

## Working through shame

Shame can take many forms for example:

- Internalized shame: this reflects deep-seated beliefs of not being good enough and other feelings of inadequacy
- Unnecessary shame: shame that is not yours to carry – for example you were the victim of sexual abuse and you feel ashamed about what happened to you
- Genuine shame: for example, you are the perpetrator of sexual abuse.

When secretiveness surrounds shame, it may be important to talk to a trusted person about what occurred. The need to keep silent is often based on the expectation that revealing your secret will result in condemnation, criticism, or rejection. It is not unusual for people who have carried a secret for a lifetime to be surprised at the acceptance they receive when they reveal their secret. Acceptance runs counter to the anticipated rejection and forces a reassessment of the meaning of your secret.

Although you may not trust anyone fully, it is important to reveal your secret to the people you trust the most. You may tell people how anxious it makes you feel to reveal your secret and how difficult it is for you to do. Be sure to talk to someone at a time and place when you will have adequate time to say everything you need to say, and to talk about the feedback you get.

With genuine shame making reparations will lead to healing.

With unnecessary shame and internalised shame this will be more complicated to work through

Internalised shame (also referred to as toxic shame) can be worked through by working on your self-esteem