

# Guilt and Shame

Guilt and shame are closely connected emotions.

## Guilt

We tend to feel guilty when we believe we have violated rules that are important to us, or when we have not lived up to standards that we have set for ourselves.

We feel guilty when we judge that we have done something wrong. If we think we "should" have behaved differently or that we "ought" to have done better, we are likely to feel guilt.

## Shame

Shame also involves the sense that we have done something wrong. However, when we feel ashamed, we assume that what we have done wrong means that we are "flawed," "no good," "inadequate," "rotten," "awful," or "bad."

Shame is usually connected to a highly negative view of ourselves.

Secretiveness often surrounds shame. We may think, "If others knew this secret, they would be disgusted with me or think less of me." For this reason, the source of shame is rarely revealed and remains hidden and destructive.

Shame often accompanies a family secret involving other family members — a secret such as alcoholism, sexual abuse, abortion, bankruptcy, or other behaviour considered dishonourable in the community.

## Setting Goals

Before we start delving deep into the healing of our feelings of shame and guilt, we need to think about what are goals are? Is it to reduce (or increase) ...

- The **frequency**? How *often* we feel guilt and shame
- The **strength**? From very intense crippling feelings to a more medium feeling of guilt and/or shame
- The **duration**? How long we feel guilt and shame for: from days on end; to a couple of hours a day; etc.?

Of course our goals might even be to feel more guilt and shame in our lives. Perhaps to take on more responsibility rather than blaming others?

## Links

[Measuring Shame/Guilt: Frequency; Strength; Duration](#)

[Tracking Shame/Guilt: Frequency; Strength; Duration](#)