



# Shame on You: In Defense of Shame

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# Learning Objectives

- Participants will be able to articulate the ways that shame is often experienced and acted out by individuals and groups of people.
- Participants will be able to identify the nature, utility, and value of engaging with shame.
- Participants will be able to identify the importance of establishing a threshold for sustainable change rooted in admonition (shame) versus symptom relief or quick-fix solutions (shame appeasement).



## Will there be a place for me?

Shame and  
anxiety

Calling out in  
order to call in

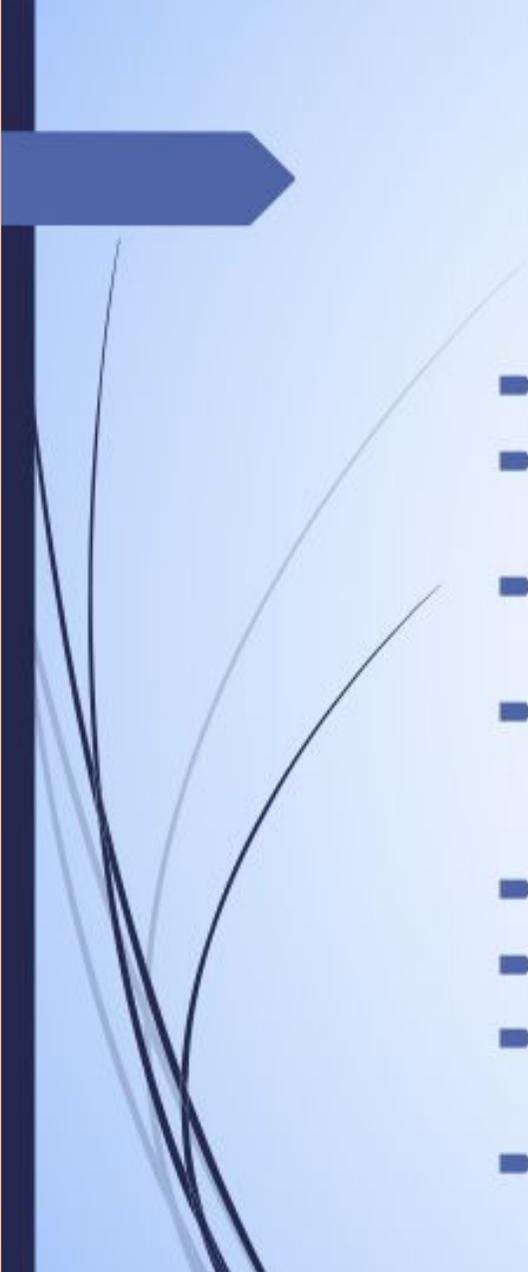
Learning to  
trust(ing)



# Trust(ing)

Shout out to our colleague, Dr. Jermaine Ma! Trust(ing) is always...

- A process (a verb and not a noun)
- About belonging.
- An assessment of risk(s).
- Contextual.
- Earned.



# Shame

- ▶ Psychology's stepchild (Karen, 1992).
- ▶ A master emotion, and a profoundly social phenomenon (Scheff, 2003).
- ▶ Represents a loss of social status, either feared or perceived (Orth et al., 2010).
- ▶ A portal through which other affects can be opened, and a "blanket that covers" other emotions (Danielian & Gianotti, 2012, p. 180).
- ▶ Social "alarm" (Sluzki, 2013), "warning signal" (Matos et al., 2013).
- ▶ Breaking of "interpersonal bridges" (Kaufman, 1974).
- ▶ Shame is "an organizing affective process in men's development" (Krugman, 1995, p. 636).
- ▶ Shame signature (Krugman, 1995).

# What is shame?

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- Shame vs guilt
- Relational experience of one's felt sense of self disintegrating in relation to an other (DeYoung, 2019)
- Atomic/individualistic self (contrasted with "calling in," which would point to a more interconnected self)
- Mwe relational self



## From Fragility to Rage

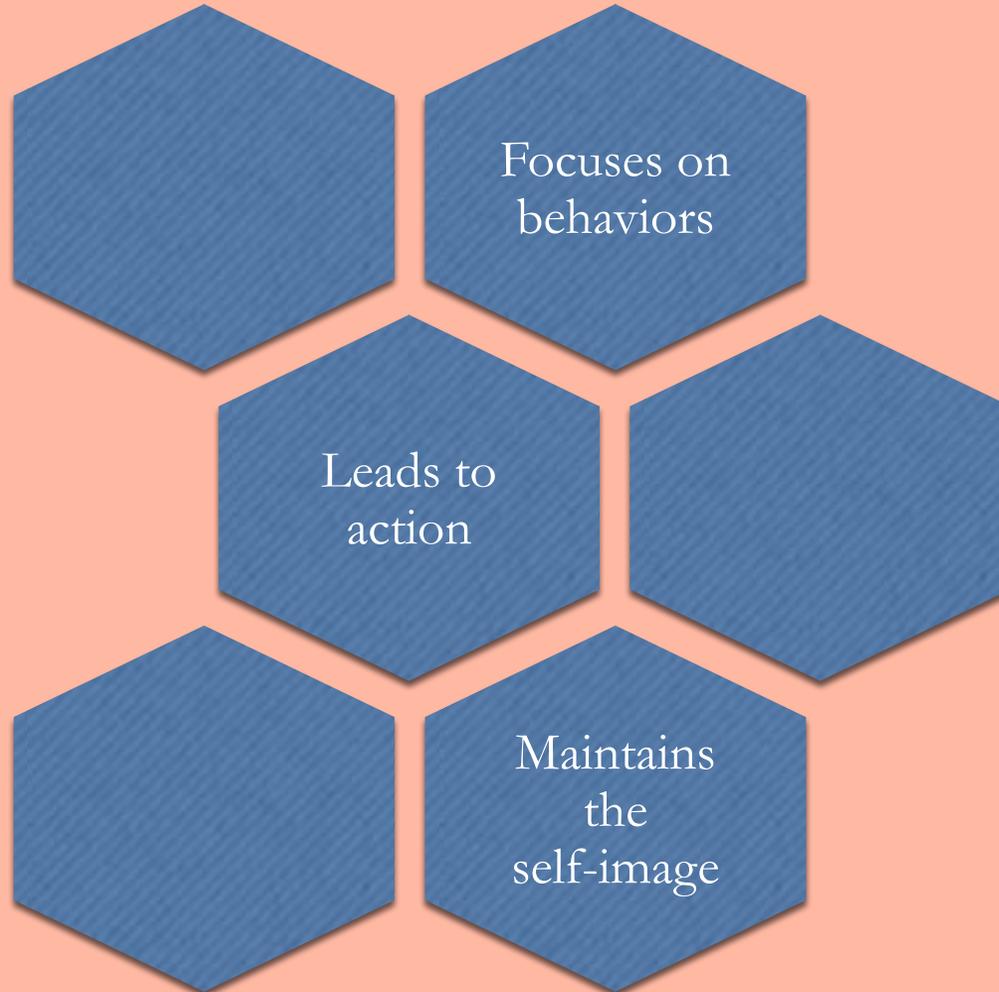
- Fragility is a disgust reaction (and a defense, ala Bion)
- Focuses on (lack of) awareness not reality
- Fragility is passive (power-based) and helps avoid necessary shame
- A product of an interpassive compromise (interactive+passive)
- White rage is an elusive and disavowed aggression—not passive—that often presents as fragility
- Protects against a sense of contamination (threat)



# Contamination

- Disgust as defense against contamination
  - Splitting (binary): me/not me
  - Power differential
- Shame is felt sense of having been contaminated (socially conditioned)
- Contaminated in whose eyes?
- Whiteness necessitates blackness and oppression

# White Guilt





# White Shame

- Resisted through rage (acted out powerlessness)
- Shatters/disintegrates the self image
- Points to the real of white identity not just guilt of action
- Can invite one out of an ego-driven, individualistic self
- How can it be embraced?



# A Naked Emperor

- Rage/fragility resists awareness not reality
- Calling out problematizes the one who speaks up
- Societal and institutional power and threat
- Can there be a sense of belonging afterwards? Is there an intent to build trust(ing) and to call in? Will you be one who remains?



# Group Anxiety

- The group organizes to defend itself against sources of anxiety - a psychotic anxiety. Bion postulated that group regression is needed to make the belief that the group is possible. Members must regress to a concreteness and specificity of fantasy - because we in essence lack other means of relating to an aggregate.
- Situations that can arise in group poses continual threats to self-esteem, making the members vulnerable to confusion, embarrassment, and shame.



## **Societal Emotional Process**

- Emotional systems govern behavior in whole societies.
- Societies that are in regression deal symptomatically with crises until forced to address the anxiety that feeds the crises.



## Society in Regression

- Blames others not accepting responsibility
- Quick fix solutions
- Inability to hold a non-anxious presence

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Performativity and image

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Short-term solutions

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Non-anxious presence

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Luke 22

**Institutions**



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