

Shame

Making a Shame Story More Specific

Adults | 10 to 15 minutes

Shame may urge you to hide, attack yourself, or assume that one event defines you. Begin with a manageable example and leave out details that feel too exposing. You can recognize responsibility while also noticing context, unfair judgment, and support needs.

Choose an ordinary recent moment. Separate the event from a global label and keep any disclosure voluntary.

Name facts and labels

Write what occurred using observable details. Then notice the label added to it. 'I forgot a commitment' describes an event; 'I am worthless' is a broader judgment.

Choose a proportionate response

Consider whether the situation calls for repair, clarification, a boundary, protection from mistreatment, or kindness. Do not accept blame that belongs to someone else.

1. What happened, described without a judgment about my whole self?**2. What shame label or feared judgment appeared?****3. What responsibility is mine, and what context or unfairness also matters?****4. What proportionate action or support would help now?****Clinical use and adaptation**

Avoid demanding disclosure or reassurance that dismisses the client's experience. Assess abuse, discrimination, trauma, depression, and safety when relevant. Distinguish accountable repair from coerced apology or responsibility for victimization.