it's on the other side?

Woman: OK, it's...yes. Um--

Steve: Tell me about that one.

Woman: It's more to the right, over here. I guess it's square (she gestures in a rectangular shape, about 2' wide and 8" high), although it's three dimensional, and ... the brightness is normal. It's further back, and I'm in and out. I mean, I—

Steve: OK, so you step in or not.

Woman: Right. There's also ... the auditory part is ... the tones are real pleasant over here. And on the shame one it's more of a—what I would call a cackling.

Steve: Cackling. Oooh, Good.

Woman: There's words, but there's a kind of a cackling to the tone—tonality.

Steve: OK. So, let's see, now you spoke of this... the not shame as being 3-D. Is the other flat? Or is it 3-D, too?

Woman: No, they are both 3-D.

Steve: OK, they are both 3-D, so we won't pay attention to that, since they are both the same. Any other differences between— Oh, this one (not shame) is farther away, right?

Woman: Yes, it is.

Steve: How far away is this?

Woman: It's about like out where Keith is. That's my normal—

Steve: OK, twenty–thirty feet?

Woman: Yeah.

Steve: Say twenty–five feet.

Woman: Yeah. And this one is like more, like about eight feet.

Steve: OK. Any other differences you notice between those?

Woman: In this one (not shame) I have—it's interesting. I have a sensation but it's not midline, it's just to the right of midline, a pleasant sensation is the way I would describe it.

Steve: OK. I'll just code this by "right," here, so positive feeling, right.

(Umhm, yeah.) Which emergency responders would call "right lower quadrant." (she laughs) Any other differences between the two?

Woman: This one (shame) would be really unpleasant if I were to step into it (nervous laughter)

Steve: Yes, I understand.

Woman: But I'm not going to, there's an off balance, a spinning sensation.

Steve: If you were to step into this for a moment, you would get off balance and spinning. (Umhm.) OK. But you don't get—over here, if you step into it, you get the nice warm sensation. (Right.) OK. Now, I want to ask you something else. Well, first, any other submodality differences you notice between them? (No.) Well, OK, that's plenty. Um, there are people in both of these? (Umhm.) OK. I want you to give me... these are actually content— Well, let me ask specifically. As you see yourself in this one, is there any difference in the size, between you and the other people?

Woman: No. There's—

Steve: Because you are real size and they are real size, or they are proportional, or whatever?

Woman: Well, they are proportional to each other, but they are bigger than the background. I just noticed that.

Steve: They are *bigger* than the background. (Umhm.) So, like unrealistically bigger? Or...just more prominent?

Woman: Umm. Maybe it's more prominent, is what it is.

Steve: You notice them a lot. (Yeah, umhm.) Now, where are they looking?...

Woman: Well, it's hard for me to get that, because the content of it was literally a swinging around.

Steve: OK. So *you* were swinging around in the picture itself? (Yeah, umhm.) Like on a swing or something like that?

Woman: (laughing) No, somebody picking me up.

Steve: Somebody picking you up. (Yeah.) And swinging you around. And that was not pleasant, right? (No.) Now over here, how many other people, roughly, over here? (Um, a couple.) Just a couple? (Yeah.) And over here? (Two.) OK, two in both.

Let me just explain what I am fishing for a little bit. Sometimes in the experience of shame there is some kind of distortion. Sometimes the other people are larger. Sometimes the person—yourself in this case—sometimes it's not real in some way. The person is deformed, or without clothes, or in some way there is a representation of not being fully yourself. (Umhm.)

Man: If you are a kid and they are bigger—

Steve: Yeah, well, I mean bigger proportionally. Unrealistically bigger. Sometimes, you know, you feel very small and there's these giants around you, and although kids could experience that just with the normal size, often there's a distortion of

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this nature. So I gather there aren't any of these in that? (No.) Fine, good. Now, just as an aside, if there were distortions like that, right now I would change those before I did anything else.

Just as in the grief pattern, if someone sees the lost person in a coffin, you make it into the live person, the person that they miss, the person that they loved and cared for, not the body in the coffin. You would make a specific content change in the picture at this point if that were the case.

Man: So those are not only content distortions, but also size distortions? What are you talking about?

Steve: I'm talking about that as a content distortion, because it's specific to content. You can think of size as a submodality. If the whole picture changes, I call it a submodality change. Maybe there's a middle ground, I don't know what you'd call it. But anyway, if there was a big/little distortion, I would have them change that at this point.

Man: And also a looking distortion?

Steve: Yeah. Often the person over here, everyone is looking at them and laughing, or criticizing, or doing whatever they are doing. And typically in the resource one, it's just like normal, you know, where people are looking at each other, or at the wall, or at whatever is going on. OK?

Man: If you were going to deal with that content distortion, what would you do with it?

Steve: Just say, "Make yourself bigger," or "Make them smaller." Make yourself bigger, make the other people smaller, until they are appropriate, realistic. You just tell them to do it. I've never had any problem with it yet. Just tell them to do it and they go, "Yes, sir!" and they go ahead and do it.

Woman: Just, you know, they were— I guess they *were* bigger because I did that when you just said that, and it opened out the frame (laughs) enough to where it's not nearly as panicky as it was.

Steve: OK, so they were probably a little bigger. (Yeah.) So, here's a nice example. I didn't even tell her to do it, and she did it. You said it opened out the frame. Did it actually make it larger?

Woman: Yeah, and it—

Steve: And is it less impactful?

Woman: Yes, because it made it square all of a sudden.

Steve: It made it square?

Woman: It's not oval anymore.

Steve: OK. Now, the next thing we want to do is map across, and usually the easiest thing to do is to change location. So take this picture and move it out to that location (on the right), and find out what else changes at the same time. It's already got a square frame over here, right? And as it goes over there, does it brighten up a little?

Woman: OK. The... ah... yeah. It brightens up, and all of a sudden the

sound goes from cackling to more like a—

Steve: —normal sound?

Woman: Yeah, or like a merry-go-round. You know, it's... like now it's fun.

Steve: Now it's fun. (Yeah.) OK. That's a difference, huh?

Woman: (laughs) Yes!

Steve: OK, do you see it out there, about where Keith was? He's gone now.

Woman: Umhm. Kind of behind Nelson and Clinton.

Steve: Behind Nelson. OK, great. (Yeah.) And you hear the sound changed already. And now what happens if you were to step into it? Briefly... (She moves her head in a small circle.)

Steve: Boy, it sure turns your head around, doesn't it? (Yeah.) Now come back out (laughter) or you'll get dizzy. (to the group) Did you see her head going around?

Woman: It just... um... it doesn't... you know, it's... I could get dizzy but it doesn't have the scary feeling to it, the off balance feeling and out of control feeling.

Steve: How about shame?

Woman: Um, well the same *comments* are being said that were shaming, but it's like I'm not reacting as though—

Steve: (to the group) Isn't that fairly obvious, just looking at her? She's kind of smiling and she's talking about this like, "No big deal."

Woman: You know, it's kind of like I could say, "No, up yours," you know.

Steve: There you go. OK. That looks real good to me. Now, at this point I want you to do something else. Now the shame is gone, right? (Umhm.) Now, keeping that picture over there, and I don't imagine you want to ever move it back, right? (No!) OK. Just keep it over there and now I want you to consider what was the standard that was not met in that situation.

Woman: Um, it had ... OK. It had ... do you want the content?

Steve: If you don't mind.

Woman: No. It just had to do with body image.

Steve: Body image. OK. Now, is that a standard that you want to meet? Is that a standard that you want to have for yourself?

Woman: It is ... OK, how can I say this? ... I do, but not with that person's criteria?

Steve: Fine. So you want to have your own criteria for body image. (Umhm.) So in terms of this specific situation, you are essentially saying

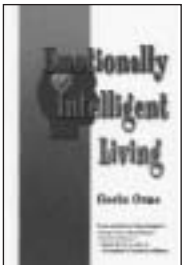
their standards, given their criteria, are not something you want to have for yourself, is that correct? (Right.) Great. Now, at this point, take a moment to consider what *are* your standards and criteria. You may have thought of this already, and it may be just a matter of accessing it and just briefly thinking about it. What standards *do* you want to meet? (OK) Given that this happened in childhood, it's possible that this may never occur again but just in case--

Woman: This one was about like as a teenager.

Steve: Teenager. (Yeah.) OK, now given that that happened so long ago, it may be that nothing like this will



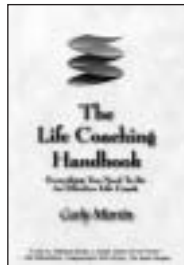
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ever happen again. But if it were to happen again, or anything similar to it, we would want you to be prepared. Given that those other people have this different standard than you have, how do you want to respond to them? Is it enough to just know that you have a different set of standards, and that you can now say, "Up yours," or something like that inside—or outside if you want to? But whatever response you want to have in that situation, just think about that and think about that if that should ever happen again, that in this situation that's what you would be satisfied doing. (OK.) OK. And that looks pretty good. Any parts object to any—

Woman: *No!*

Steve: (laughs) No! It doesn't look like it!

Woman: It's nice to tell people "Up yours!" (she laughs)

Steve: OK. There are times for doing that. It's like, "Off my suedes." "Back off!" (Yeah.) OK, now do you have any questions about this?

Woman: No, I just want to take it back through a bunch of other—

Steve: We will do that next. (both laugh) OK. Now, you've done the timeline generalization stuff, the "decision destroyer" and all those things. Now I want you to first take a moment to just think about this situation and that by perceiving this in this

area rather than over here, you can have all these resources of being able to notice the other people's demands or standards and cheerfully just say, "Well, this is not one I want to meet." (Uhhuh.) And I want you to consider that there might be some situations in which you *would* want to meet their standards, or somehow deal with it in a different way than "Up yours." (OK.) It might be special friends of yours with whom at least you would want to be a little more political about it. (she laughs) Or that you might even at some point be willing to make certain concessions to their standards because you value their friendship or their relationship sufficiently. (OK.) That was important to you, and that on balance, given all your different criteria, that would be good for you, (Uhhuh.) OK? Can you think of-- You've already thought of a couple of situations like that? (Uhhuh.) Great.

Woman: And how I'd respond differently, you know.

Steve: Sure, right. We want you to have the full range of response to this. We don't want to just send you out into the world, raising your middle finger all day long. (laughter)

Woman: Aw, shucks.

Steve: This is not life supporting in the long run. (laughter) OK. Now, think about this whole situation, and I want you to feel that in your whole body, feel that whole situation, these resources, and your ability to evaluate a situation and respond the way you want to, and I want you to float up ... above your timeline ... and go

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back ... as far back as you want to go. It could be to birth, or to conception, or wherever you want to go, as long as it is way back there .... (OK.) And then come right up through time, carrying these resources, and each time you get to one of those times where you felt ashamed, it can change, and most of this will take place on the unconscious level. Go at your own speed and your own tempo ... and come right up to the present....

Woman: (surprised/satisfied) Humph!

Steve: Now, see yourself in the future, going on in the same way in any such situations where other people are attempting to impose their standards. Consider them and

decide if that is something that you want to accommodate to or not. ...

Woman: Yeah!

Steve: Now that looked pretty good.

Woman: That's ... yeah ... that's real nice

Steve: Is that good? (Ummm. Yeah.) Do you want to do it again? (Um ... yeah.) Take a double dose back now. (OK.) Float above, go back to wherever you went. This time come up a little faster, just come zipping up, and when you get up to the present, look out into the future and see yourself in the future with these resources in all the appropriate situations.

Woman: OK. (laughing) I have to share the auditory part that I am so good at—it's kind of like, "Eat your heart out, buddy." (laughter)

Steve: OK. Any questions?

Woman: It feels good.

Steve: Yeah it looks good.

Woman: (laughing) Yeah. No questions for me.

Steve: OK. Go forth in the world and be shamed no more.

Woman: Wow! Thank you! (laughter)

Michael Hall

(This session took a little less than 21 minutes.)

## Follow-up

About three months after this session, the client boarded a sold-out jumbo jet bound for Europe. Since she is only 5' 3" and weighs 297 pounds, she overflowed a bit into the adjoining seats. A very expressive Frenchman had been assigned to a seat next to her, and when he arrived late, he pointed at her and said in a loud voice, almost screaming, "Look at this! I'm not going to sit here!" and made quite a fuss. Throughout this the client remained calm, thinking to herself, "I'll bet everyone is thinking what a jerk this guy is." She said, "Only later did it dawn on me that before the session, I'd have been looking under the seat for a place to hide."

Three years later, she said, "Once I had the awareness that I automatically 'clicked in' to feeling comfortable in that situation, it had a real freeing effect; I'm no longer inhibited in public situations where people might stare or point. I've never been in a situation since where I've felt shame."

I have just spoken with her again, over 11 years since the session. She said to me, "What has changed at the belief level is that before I thought 'I didn't have the right to be.' Now, it's 'Hey, I have the right to be here, too.' I remember one time in California, a couple of children, about 6 and 8, were pointing at me and staring, and saying, 'Look at the fat lady.' I went up to their parents and said, 'You know, it's not kind to teach these kids to be so critical and judgemental.

Everybody has some disability, and if I had a choice to be different, I would.' And then I walked away, and thought to myself, 'God, did I say that?' That change has really stuck."

Now, if you read any John Bradshaw or any of those other people, they will tell you that there are two kinds of shame. There is useful shame that gets you to change your behavior, and there is toxic shame which eats your heart out in a bad way. And I think they have made a valid distinction. There is one kind of shame in which it is basically based on behavior. You did something, you screwed up, you know. Somebody caught you naked or whatever it is, and it is a specific behavior and you are ashamed of that *behavior*, but you are not ashamed of your *self*. It doesn't become a comment on your being. What they call toxic shame is when it is a comment on your *being*. It's actually a reflection on your *self*, your very being and that is certainly much more harmful. But I don't think you need *either* kind.

And as we demonstrated here, if you are in touch with your own criteria and you realize when you want to meet someone else's standards and compromise in some way, or dovetail outcomes in some way, and this person is your spouse or your boss or someone that you do need to have ongoing relationships with, then you simply decide what you are going to do. Life does face you with difficult decisions sometimes, but you just do what you do and, you know, "You pays your money and you takes your choice," as they used to say.

The basis for changing shame is submodalities. They are very, very

powerful. It changes how you code things. It changes how you access resources and, as you saw here, as soon as she moved that picture over, it made a huge difference. And notice that even though she initially said there was no size difference, when I started talking about that—and that is why I did it just in case—when she changed that, the picture opened up and she already had a changed feeling for it. It was already not as bad, even before mapping across to the new location. So, any questions?

Man: What if the person really does believe that they violated their own standards? They look at the situation and still go, "Yeah, I really violated my standards."

Steve: My own standards? (Yeah.) Then what do you have? If you violate your own standards, what do you have? (Guilt.) Guilt, right. So that's what happens. That's why we are going to do guilt, or self-forgiveness next. (Great.) Because sometimes when you do this and then you map across, now you feel guilty. The forgiveness pattern deals with that. It's very parallel and very similar, but it is also different, and to keep things simple, let's just stay with shame now. But that is the next step.

Very often people just say, "Well, you know, those standards are not ones I want to meet, they are other people's standards." Or if I want to meet them, then I just figure out what I want to do. And sometimes, you can fluff it and just say, "Well, you know, you and I have different standards; can we still remain friends?" There's a wide range of possible responses in there.

Sometimes it can be very useful to reexamine old standards and update them, or refine them to make them more detailed and specific. You can find several pages about doing this in *Heart of the Mind*, (pp. 151-154)

Man: I really like it when you mentioned that part about, you know, the times when you want to look at different possibilities for what you want to do.

Steve: Yeah. Well, if you are sloppy, then you get sloppy results and if—seriously, it is possible. People used to go to “assertiveness training” seminars and all it did was teach them to be a prick. They just went out in the world going, “Up yours!” and “I want my demands and to hell with yours!” It really does happen. And we want to build in all the forks so the person has the full range of response and the full range of choices. If you don’t explicitly build it in that way, it may not get in there. Some people will do it anyway, but in this case we like to think of other people as not competent, and make sure that we are competent so that just in case they are not competent, we can cover all the bases.

Man: I was thinking that in some situations where you have shame, the parental reimprinting might be a real helpful part of the process?

Steve: Sure.

Man: Do you think growing a part up might be helpful?

Steve: Of course.

Man: So there’s a lot of things we’ve already done that just blend in with it.

Steve: Yes. That’s true. Absolutely. Now, so far every time I have done this, it has been enough, we didn’t need to do those other things. But I have no objections. And you see, when you build this thing in and you make this transition and then you take it back through time, you are making it into a through-time characteristic of the person. So you are building a piece of self-concept. You are building a self-resource that the person will carry with them through time.

This is a really important distinction. You can change a single event without thereby building it into the person as a *capability*. That’s one of the lovely things about the decision destroyer, or timeline reprinting, and

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so on, where you go back and you bring all that stuff *with* you. Then it’s there with you all the time. It’s just like your name. You are never without your name, it’s always there. You don’t think about it, but if somebody asks you, or you have a challenge that relates to that, then *boom*, that stuff is there. Are there any other questions before we go through the steps of the process?

## Resolving Shame Process Outline

Overall, the Shame Resolution pattern first eliminates the feeling of shame in response to not meeting someone else’s standards, by utilizing

shifts in submodalities. Then it teaches a decision process to examine the external standard, and determine: a. whether the person wants to have this standard, or some modification of it, for himself; and b. what the person wants to *do* in response to this situation.

## 1. Contrastive Analysis

Compare the following two experiences, and list the *content* differences and the *submodality* differences between:

- a. An experience of shame. (This will always be a response to not meeting someone else's standard.)

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- b. An experience of not meeting someone else's standard without shame, and *with* a more resourceful coping response.

## 2. Testing (Optional)

Test to find out which of the content and submodality differences are most powerful in increasing or reducing the feeling of shame. Change one difference at a time to find out how powerful it is in changing the person's feeling of shame, and then change that difference back and change another one, in order to learn more about what is going on.

The typical important *content* differences we have found are:

- a. Other people are facing and staring directly at the ashamed person, disapprovingly.
- b. The person who is ashamed *may* be seen as naked, misshapen, etc.
- c. Others are seen as much larger than the person who is ashamed,
- d. In *not* shame, the person is sometimes surrounded by some kind of protective shield, often transparent.

The major important typical *submodality* differences we have found for shame are:

- a. The location of the image is different, and usually a "driver" of other submodality shifts.
- b. The image is often still, or almost still: a frozen eternal moment in time, or a short repeating tape loop.

## 3. Transformation:

Map across the content of the shame experience to that of not shame, using the most powerful content and submodality elements you found by testing in step 2.

- a. First adjust any content distortions in the self-image. (Put clothes on, change misshapen image to normal image, etc.)
- b. Make the self as large as the others. (Occasionally, in severe shame, you may want to *temporarily* make the self larger than others, or make others smaller than the self.)

- c. Change the location of the image.

When these changes have been made, usually all the other submodality differences will have changed automatically. Check to be sure, and shift any that remain unchanged. When the mapping across is complete, the person will not feel any shame, and will feel resourceful instead.

#### 4. Evaluate Standards:

Now that the person feels resourceful, it's important to examine the external standard, its outcome, and the possible consequences of meeting or not meeting it.

- a. Whose standard is this?
- b. What is the outcome/intention of the standard?
- c. Keeping the outcome in mind, "Is the external standard in this situation one that you want to have for yourself?"

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**1. Yes.** If the answer is "Yes," go directly to step 5. (Even when someone basically agrees with the standard, usually they will want to revise it or restate it in some way to make it completely appropriate.)

**2. No.** If the answer is "No," ask, "If not, what standard do you want to have for yourself in this situation? . . ." (Be sure this standard applies reciprocally, as in "the Golden Rule.")

**3. Unsure.** If the person is ambivalent or incongruent, sort polarities, get outcomes/intentions, and then integrate the two in some way, or negotiate for a joint agreement on a standard. (See footnote<sup>1</sup>, pp. 151-154) When you are done, they will be able to answer yes or no congruently.

#### 5. Plan a Specific Response:

"Having decided on *your own* standard in this situation in which you did not meet someone else's standard, what do you want to do in this situation?"

- a. **Same standard.** "If your standard is the same as, or similar to, the other person's standard, you might want

to consider an apology, or some kind of amends, a specific commitment to meet that standard in the future, etc.”

- b. **Different standard.** If your standard is different, you might want to consider not associating with that person, explaining that your standards are different, “going through the motions” of meeting their standards, even though you think they’re silly, joking about your differences, leave the country, etc. Keep in mind that no two people have exactly the same standards. If the person needs help developing a satisfactory response, use the “New Behavior Generator” (including the

“as if” frame and modeling) to select an appropriate response.

## 6. Future-Pace

Actually rehearse whatever response you decided upon in step 5. Imagine carrying it out associated. (Do it dissociated first, if you have any doubts about it, in context, to be sure it’s satisfactory to you. If not, back up to step 5.)

## 7. Congruence Check

“Does any part of me have any objection to having this ability to evaluate a situation, and the standards involved, and decide what I want to do?”

## 8. Testing

“Think again of that situation in which you felt shame.” Check for nonverbal as well as verbal responses.

## 9. Timeline generalization

If the person has had many experiences of shame, it can be very useful to use timeline generalization to help the person reevaluate *all* their past experiences of shame in the way they have just learned through the shame resolution pattern.

“You have just reprocessed an experience of shame in a way that gives you more choices about how you respond to situations in which some-

filler

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one else has different values or standards than you do. I want you to take this capability with you back to an earlier time in your life, before you had any experiences of shame, and come rapidly forward through time, carrying this ability with you as part of yourself, reprocessing any other experiences of shame, realizing that much of this will take place at the unconscious level. Take all the time you need, and when you reach the present, see yourself moving forward through time, still carrying this ability with you."

This timeline generalization process can have a dramatic impact on a multitude of past experiences as it installs this ability as a "through time" and cross-contextual ability that becomes part of the person's sense of themselves, their identity. This is particularly useful if the shame was about the *self*, rather than just about a specific behavior.

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