A person holding his hands up

Description automatically generated with low confidence

Spiritual Direction: Healing of Toxic Guilt and Shame

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Shame:

1 Shame exists of a spectrum from shamelessness to healthy shame and toxic shame.

2.Shame is a painful experience of a belief in one’s basic defectiveness as a human being.

3.At its most painful end, people can become suicidal believing that they should not exist. Dream of the elephant man….” I am a human being”

4.The core is the terror of abandonment. There is a break somewhere in the interpersonal bridge between people.

5.Shame can arise from the sure clue that someone important has seen you and disapproves of something in your very being.

6.Shame can seduce you into being that you must play a role and be untrue in order to survive. The true self feels threatening, this impacts the relationship with god.

7.Shame in incompetence in an area which should be meaningful for you as a man or woman or in being valued by significant others.

8.Shame should not be eradicated but detoxified to manageable views of self.

9.Toxic shame is the place of enormous pain and conflict, of hiding and non-acceptance. It needs to be exposed and eradicated.

10. The deep pain causes us to defend ourselves by creating another level of pain by not facing the pain squarely. signs of coping are denial, withdrawal, perfectionism, harming others by an offense first to protect myself. Seeking power over others, compensate with arrogance in something you are good in. Rage and defensiveness.

Toxic Shame: Case Material

1. Abuse as a child: dark secrets in the soul and body
2. Abandonment- physical, emotional or spiritually
3. Cyclic familial voice of Shame (mother and the Gremlins)
4. Trauma and guilt and shame of survival
5. Religiosity and scrupulosity
6. Perfectionism- never good enough syndrome
7. Effects of racism, immigration, and prejudice
8. Women at great risk of super woman
9. Sexual minorities- and religious or social prejudice

10. Images of God, sensitive child, victim of excessive religious belief that does not let life emerge.

**Discerning the Voices**

***SHAME CONTAMINATION***

**Judgmental**

**Fearful**

**Opinionated**

**Intrusive**

**Dominating**

**Limited**

**Rationalizing**

**Controlled**

**Restrictive**

**Conventional**

**Anxious**

**Defensive**

**Separated**

***TRANSPERSONAL SELF***

**Compassionate**

**Loving**

**Wise**

**Receptive**

**Allowing**

**Unlimited**

**Intuitive**

**Spontaneous**

**Creative**

**Inspired**

**Peaceful**

**Open**

**Connect**

**Ideological Characteristics of fundamentalism.**

1. **Reactivity to the Marginalization of Religion**

2. **Selectivity of ideas and ideologies**   
a. difficulty with the shadow   
b. strong idealization creates strong demonization's   
c. overvalues the immortal which can create an absence of appropriate feelings and responses.   
d. obsessive need to control in the striving for perfection

3**. Moral split**   
a. dangers of inflation   
b. identifying with the all-good God.   
c. suppression of the instructive and bodily connection   
d. conformity to an image rather interior truth.

4.**Absolutism and inerrancy**   
a. doctrinal position claiming that the Bible is absolutely accurate and free of errors.   
b. living in a world of constant conflict, defensiveness and fear   
c. cannot live the meaning of paradox   
d. denial of the facts which science and human development   
e. historic reduces the life of Jesus as a life to mimic rather as a death resurrection reality of the risen Christ.   
f. the atheists and the fundamentalists have similar problems   
g. morality is assassinated from conscience

5.**Millennialism – apocalyptic completion**   
a. fear of the unknown   
b. literalism vs. symbolic reality cannot taking responsibility for the world

**Decontaminating God Images: Shame based Images of God**

1. Attachments marks the beginning of a process fixing one’s desire upon a person, object or situation in such a way as to pour energy into as a God image. – judgement and condemnation

2. The attached persons surrender their hearts desire upon a person object or event in an ever-growing loss of orientation creating power upon that object in a transpersonal way. Not good enough self as object of obsessions

3. Idolatry deepens as the false God consumes our freedom the false God is incapable of giving; they cling to dream rather than reality. Engrossed enjoyment of the pleasures/ pain creates an incessant craving, which diminishes true intimacy with God, self and others. Addicted to my wounded self,

4. Healing divine therapy demands a surrender of preoccupation, ritualization, compulsive behavior and the despair of the darkness of painful specialness and isolation without God.

Despair in False God Image

Joy in Fuller Experience of God

(Behavior)

Problem of Espoused Verses Operative

God Imagery

(Emotions and Commitment)

Idolatry

Anthony Gittens

Idolatry is mistaking an image of God for the reality it represents. Image making tends to reduce God to manageable proportions, attempting to domesticate God to subvert God’s command. As such, image making can be naive, pretentious and deadly.

Donald Taper: Jung’s thoughts on God

“Jung remarked that one’s conduct can be determined by such values as money, power, self -service, which though operating as the highest value in a person’s life is that person’s “God” replacing the “God” which the person “claims” to be the real one, particularly in public statements.”. p 75

Jung emphasized that one’s relationship to God involves conduct as well as access. He said that, instead of putting religious precepts in place of the will of God as a personal experience, one should explore God’s will daily. He added the God-image can bring about a powerful impetus to action or inspiration that could never be done by conscious effort”. P 75

Ann Manor: Living God and our living Psyche

“In addition, unconscious images of god operate in us, ones that act at the center of our existence wound which our interior and exterior lives revolve. We could be tyrannized by a problem like an inferiority complex, a drinking problem, an addiction; or our deepest need for money that represents to us security; or an ideal, even a religious ideal to be God’s servant-when unconsciously we want to be God’s best servant”. P. 77

Dennis Linn, Sheila Linn, Matthew Linn,

Good Goats-Healing our Image of God.

P 43-45.

“We usually mimic the addictions we attribute to the God we adore”.

“Whether our addiction be work, money, smoking or drinking, we get stuck in addictions for the same reason that alcoholic Bill Wilson, took his first drink; to deaden the pain of not belonging”.

“We believe that the feeling of not belonging underlies every addiction. Every addiction (or compulsive negative behavior) began as the best way we knew at the time to belong to ourselves, others, God and the universe. The way out of an addiction is to find a better way to belong.

“Treatment centers recognize…that the recovery rate is much lower for addicts with a fearful and punishing image of God. Addicts in treatment with a very harsh view of God have a harder time than people with no religious training at all”.

“Bill W. spoke of how in recovery, we generally change our image of God many times. But he concluded that once we discover a God of “belonging”, all will be well with us here and hereafter.”

**Decontaminating God Images-Death of the Mythic God**

Who is the mythic God image who is dead, dying, being fought over with in religious traditions and in our post-modern world and images of fundamentalists everywhere??

Just because images are not espoused does not mean they don’t operate in the unconscious, wielding power when we are most vulnerable, needy or stressed.

**Decontaminating God Images**

Jim Marion-The Death of the Mythic God.

1 The mythic God was a being separate and apart from humans.

2 The mythic God lived in the sky observing everything from a judgmental view (Giant Eye)

3 The mythic God was male and required the subordination of women and all those who were not viewed as acceptable

4 The mythic God was ethnocentric- our God and our side in war and economic success

5 The mythic God was a God of law, order and scrupulous adoration to be acceptable.

6 The mythic God, being a projection of the human ego, had negative and positive qualities and mood swings which might parallel parental issues

7 The mythic God was patriarchal and required obedience to male stand ins.

8 The mythic God, because he was a totally separate being, required that we as supplicants pray to him for our needs and, he would sometimes intervene supernaturally if we were at some indefinable standard of holiness.

9 The mythic God requires proselytizing and missionary work to make others like ourselves- perfect.

10 The mythic God, along with those who go to heaven and others are separated forever.

11 The mythic God existed to satisfy human needs which could not be met otherwise

12 The mythic god does not require much responsibility or relationship from an individual, one must be fixated on a rigid belief system as truth…

**Decontaminating God Images – Metaphoric Theology**

Metaphorical Theology – Sally McFague

Idolatry of religious language p 4

1 Insists on literal reference of language of God

2 Biblical images are the only authoritative and appropriate images of God.

3 We have injected a narrow view of truth in our culture have lost sensitivity.

4 Contemplation and prayer could keep alive wider view of layered meaning of images.

5 Claim can be made that our time is more literalistic than any other time in history.

**Metaphoric Theology Sally McFague p. 15**

1 Thinking metaphorically means spotting a thread of similarity between two dissimilar objective events, or whatever, one of which is better known than the other, and using the better known one as a way of speaking about the lesser known.

2 God metaphors shock, they bring unlike together, they upset conventions, they involve tension, and they are implicitly revolutionary. Jesus’s parables work in this regard.

3 Metaphoric theology will insist that many metaphors and models are necessary, and that a piling up of images is essential, both to avoid idolatry and to attempt to express the richness and variety of the divine-human relationship.

Personal-father, mother, lover, friend, savior, ruler, servant, companion, comrade, liberator, non-personal-rock, fastness, stream, power, rain, thunder…

Her models are metaphors with staying power which can cause a literalization of models. God is Father.

Metaphoric theology cannot simply be a baptism of the tradition, for that would mean giving up the tension which is at the heart of the metaphor.

## Perfectionism Symptoms

1.Frozen emotional response - Example in movie Ordinary People. The opposite response is to act out as in road rage. There are different cultural expectations by gender – women punished for anger often become depressed because they cannot be angry. Men are punished for grief and get angry when they cannot grieve. In all cases part of the self is denied because society doesn’t find it acceptable.

1. Depressed body and sexual issues
   * can act out sexually but still be sexually repressed
   * physical sexuality and emotions are not melded together
   * culture emphasizes performance and distorts capacity to just be with each other
2. Hooked into unrealistic adolescent issues
   * apt to be cynical as adults
   * adults with adolescent idealism are stuck
   * adult relationships demand grounding in reality, grounded in lived experience, accepting the reality that we are sinners, we are lazy, we are co-dependent
3. Change and spontaneity is threatening – don’t ask me not to plan because then my authentic feelings may come up. Over planning is an effort to control everything. Must be able to screen all emotions.
4. Structures feel safer than original experience
   * cults are attractive to perfectionists
   * communities demand interaction, sharing, dialogue, conflict
   * often the brightest are drawn to a cult
5. Denial around real problems – co-dependency – they see something different than true reality – this blindness keeps the structure perfect. Recovering perfectionists who speak the truth can be labeled as problems.
6. Has a psycho-spirituality of control – What I do spiritually is not to give greater freedom but greater control – leads to feeling if constraint and imbalance. Spirituality should make us free and balanced.
7. Dependent on excessive positive feedback. A perfectionist never forgets. One hundred people may praise you but you will remember the one who did not give praise. To be ignored is the height of insult to a perfectionist because everything they do is to be seen. Lack of feed back makes them feel insecure about their structures. Perfectionist control can be maintained by giving instead of relating. Non-relationship is control. Men control by holding back.
8. Fear of solitude, movement toward workaholism point to the void at the center.
   * I can work myself to the ground to fill the empty places.
   * Necessary to create spaces and not negotiate them away
9. Expressed grief is not allowed. It is a loss of control and indicates weakness.  
   Neediness is a dirty word.
10. Ambiguity and process is repressed even though because of our very nature.

It means that we are not finished. Perfectionists can’t stand the state of incompleteness.

1. Fear of the future if it looks different from the moment
   * risk is a big thing
   * change may show up my lack of perfection, my inadequacy
   * the fear stops you from learning
   * inquisitiveness and interest in learning are curbed
2. Avoidance of authentic struggle
   * replace the authentic with the non-authentic
3. Expresses desire for God but not the need for God and dependence upon God

Conversion comes when desire turns into need

1. The person is threatened by the search for meaning
   * resists going deeper because the effort to do is an admission that you

have not arrived, admits the need

* + “Saints and sinners love God; religious people crucify Him” (desire)

1. Understands fidelity through the lens of sameness
2. Under-current of self-righteousness
3. Fears cooperative style of relating
   * doesn’t want to work in a group because they assume, they cannot learn from others.
   * Collaboration may mean I don’t know something
4. Feels uncomfortable with ‘in-between’ periods

20. Has difficulty with gutsy, heartfelt spirituality

* + if relationship with people or God is not perfect then chuck it
  + if I say the truth, I have to admit weakness
  + “If my relationship with God is perfect, I shouldn’t be feeling this.”

**Women / Shame, / Never Good Enough and Spiritual Direction**



Mary Southard

Janet Corso

*What is missing in us and is connected to what we’ve left out of our individual and group pictures of God? It seems to me that* ***we’ve left out the feminine*** *– the principle that’s universally recognized as the one that draws us into intimacy and relatedness, that opens, let’s go and let’s be, nourishes, receives, reconciles, and connects us … The feminine, as seen in the mothering metaphor brings us to a new ground of intimacy with God… and helps us to respond to a world at deep risk. It helps us to find a new vision of caring for the world and helps us awaken to the primacy of relationship over power, embrace tenderness, and lovingly endure the labor pains necessary to bring about forgiveness, solidarity and community. It reveals the God who suffers and waits in order to create, birth and heal. When we relate to and embody the feminine, we’re more apt to make ourselves vulnerable, to incubate what’s dark, to care for the wounded, the broken and alienated, the motherless of the world, and* ***to claim the feminine in the world****.* –Sue Monk Kidd, *Dance of the Dissident Daughter*

***The Christian faith tradition has, on the whole, been sinful in its treatment of women.*** *It’s been scandalous, myopic, discriminatory and unjust - in a word: sinful. And it’s institutionalized that sin. That sin has become ok. Historically, it’s been a major factor in the marginalization of certain groups – ironically, it’s major faithful supporters: women, both lay and religious. – Michael Crosby, OFM, Cap*

**Fundamentalism [be it Islamic, Christian or whatever] is anti-female and the feminine.**

*The more educated and conscious women become, the more they struggle with their faith tradition and feel more keenly a split in their spiritual selves.* ***How do they reconcile a faith tradition (its heritage, beauty and meaning) with their personal spirituality and relationship with God?***

– Janet Ruffing, RSM, *Spiritual Direction; Beyond the Beginnings*

*Men bemoan the split that occurred with Descartes of the mind and body****. But******there is an historical and******traditional split that has been forced upon women’s psyches,*** *between spiritualized femininity as seen in the disembodied mother or the worship of virginity versus the carnal femaleness of Eve as the instigator of sin, and the whore/prostitute Mary Magdalene. -* Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Mary: The Feminine Face of God.*

*Unless a woman is* ***conscious of any anger******with her institutional church*** *and worked through that in her own way (through therapy, renegotiating a new relationship with her faith tradition, or walking away after discernment, etc.) her spirituality will suffer*. – Janet Ruffing, RSM

*Spiritual Direction; Beyond the Beginnings*

*Women often need to connect with the powerful goddess and dark mother energies within themselves in order to* ***claim their own authority and full spirituality.*** *The Black Madonna (the symbol of the earth and submerged feminine energy) heals the psychic split.*

– Marian Woodman, *Dancing in the Flames; The Dark Goddess in the Transformation of Consciousness.*

*Likewise, a broader understanding of the* ***universal feminine archetypes at each stage of a woman’s life*** *can help her understand and access her own inner wisdom. The energies of those archetypes that play a significant role in her own psyche and spiritual journey – not just the virgin and mother stages but the archetype of practical and intellectual wisdom (Metis); the crone and archetype of liminal space and crossroads (Hecate); the archetype of mystical and spiritual wisdom (Sophia); and the archetype of the hearth and the sacred center (Hestia;, among others.* – Jean Shinoda Bolen*, Goddesses in Everywoman; Powerful Archetypes in Women’s Lives*

***Women’s distinctive sin is self-contempt*** *(self-dislike or hatred), which is often centered on the body and is culturally safe to express in depression, confusion, naivete, tentativeness, and a false humility. A lack of healthy self-love means that women can neglect their own inner growth, and cling to a stunted spirituality, because they are so busy being present to others – as culture, society and religion still demand.* – Rev. Margaret Guenther

*Women spiritual directors need themselves to have gone through their own conscious feminist development, so that they can distinguish between* ***authentic self-transcendence and surrender*** *in their women directees and the internalized demands of traditional teachings that have encouraged self-denial before having achieved self-possession. Male directors should have a strongly developed feminine side and perspective before they are ready to sit in spiritual conversation with women.*

– Janet Ruffing, RSM, *Spiritual Direction; Beyond the Beginnings*

*For a woman to come to any real appreciation of what she means to God, not for what she does but for who she is, not in spite of her sins but because of her deep beauty, often requires* ***immense effort in prayer and the wise support of a mature and liberated spiritual director.***

# Sandra Schneiders, IHM, *Written That You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*

Healing Approach for Shame in Spiritual Direction

Establish a conscious connection to the toxic pain voice and recognize it from other voices.

Differentiate the voice of Shame for the potential Voice of God (how is it a lie, a distortion, loudness, seductive0

The voice of Shame comes from a wounded place- unloved, unaccepted, visualize, dialogue and see the truth of the pain.

Shamed voice is a distortion of truth that harms our lives, where is the distortion.

Discern the power of the voice of the lie and reject its power, dogma, and influence, begin the revolution

Let go of the intensity and loudness of the emotions- learn to distrust them.

Allow the Voice within stirring to tell you the Truth, align with the voice of the director helping the person listening to the Voice of the truth

The still small voice is actually the most powerful and transformative.

God’s voice is mercy, Unconditional Love, Compassion- don’t believe anything else (the Key is Mercy)

Let go of the chattering of its too late, your too old, why bother, these are the addiction to familiarity.

Develop the suspicious voices from the past to the newer Voice of liberation, trust the feelings of joy as gift

There may be attacks (War is Over) You are a free man or woman; the Nazi’s have been dislodged for good.

Movements to healthy Shame: John Bradshaw

Healthy shame is needed for community and the need for dependency for others, toxic shame moves us to isolation

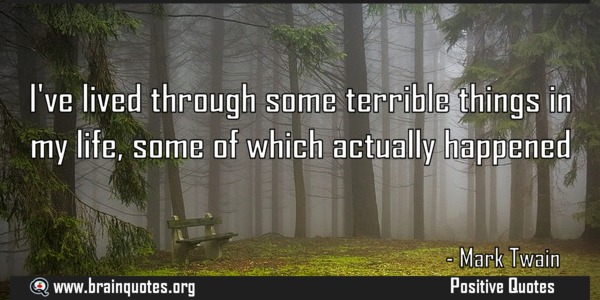
Healthy Shame helps us to be creative and willing to learn from others, toxic shame keeps me distrustful and fearful.

Healthy shame keeps the value of our appropriate lowliness before Mystery and Otherness, as creature before God

Healthy shame leads to the sacred nature of sexuality and love, otherwise sexuality can become mechanical and depersonalized.

Healthy shame leads to humble inferiority to learn, have limits and the need to improve myself.

Healthy Shame makes us aware of the awe and reverence of the Holy, the mystery. This moves us out of compulsive self-consciousness. Maslow Says: The spiritual life is part of our human essence. It is the defining characteristic of human nature, without which human nature is not full human nature.”



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**Conversion: Psycho- Spiritual Evolution**

From Illusion of reality to the truth of reality

From Fear of self-acceptance to Freedom and acceptance

From anxiety to trust and humility

From Judgement to compassion

From outer to inner authority

From perfection to acceptance and growth

From self-rejection to acceptance and growth

From self-obsession to generativity of using our gifts

From self-defeat to person integrity

From brokenness to incomplete and growing wholeness

From lack of energy to new vigor and strength

From hiding to personal integrity and strength