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Overcome Shame Clinical Practice Workbook

A clinically branded, function-preserving edition retaining the original exercises, psychoeducation, checklists, logs, planning tools, and response space.

DSM-5-TR · ICD-11 CLINICAL ALIGNMENT

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2 · Identifying Triggers

3 · Feelings of Shame

4 · Shame Negative Beliefs

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6 · Shame Triggers Worksheet

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How to use this workbook

- Use this workbook selectively and collaboratively; it is educational and does not replace individualized assessment, diagnosis, treatment, medical care, or crisis services.
- Skip, pause, or modify any activity that increases distress, danger, shame, or loss of functioning. Adapt language for culture, disability, neurodivergence, health, resources, and lived context.
- Ratings in this workbook are reflection tools unless a named, validated measure and interpretation are explicitly provided.

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What Is Shame?

Shame is the belief that you are flawed in some critical way.

This belief causes you to feel that if people get too close and see your significant defects, they will reject you or withdraw from you.

Your perceived flaws might be private (e.g. angry impulses, unacceptable sexual desires, feelings of envy, selfishness, etc.) or public (e.g. undesirable physical appearance, social awkwardness, etc.)

The following are common signs of shame. Check off the ones you relate to:

- ☐ You often struggle with feelings of defectiveness and thoughts that you're flawed somehow.
- ☐ You feel unworthy of other people's respect.
- ☐ You strongly believe no one could ever care about you or truly love you.
- ☐ You feel disconnected and far removed from the experiences of love and connection that others who live a "normal" life seem to experience naturally.
- ☐ You strongly believe that if people get too close and see your significant defects, they will reject you or withdraw from you.
- ☐ You are often hypersensitive to any form of criticism, blame, comparison, or rejection from people around you.

The following exercises will help you overcome feelings of shame and live authentically.

Identifying Triggers

1. When do you seem to feel shame the most?

2. When was the last time you noticed feeling this way?

3. What usually happens right before you feel this way?

Feelings of Shame

The following is a list of feelings related to shame. Read through the list and circle the ones you tend to feel or write them down.

Abandoned	Crushed	Erased	Insufficient
Aching	Culpable	Estranged	Insulted
Afflicted	Damaged	Exasperated	Intimidated
Agonized	Defeated	Excluded	Invisible
Alienated	Deficient	Exposed	Isolated
Alone	Deflated	Fear	Loathsome
Antsy	Degraded	Frightened	Lost
Assaulted	Denounced	Frustrated	Low
At fault	Deprived	Gloomy	Mediocre
Awkward	Devalued	Grieved	Miserable
Bad	Diminished	Heart-broken	Mortified
Baffled	Discouraged	Heavy-hearted	Mournful
Bare	Disgraced	Helpless	Neglected
Betrayed	Disgusted	Humiliated	Offended
Blamed	Dismayed	Ignored	Oppressed
Blue	Disregarded	Impotent	Overwhelmed
Broken	Disrespected	Incapable	Pained
Brutalized	Dissatisfied	Incompetent	Paralyzed
Bummed	Dissociated	Indecisive	Pathetic
Burdened	Distant	Ineffective	Powerless
Burned	Disturbed	Inept	Raw
Chastised	Emasculated	Inferior	Rebuffed
Cheated	Empty	Injured	Rejected
Conspicuous	Enraged	Insecure	Ridiculed

Shame Negative Beliefs

The following are common shame-related beliefs. Check off the ones you tend to experience:

- ☐ I am unworthy of love and respect
- ☐ I am flawed and defective
- ☐ Nobody I desire would desire me if they really got to know me
- ☐ I'm unattractive
- ☐ I am no good
- ☐ No one understands me
- ☐ I've let people down
- ☐ I'm so weak
- ☐ I am a bad person
- ☐ I am inadequate
- ☐ I am not good enough
- ☐ I deserve only bad things
- ☐ I am permanently damaged
- ☐ I do not deserve . . .
- ☐ I deserve to be miserable
- ☐ I am different/don't belong
- ☐ It's not okay to feel/show my emotions.
- ☐ I cannot stand up for myself.
- ☐ I am powerless/helpless
- ☐ I cannot get what I want
- ☐ I have to be perfect/please everyone
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Shame Coping Behaviors

In your attempt to cope with painful shame-related feelings and thoughts, you may have been engaging in behaviors that provide temporary relief from pain, yet reinforce your shame beliefs.

There are three major groups of unhealthy coping behaviors: overcompensation, surrender, and avoidance. Read through them and check off the ones you've been engaging in:

Overcompensation

- ☐ Aggression or passive-aggressiveness (including criticizing, blaming, or being resistant)
- ☐ Controlling and dominating others
- ☐ Manipulating or exploiting others to meet your needs
- ☐ Recognition seeking or status seeking
- ☐ Rebellion (including procrastinating, complaining, or performing poorly)

Surrender

- ☐ Compliance and passiveness
- ☐ Dependence and relying on others
- ☐ Avoiding conflict
- ☐ People-pleasing

Avoidance

- ☐ Socially withdrawing and isolating yourself
- ☐ Hyper independence

- ☐ Compulsive stimulation seeking (through compulsive shopping, sex, gambling, risk-taking)
- ☐ Engaging in addictions (e.g. food, alcohol, drugs, video games, overworking, etc.)
- ☐ Psychological withdrawal (through denial, fantasy, dissociation, etc.)

Maybe you use different coping behaviors depending on the situation or area of life (work, friendship, family, partner, parenting, community).

Reflect on a recent incident that triggered your feelings of shame.

Which emotions did you experience?

What thoughts did you have?

What behaviors did you engage in to cope with the pain?

Shame Triggers Worksheet

Situation	Emotions	Thoughts	Urges (if you didn't react)	Behavioral reaction

Reflect on your coping behaviors.

1. Did they make the pain go away? Did they make you feel worse about yourself? Did they create more problems? Explain.

2. What were the consequences of your coping behaviors?

The following is a list of common outcomes of unhealthy coping behaviors. Check off the ones you relate to:

- ☐ Isolation
- ☐ Shyness
- ☐ Feeling helpless
- ☐ Depression
- ☐ Self-hate
- ☐ Loss of friendships
- ☐ Problems in relationships
- ☐ Problems in work
- ☐ Conflict with romantic partner
- ☐ Loss of job
- ☐ Burnout
- ☐ Feeling numb
- ☐ Addiction
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Responding in New Ways

Think back to a recent incident when you felt shame.

How did you react? What could you do differently if you weren't trying to avoid the pain of shame? What is something you could do that would be more in line with your values and more effective?

Triggering Situations	Old Coping Behavior	Healthier, Alternative Responses

Mindfulness

Mindfulness creates a space that allows you to think before reacting. This skill will help you consciously choose how to respond to shame.

Mindfulness Exercise: The Five Senses

Use your five senses to increase your awareness of the present moment. If your mind drifts, gently bring your attention back to the task.

Sight: Look around and notice everything you see. Notice the object, colors, shapes, size, etc.

Spend a few seconds noticing whatever you see.

Hearing: Bring your attention to anything you can hear.

Notice any noise, voices, or sounds of movement nearby or at a distance, external or internal (e.g. breathing, swallowing).

Spend a few seconds noticing any sounds you can catch.

Smell: Inhale deeply. What can you smell (e.g. soap, shampoo, food, etc.).

Spend a few seconds noticing any smell you can catch.

Taste: Pay attention to whatever you can taste, such as traces of things you recently ate or drank.

You may also eat something slowly while you pay attention to the taste.

Spend a few seconds noticing whatever you can taste.

Touch: Bring your attention to anything you feel with your touch sense.

This may include textures of objects around you, the feeling of your clothes or the floor against your body, the temperature of the air, etc.

Spend a few seconds noticing whatever you can feel against your skin.

Mindfulness Exercise: Sitting Down With Feelings of Shame

Think of something that brings on a degree of feelings of shame that aren't overwhelming.

1. Sit in a comfortable position with your eyes close or loosely focus on the floor and take a moment to relax the muscles throughout your body.
2. Bring the shame-provoking situation into your awareness. Keep some of your attention on your breath to stay anchored in the present moment.
3. Notice everything that happens in your mind and in your body as you hold the shame-provoking situation in your awareness. The goal here is to become curious.

What emotion arises in your body? What thoughts do you have? What happens over time? Does the situation stay sharp in your awareness, or does it get fuzzy?

Remember that you don't have to change or fix anything. If you notice yourself getting carried away with your automatic thoughts, gently bring your attention back to the breath and to the present moment.

5. Finish the exercise by focusing your attention on the breath for a minute or two.

Sometimes shame will fade quickly, and other times it may persist longer. Mindfulness helps you realize that the emotions associated with your shame are not that hard to tolerate and that they seem to wither away when you invite the situation to awareness.

Clarifying Your Values

Values are the things you care about and matter to you.

Living a value-driven life helps you resist the urge to use old shame coping behaviors and make a conscious choice to respond according to your values when shame strikes.

You may use the list of values on the next page to identify your values in each life domain.

Based on your values, identify goals that reflect these values. Make sure they are all achievable in a particular time frame.

Life domains	Values	Goals
e.g. Relationships	Connection	• Reach out for support when feeling low • Spend quality time with my loved ones
Intimate Relationships		
Parenting		
Friends And Social Life		

Family Of Origin		
Education And Learning		
Physical Health		
Mental Health		
Spirituality		

List of Values

Acceptance	Dignity	Innovation	Reverence
Achievement	Discipline	Inspiring	Rigor
Accountability	Discovery	Integrity	Risk-taking
Adaptability	Drive	Intelligence	Satisfaction
Alertness	Effectiveness	Intensity	Security
Altruism	Efficiency	Intuition	Self-reliance
Ambition	Empathy	Irreverent	Selflessness
Amusement	Empowerment	Joy	Service
Assertiveness	Endurance	Justice	Sharing
Attentiveness	Energy	Kindness	Significance
Awareness	Enjoyment	Knowledge	Silence
Balance	Enthusiasm	Lawful	Simplicity
Beauty	Equality	Leadership	Sincerity
Boldness	Ethics	Learning	Skill
Bravery	Excellence	Liberty	Smart
Brilliance	Experience	Logic	Solitude
Calm	Exploration	Love	Spirituality
Certainty	Expression	Loyalty	Spontaneous
Challenge	Fairness	Mastery	Stability
Charity	Family	Maturity	Status
Cleanliness	Famous	Meaning	Stewardship
Cleverness	Fearless	Moderation	Strength
Commitment	Feelings	Motivation	Structure
Communication	Focus	Openness	Success
Community	Freedom	Optimism	Support
Compassion	Friendship	Order	Surprise
Competence	Fun	Organization	Sustainability
Concentration	Generosity	Originality	Talent

Confidence	Genius	Passion	Teamwork
Connection	Giving	Patience	Thoughtful
Consciousness	Goodness	Peace	Timeliness
Contentment	Grace	Persistence	Tolerance
Contribution	Gratitude	Playfulness	Toughness
Control	Greatness		Traditional
Conviction	Growth	Power	Tranquility
Cooperation	Happiness	Productivity	Trust
Courage	Hard work	Professionalism	Truth
Courtesy	Harmony	Prosperity	Understanding
Creation	Health	Purpose	Unity
Creativity	Honesty	Quality	Victory
Credibility	Honor	Realistic	Vigor
Curiosity	Hope	Recognition	Vision
Decisiveness	Humility	Recreation	Vitality
Dedication	Imagination	Reflective	Wealth
Dependability	Improvement	Respect	Winning
Determination	Independence	Responsibility	Wisdom
Devotion	Individuality	Results-oriented	Wonder

Review what you've written on the Values Clarification table. How many of your values are you acting on?

Defusion: Managing Self-Judging Thoughts

The term “defusion” was coined by Steve Hayes, the developer of acceptance and commitment therapy ACT.

He noticed that when people are “fused” to their distressing thoughts, unable to separate their core identity from their thoughts, they tend to be unhappy.

Defusion helps you notice your negative thoughts, acknowledge them, and let them go.

The simple act of acknowledging your thoughts and distancing yourself from them can often be enough to calm your mind.

Try the following techniques and choose what works best for you:

Technique 1. Thanking Your Mind

Acknowledge your thoughts by saying something like, “Thank you, Mind,” each time a negative thought pops up.

You may add something like, “Thank you, Mind! How informative!”

Make sure you don’t say it in a sarcastic or aggressive manner. Rather, say it with humor and with a genuine appreciation for your mind’s amazing ability to generate a never-ending stream of thoughts.

Technique 2. Hearing Thoughts in a Silly Voice

When a recurrent negative thought or self-judgment is bothering you, choose an animated cartoon character or an actor with a humorous voice and hear it in their voice.

This makes it less likely for you to take the thought seriously.

You might even find yourself grinning or chuckling at the thought.

Technique 3. Naming Your Mind

This helps you distinguish between your Self and your negative thoughts.

1. Sit in a comfortable position where you won't be disturbed. Close your eyes and let your mind dwell on your typical negative thoughts.
2. Imagine someone else saying these thoughts out loud. What does their tone of voice sound like? Is it high-pitched, low-pitched? Does it sound like someone you know or have known?
3. Give the person or character who is talking a name other than your own and write it here: _____
4. Next time you hear the voice, acknowledge it by saying something like, "Hi _____ [insert name] I hear you talking again." or, "Hi _____ [insert name] are you trying to bring me down again?"

Technique 4. Having (Not Being) Your Thoughts

Whenever you're having a negative thought, take a step back from it by saying, "I'm having the thought that _____"

For example, instead of saying, "There's something wrong with me," try saying, "I'm having the thought that there's something wrong with me."

Try it: Think about a recent disturbing thought you had, and try to distance yourself from the thought

Thought: _____

I'm having the thought that _____

Technique 5. Scheduling a Time to Worry

This is especially helpful when you're worried about something and there's nothing you can do about it now.

Instead of engaging in worrying throughout the day, postpone these thoughts until a more convenient, less intrusive time.

You can tell yourself you will worry when you finish work and get back home or write down the thought on a piece of paper or save it on your phone to worry about later.

Choose a specific time every day (e.g. 20 minutes in the evening):

Technique 6. Labeling Your Thoughts

Attach a label to your thoughts.

This can be an emotional label (e.g. that was an angry thought) or an abstract label (e.g. that was a self-defeating thought, or that was a harsh thought).

You may use the past tense (that was) to further distance yourself from your thoughts.

Try it: Think about a recent negative thought you had, and label it:

Thought: _____

That was _____

Technique 7. Sorting Thoughts into Categories

When a negative thought pops up, acknowledge it and assign it to a distinct category.

The following are some common types of negative thoughts:

1. All-or-Nothing Thinking

This is when you look at things in absolute. If you fall short of a certain goal, you conclude that you are a total failure as a person.

2. Overgeneralization

This is when you decide that a negative experience describes your life completely, or that a specific flaw describes you as a person.

3. Mental Filter

This is when you focus entirely on the negative aspects of a situation while ignoring the positive aspects. Soon, the whole situation looks negative.

4. Fortune Telling

This is when you make a disturbing prediction about your future.

If you're feeling down, you may tell yourself that things will never change and that you'll always feel this way.

5. Mind Reading

This is when you jump to conclusions regarding others' thoughts and feelings without any clear evidence. You might decide that someone is rejecting you because they didn't pick up their phone or you might

convince yourself that everyone else is happy, that no one else ever struggles with insecurities.

6. Magnification and Minimization

This is when you exaggerate the negative and minimize the positive in a certain situation.

7. Emotional Reasoning

This is when you turn your feelings into facts. You may find yourself thinking, “I feel worthless, I must be worthless,” or, “I feel like I’m on the verge of a nervous breakdown, so I must be in real danger.”

8. Should Statements

This is when you criticize yourself or other people when they don’t meet self-imposed standards or expectations using shoulds and shouldn’ts.

9. Labeling

This is when you try to capture the “essence” of yourself or someone else with a label. It is an extreme form of overgeneralization.

For example, you might call yourself “stupid” or “loser” instead of saying, “I made a mistake.”

10. Self-Blame and Other-Blame

This is when you find fault in yourself or others instead of trying to identify the real causes of the problem and solve it.

Self-Blame – this is when you blame or beat up on yourself for something you weren’t entirely responsible for.

Other-Blame – this is when you blame others while overlooking how you might have contributed to the problem.

Think about a recent disturbing thought you had, and try to assign it to a category:

Thought: _____

Category: _____

Technique 8. Symbolically Letting Go

1. Hold your hand out cupped upward as you're holding a small stone.
2. Imagine that you're holding your negative thought in your cupped hand and turn your hand over to let the thought fall down.

Technique 9. Writing Your Thoughts On Cards

Use index cards to write down your negative thoughts when they pop up.

When the same thought comes up again, tell yourself something like, "I've got this one on the card. I don't have to think about it."

Tracking Defusion Techniques

Try each of the techniques above to distance yourself from your negative thoughts and track how helpful each technique has been:

Defusion Technique	Situations when I used it	Thoughts I had	Outcome
Thanking Your Mind			
Hearing Thoughts in a Silly Voice			
Naming Your Mind			
Having (Not Being) Your Thoughts			
Scheduling a Time to Worry			
Labeling Your Thoughts			
Sorting Thoughts into Categories			
Symbolically Letting Go			
Writing Your Thoughts On Cards			

Self-Compassion

The goal of practicing self-compassion is to replace your usual self-critical thoughts with compassionate ones.

Self-compassion can be an antidote to shame.

Exercise 1. Do Something Compassionate

For the next week, do something compassionate for yourself every day.

Below is a list of small things to do for yourself. Check off the ones you think you can try and add more to the list:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Talk to a friend on the telephone | ☐ Get out of your house, even if you just sit outside |
| ☐ Exercise | ☐ Get a massage |
| ☐ Dance | ☐ Eat chocolate or eat something else you really like |
| ☐ Do stretching exercises | ☐ Cook your favorite dish or meal |
| ☐ Go for a long walk in a park or someplace that's peaceful | ☐ Take a cooking class |
| ☐ Lie in the sun | ☐ Go out for something to eat |
| ☐ Go jog | ☐ Watch a funny video on YouTube |
| ☐ Ride your bike | ☐ Watch a funny movie |
| ☐ Go for a swim | ☐ Listen to a podcast |
| ☐ Go ice skating, roller skating/blading | ☐ Research a topic of interest |
| ☐ Go to a sporting event, like a baseball or football game | |

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Buy something on the Internet (within your budget) | ☐ Write a short story |
| ☐ Do a puzzle with a lot of pieces | ☐ Read your favorite book, magazine, paper, or poem |
| ☐ Go get a haircut | ☐ Paint a picture with a brush or your fingers |
| ☐ Go to a spa or sauna | ☐ Do arts and crafts |
| ☐ Go to a bookstore and get a new book | ☐ Paint your nails |
| ☐ Go to the opera or ballet | ☐ Change your hair color |
| ☐ Pray or meditate | ☐ Take a bubble bath or shower |
| ☐ Go to your church, synagogue, temple, or other places of worship | ☐ Have a warm drink |
| ☐ Learn a new language | ☐ Write in your journal or diary about what happened to you today |
| ☐ Sing or learn how to sing | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Play a musical instrument or learn how to play one | ☐ _____ |
| | ☐ _____ |
| | ☐ _____ |

Exercise2. Write a Love Letter to Yourself

Pretend you are your own best friend and or close sister or brother who is supportive and loving and write yourself a letter.

It may be helpful to look at your picture when you were a child to increase your feelings of self-compassion.

In your letter,

(1) briefly describe your struggle with feelings of shame and shame triggers (e.g. past traumatic experience, a toxic person in your life, an upcoming, challenging event, etc.).

(2) Then, write from the vantage point of a supportive friend.

You may also imagine what you would say to a friend who has the same thoughts.

Dear _____

I know that when (your trigger) _____

you feel (shame-related emotions) _____

and you react by (old coping behavior) _____

However, (offer yourself compassion) _____

Love always,

Exercise 3. Self-Compassion Mantra

Kristin Neff, Ph.D. is a pioneer in the study of self-compassion. She gives her own self-compassion mantra as an example: This is a moment of suffering. Suffering is part of life. May I be kind to myself in this moment.

You may use her mantra in moments of suffering or you may compose your own.

Your statement of compassion for yourself:

Exercise 4. Self-Compassion Journal

Start a self-compassion journal where you write down distressing experiences and offer yourself a compassionate response similar to the one you'd offer a friend in the same situation.

Incident	Internal experience (feelings, thoughts, urges)	Compassionate response
e.g. I was late for work	I felt incompetent and was mad at myself	Things happen and anyone can be late for work from time to time and that doesn't mean they're incompetent. I embrace my humanity

Incident	Internal experience (feelings, thoughts, urges)	Compassionate response

2026 Clinical Alignment

DSM-5-TR (including Sept. 2025 update) · ICD-11 CDDR / 2026 MMS

Classification status

- DSM-5-TR: No diagnosis under this title · No diagnosis is established by the title.
- ICD-11 CDDR: · No diagnosis is established by the title.
- This workbook is non-diagnostic. A title, checklist, or completed activity never establishes a diagnosis.

Pages requiring the updated interpretation

- The audit identified source pages 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30. The statements below supersede incompatible diagnostic, scoring, safety, or resource wording on those pages.

Diagnostic and differential limits

- Assess duration, distress/functional impairment, cultural and medical context, substance/medication effects, and relevant differential diagnoses before assigning any diagnosis.

Document-specific corrections

- Pages [2, 4, 24] · Frame · Overcome Shame· using the DSM/ICD status below; add duration, impairment, exclusions, and differentials without reproducing criteria. The title alone must never be treated as a diagnosis.
- Pages [1, 2] · Treat the Overcome Shame ratings/checklists as author-created reflection tools only. Remove unsupported severity bands, cutoffs, totals, or language suggesting diagnostic validity; label response anchors and recall period explicitly.
- Pages [6, 7, 10, 29] · Add direct risk escalation for suicidal thinking or self-harm and assess bipolarity, psychosis, substance effects, trauma, medical contributors, and severe functional decline before relying on activation, reframing, or self-guided coping. Apply this specifically to the workbook's What Is Shame?, Identifying Triggers, Feelings of Shame, Shame Negative Beliefs sections.
- Pages [1, 4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 27, 28, 30] · Review all medical assertions in Overcome Shame with a qualified medical professional; distinguish psychoeducation from individualized advice and add referral thresholds, contraindications, and medication/procedure cautions appropriate to this population.

Measures, scoring, and permissions

- Treat the Overcome Shame ratings/checklists as author-created reflection tools only. Remove unsupported severity bands, cutoffs, totals, or language suggesting diagnostic validity; label response anchors and recall period explicitly. custom/unvalidated unless evidence is supplied confirm no third-party item wording was adapted

Intervention scope and contraindications

- Add direct risk escalation for suicidal thinking or self-harm and assess bipolarity, psychosis, substance effects, trauma, medical contributors, and severe functional decline before relying on activation, reframing, or self-guided coping.

Crisis and current resources

- U.S.: call or text 988; chat at <https://988lifeline.org/>. Immediate danger: local emergency services. International resources must be separately verified for the intended country and dated.

Authoritative references

- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/updates-to-dsm/updates-to-dsm-5-tr-criteria-text>
- <https://icd.who.int/browse/2026-01/mms/en>
- <https://988lifeline.org/>
- <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240077263>