



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO

SHAME-FREE PARENTING



Shame starts at home. Fortunately, so does shame resilience. As parents, we have the opportunity to raise children who are courageous, compassionate, and connected. We can choose to learn the tools we need to parent without using shame. We can even teach our children empathy skills. But as you might guess, before we can teach or model these skills, we must understand the role shame plays in our own lives and practice resilience in our relationships.

—[Dr. Brené Brown](#)

A Parent's Guide to **SHAME-FREE PARENTING**

Contents

We all need to figure out how to deal with shame.....	1
Why do I need to be concerned about shame?.....	1
What exactly is shame? Is it different from guilt?.....	2
What are the effects of not knowing how to deal with it?	2
What causes it?	3
What distinguishes it from other emotions?.....	3
Is it different for men and women?.....	4
How does family contribute?	4
Does culture contribute?	5
Does the Church contribute?.....	6
How do we deal with shame poorly?.....	7
What happens internally when we succumb to shame?	7
What light does God's Word shine on shame?	8
How do vulnerability and empathy help?.....	10
What happens internally when we deal with shame well?	11
How does this relate to how I discipline and correct my kids?	11
How can I create an atmosphere of shame resilience?	13
How can I know if I'm parenting from a place of shame?	13
Final thoughts	15
Related Axis Resources	15
Additional Resources	16
Recap	17
Discussion Questions.....	18

We all need to figure out how to deal with shame.

We've all felt it—that sick feeling in the pit of our stomachs. A sense of complete unworthiness and isolation, an awareness that we are utterly unlovable. That feeling is shame, and it's something everyone experiences. We feel shame for how we look, our personalities, failing others and ourselves, saying the wrong thing at the wrong time—you name it. If there is anything in life that matters to us, we will have to navigate shame in that area because we are imperfect people.

As parents, it's crucial that we first recognize how to deal with our own shame and then evaluate what messages about shame we're communicating to our children. Shame is powerful and unavoidable, but if we learn to recognize and navigate it, we and our children can actually learn to be stronger people because of it.

Note: Though shame is a universal experience, it's only in recent years that people have begun studying, writing, and talking about it because it was, well, shameful to do so. For that reason, we have relied heavily on the (excellent) research of a few for this Guide.

Why do I need to be concerned about shame?

Dr. Brené Brown, who's done extensive research on shame and vulnerability, says in her book [*I Thought It Was Just Me \(But It Isn't\)*](#), “Most of us, if not all, have built significant parts of our lives around shame.” Parenting is a major area of life where we experience shame. It's extremely tempting for us to feel shame both because of our own performance as parents and because of the behavior of our children. And often, if we feel shame over something our kids do, we end up transferring that shame onto our children either purposefully or inadvertently. Brown says that parents (including herself) are “very susceptible to using shame, fear, and judgment against children when they engage in behaviors that damage the ‘parenting image’ we are trying to create.”

What exactly is shame? Is it different from guilt?

In *I Thought It Was Just Me*, Dr. Brown defines shame as “the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging.” There’s also an element of vulnerability in shame: Somehow, we are exposed or laid bare for others to see, and they disapprove of what they see. Shame tells us we’re not good enough. It looks at our failures or perceived failures and [tells us that’s who we are](#) and all we’ll ever be.

But Dr. Brown distinguishes shame—which focuses on our identities—from guilt—which focuses on our behavior. Whereas guilt is **constructive** because it motivates us to do better, shame is **destructive** because it locks us into an identity based on our behavior. Shame says, “You’re a liar,” instead of, “You’re someone who struggles with lying” or “You told a lie.” By making the behavior of lying the person’s identity, shame implies that it’s impossible for the liar to be anything else.

What are the effects of not knowing how to deal with it?

[Research shows](#) that having unresolved shame is strongly tied to:

- addiction
- depression
- suicide
- eating disorders
- violence

In addition, because shame twists and distorts our identities, telling us that our behaviors define us, it is never helpful as a way of motivating people to make positive change in their lives. Instead, it actually paralyzes us by isolating us from and destroying the human connection that gives meaning to our lives and helps us want to be better. It keeps us from being vulnerable, which can eventually ruin our relationships. People hate talking about shame, yet over and over again, Brown says that secrecy and isolation make shame grow exponentially. The less people talk about their shame, the more shame

they experience. So it's also a cycle from which it can be hard to break free.

What causes it?

Unsurprisingly, it really depends on the person. Someone could feel extreme shame over something that someone else would never even think about. The impact of shame on a person can look like anything from a fear of not wearing makeup in public to fear of posting on Facebook, playing charades, or asking someone out.

A friend of ours recently witnessed a “minor” example of a mother shaming her son at the grocery store. Our friend was ordering meat at the deli counter, and the mom had sent her son, who was around 11 years old, to order cheese. The son told the man working at the counter that he needed some parmesan. The man was kind, but said they didn't have that kind of cheese and asked if the boy was sure he had the name right. The mom came up soon after, and it turned out she wanted provolone. She then turned to her son and said, “I just told you it was provolone, and you couldn't even remember that?”

It didn't appear the boy was being anything other than forgetful. But even if he had done something wrong, there was nothing helpful or redeeming about his mom publicly shaming him for forgetting what she'd told him. Instead of separating his behavior from **him**, she implied that there was something wrong with him because he'd failed in this task. This is a small example, relatively speaking, but the message she sent him about who he was and the shame she imparted were significant. He was made to feel small, unworthy, and incapable.

What distinguishes it from other emotions?

It's important to be aware that we [don't actually have to do anything](#) to feel shame. Shame could arise simply from the fear that someone will find out something bad about us. What's more, in an interview with Axis, Christian author and psychologist Dr. Dan Allender points out that shame is unique from other emotions in that it's contagious. We can experience shame simply from observing other people who are

experiencing shame.

Drs. Brown and Allender both agree that people are often unaware of just how much shame is impacting their behavior. People might think they have an anger problem or that they're perfectionists, when the deeper reality is that [shame is driving them](#). Allender notes—and this is key!—that **we react to shame similarly to how we deal with trauma**. Because we don't want to remember our shame or the events that caused it, we detach ourselves from those experiences. We try to fragment our emotions and numb our feelings.

Is it different for men and women?

In *Men, Women, and Worthiness*, Dr. Brown makes the remarkable statement that **gender is key to understanding shame**. In fact, she says, it's impossible to develop shame resilience while ignoring the fact that gender drives our experience of shame.

How men and women experience shame is the same, but the [reasons why they do](#) are different. Women face incredible pressure to effortlessly meet an overwhelming number of conflicting standards and expectations. Appearance is an almost universal shame trigger for women: 90% of them feel shame about their bodies. On the other hand, the overwhelming pressure that men face is never to fail or appear weak. Their primary shame triggers come from their professional identities, status, and money. Knowing the reasons behind each gender's shame then help us to better identify how to address the same.

How does family contribute?

[Brown writes](#), “In my research it was painfully clear that the shaming wounds inflicted in our first families often set the stage for many of our greatest shame struggles.” For example, one of Brown's family messages was, “We don't get sick.” So if any kind of illness gets in the way of her doing her job or fulfilling her responsibilities as a mom, she deals with shame about that.

Other messages could be, “We don’t tolerate wastefulness” or “We can make it through anything.” One woman we talked to realized that one of her family messages was, “Sleeping in is lazy.” She realized that whenever she sleeps in, she often feels guilty for doing so, regardless of her reasons, because she’s internalized her first family’s message. A man we talked to says that a message in his family was, “We get good grades.” Because of this mindset, growing up he felt shame if he ever got any grade lower than an A.

This is so tricky, because you’ll notice that all of these messages are based on good ideas and values. Where they go wrong is by never permitting any kind of failure or allowing for any kind of grace. Also, it’s important to be clear that what they were feeling was not guilt. Guilt would be experienced if the man had gotten a B because he knew he didn’t work as hard as he could have or if the woman had slept in out of pure laziness. The guilt would clearly be based in a behavior (doing something wrong or not doing one’s best), whereas shame is based in identity (“I slept in, therefore I am lazy” or “I got a bad grade, therefore I’m not smart”) and doesn’t take circumstances into account.

Does culture contribute?

Absolutely. However, what drives shame in Millennials (b. early 1980s to late 1990s) and Gen Z (b. late 1990s to late 2010s) is slightly different from what caused shame in previous generations. [Brown writes](#) that despite families of origin being the most influential voices in our lives, other influences are also powerful:

[I talked to] many people who struggle with shame around issues that stem from other places—namely cultural messages and stereotypes. This is especially true of women and men who are under forty. For many people in this age group, the media has become the primary storyteller of their lives.

So what standards is culture telling us we’re supposed to meet? Well, its messages are conflicting. One of them is that [weakness is not allowed](#). Because vulnerability is a type of weakness, there’s no room for vulnerability. Yet at the same time, our culture celebrates authenticity (which is also a kind of weakness) and cannot stand hypocrisy.

There are too many cultural messages to list all of them, but here are a few other ones:

- All of us, but especially women, are expected to meet impossible standards of beauty.

- Our culture is highly individualistic, making it more likely we'll experience shame if we have to ask for help.
- It almost seems superfluous to mention how common it is for people to shame each other online for the slightest mistake. One semi-recent example of this was when J.R. Smith of the Cleveland Cavaliers failed to take a winning shot because he thought the Cavs were ahead of the Golden State Warriors during the NBA Finals. The teams were actually tied, so the game went into overtime and the Warriors ended up winning. [The internet was not forgiving](#). What message does this send? That you can't make one single mistake in your career without seriously paying for it in public shame.

If you're not sure how culture is influencing your kids, it might require observing and talking to them to figure it out. But look for areas where they feel like less of a person or unvaluable. Most likely it's because of a standard they've accepted that they also feel like they don't meet for one reason or another.

Does the Church contribute?

Sadly, Christian culture is notably uncomfortable with making space for people's brokenness. On the one hand, as mental health counselor Andrew J. Bauman [points out](#), so much of the focus in Christendom is on our sinfulness and so little on our redemption that it seems our sinfulness is truer than our salvation. On the other hand, we contradictorily think that others will perceive us as "bad Christians" if we acknowledge that we struggle with "shameful sins," like porn addiction or same-sex attraction. Christians might fear being shamed or misunderstood if they admit they've had an abortion or experienced sexual abuse. It's not just "unacceptable sins" that we can feel shame over but also for our social status or season of life. The church often emphasizes marriage and family so much that it's easy for singles to feel shame for not being in a relationship (secular culture makes this problem harder, too).

Now that we've looked at the major contributors to shame, it might be a good time to stop reading and think for a few minutes about what messages you may have received or internalized when you were younger. Write them down so you can refer back to them later. Once you're done with that, take a few more minutes to think about

messages that you (or others) might be purposefully or inadvertently teaching your kids. They could be good messages at their core, but if they're communicated in a way that's too black and white, it could be causing harm. Write those down, too.

How do we deal with shame poorly?

Shame is intolerable, so we have to deal with it somehow. Often, [that means in dysfunctional ways](#), such as:

- numbing ourselves/self-medicating/addiction;
- resisting uncertainty (fear makes us vulnerable);
- blame-shifting'
- ignoring it and pretending that everything is ok; and
- trying to fix and perfect ourselves (and others).

In addition, Dr. Allender says that one of the most common ways of dealing with shame is contempt, either for ourselves or for others. Another “solution” is false forgiveness. Instead of truly naming what we did when we shamed someone else, we say, “I didn’t mean it.” Even if the person responds with, “I know you didn’t,” that’s not true forgiveness because we weren’t honest. We *did* mean it, and we need to apologize.

Another problematic response is shamelessness. Allender says that U.S. culture was shame-based in the 1940s and ‘50s, but since the 1960s we’ve gone the opposite direction and have responded to shame by becoming “immune” or impervious to shame. Nothing bothers us, and no one can make us feel bad for our choices! Aspects of the body positivity movement are an excellent example of this. In response to the shame put on them for not meeting our culture’s impossible standards, some women respond by posting highly revealing pictures of themselves online. In trying to avoid shame, they tried to become shameless.

What happens internally when we succumb to shame?

In her book, [Craving Grace: Experience the Richness of the Gospel](#), Ruthie Delke explores

what's going on inside when we're confronted with our sin and either succumb to shame or draw near to God. As we go through life, we all will continually be confronted with our sin and our shortcomings. Every time this happens, we have the choice to live as orphans and "manage" our shame or to repent and live out of our identities as God's children. She says, "How will I respond when I feel the weight of my sin? I can repent and run to the cross, or I can resist and turn away from the cross."

Of course, we might feel shame for something that is not our fault at all. But whether our shame is or isn't our fault, we are still faced with the choice of letting it define us or believing that God's unconditional love defines us. Here's essentially what's going on within us when we experience shame and don't know how to deal with it:

1. We're confronted with shame, pain, and/or sin.
2. We accept the lies that shame tells us and/or resist repentance.
3. We "manage" the pain and/or sin (see the section on inadequate ways of dealing with shame).
4. We feel increased isolation from God and others, which leads to even more shame.
5. We begin to create and project a false-self that resists vulnerability, intimacy, and trust.

And so the cycle goes until we are willing to be vulnerable, receive empathy, and believe what God says about who we are.

What light does God's Word shine on shame?

Sadly, shame became part of the human experience as soon as Adam and Eve rebelled against God. Genesis 3 records that when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree, they saw that they were naked, a condition so closely associated with shame that it could almost be synonymous with it. They then tried to hide their nakedness with the (inadequate) covering of fig leaves and hid from God's presence. When God confronted them, they blamed Him and each other for what they had done.

Yes, it's true that they had sinned, something they should have felt guilty for and repented of. But it turned into shame when they turned their failure into their identity, then tried to run away from it. Ultimately, shame begins when our faith in God's goodness ends. Instead of running to God as the solution to their sin, they felt exposed and unworthy,

so they ran away from Him and hid. (In fact, Dr. Allender says that they should have faced God naked and admitted they deserved death, rather than hiding or pretending what they had done was excusable.)

This is exactly what we do when we experience shame. We try to cover it. We hide, isolate ourselves, and blame other people. But our “coverings” are just as inadequate as Adam and Eve’s were. We need our shame to be brought to the light and atoned for as God did when He gave them coverings of animal skins.

The [writer of Hebrews tells us](#) that Jesus, for the joy set before Him, “endured the cross, despising the shame.” He not only died for our sins and to set us free from death, but He also took our shame upon Himself. Allender says that the Gospel can’t make sense to us unless we’re willing to deal with our shame. Some of the new realities that set us free from shame are:

- God is love, and His love is unconditional.
- Our primary identity is that of a loved child of God, not an abandoned, sinful orphan.
- God is not continually angry with us. He looks with favor on us because of Christ.
- We’re not trying to appease a mean God. We can’t earn His love—He gives it freely.
- God is more good, powerful, merciful, and loving than we can comprehend.
- God is for us, on our side. The Holy Spirit leads us in good paths.
- Jesus not only died for our shame, but He is “God with us.” He walks alongside us in our grief [as He did with Mary and Martha](#) after the death of Lazarus.

We must be brave and humble enough to name and own up to our shame—if we can’t do that, we can’t overcome it ourselves, nor can we help anyone else to do so. We must not ignore it or make excuses to the people we love. Both Allender and Brown emphasize the importance of kindness when confronting our shame. God has been immeasurably kind to us. [Romans 2:4](#) says that the kindness of God leads us to repentance. If we remember this, we’ll be able to be kind to ourselves and to our kids, as well as teach our kids to treat themselves with this same kindness.

How do vulnerability and empathy help?

Adam and Eve had to face God before He could deal with their sin and shame. They had to be vulnerable before Him. [Brown says](#) that it's impossible to address shame apart from vulnerability. Vulnerability is difficult because it seems like weakness, and it does mean risking being hurt. But we have to risk being hurt in order to experience true connection and healing.

Developing shame resilience starts with identifying shame for what it is and being aware of when we're experiencing it. Brown calls this "critical awareness." We need to be alert to the shaming messages our society and families have told us and know how those messages are shaping our internal narratives. What are our typical responses to shame? Brown says that she's become aware that when she starts plotting little ways to "get back" at others, it's because she's experienced shame and hadn't realized it. Because shame impacts us physically, we also need to start noticing [how our bodies react when we're in shame](#). Do we flush? Do our armpits get sweaty? The sooner we can identify these symptoms, the more resilient we'll be. When we recognize shame, we then need to share what we're going through with someone we trust.

Empathy is key to overcoming shame. We need to have trustworthy people we can talk to who know how to show empathy, and we need to show empathy to our kids and to others. How do we do this? It's important to listen well and not judge the other person. Our goal should not be to teach them how to do better, but to learn about their perspective. Even as we communicate what we think and perceive about what they're telling us, we should let them know that, no matter what, we're open to learning from them and to being with them. Even though empathy is extremely compassionate, [it doesn't act like things are ok](#). It's honest without judging.

It's also helpful to recognize that people don't have to go [through the exact same experiences](#) to show empathy to each other. They simply need to have experienced the same emotion. Going through the exact same experience as someone else can actually impair empathy if it leads one person to assume they know what the other person is feeling.

What happens internally when we deal with shame well?

[Dr. Brown says](#) that “people who have a strong sense of love and belonging believe they’re worthy of love and belonging.” As Christians, we know that our worthiness and sense of love come from Christ. So how do we move through shame toward living out of love? Ruthie Delk says that when we deal with sin and shame well, it basically looks like this:

1. We’re confronted with shame, pain, and/or sin.
2. We reject lies and believe truth, owning and repenting of sin if necessary.
3. We accept God’s grace, receive His forgiveness, reconcile with others if necessary.
4. We rest in God’s love, experience freedom and depth in community.

Dr. Brown describes shame resilience this way:

1. Identify that you’re experiencing shame (your physical reaction, internal narrative, the messages that trigger shame for you).
2. [Practice critical awareness](#), that is, look at the bigger picture and recognize that you’re not alone.
3. Share what you’re going through with someone you trust.
4. Receive empathy from others.

Both of these frameworks are useful for helping us deal with shame well. We need to know the lies we’re tempted to believe and how we typically react to them. When confronted with those lies, we need to actively reject them by speaking God’s Word and truth aloud to ourselves and by sharing what we’re going through with someone else if we can.

How does this relate to how I discipline and correct my kids?

In her book [Mindset: The New Psychology of Success](#), Carol Dweck writes, “No parent thinks, ‘I wonder what I can do today to undermine my children, subvert their effort, turn them off learning, and limit their achievement.’” Parents want to do everything possible

to help their kids, yet they can often send messages that communicate judgment and shame, or what Dweck calls a “fixed mindset” (i.e. that you are the way you are and can’t change).

Because of the messages we’ve internalized from culture, church, or the families we grew up in and because we want the best for our kids, it’s possible that we might be relying on shame in our parenting without realizing it. The reason we’ve spent so much time in this guide explaining what shame is and how it impacts us is so that you can be aware of its effect on you and so that you can teach your kids how to resist it themselves.

You might think that you just have high standards for your kids, while you are actually pressuring them into being perfectionists. We encourage you to prayerfully seek God and ask Him to show you if you are parenting in a way that could be fostering a fixed mindset. Such a mindset will have a powerful impact on your kids even once they are grown—but remember, it’s just as powerful if you empathize with your children and encourage them that they can grow and learn from their mistakes (which is what Dweck calls a “growth mindset”).

If you’re ready for it, now would be a good time to ask your kids if there are areas where they feel like they’re not allowed to mess up or if you’ve ever made them feel not good enough. You should also ask them if they feel safe with you, if they believe they can come to you no matter what they’ve done and be received, loved, and forgiven. See if what they say matches up with what you wrote down earlier or if it surprises you. Either way, it will be hard to hear, but by doing so, you begin the path to healing and spiritual wellbeing, both for your kids and yourself.

Now is a good time to remind you to be gracious to yourself. If you ask your kids

how you’ve shamed them, and in turn feel ashamed and like a failure, then shame is still winning! **You cannot measure your success as a parent by the behavior of your kids.** You could be the best parent in the world, and your kids could still rebel. Adam and Eve were in the absolute perfect scenario and still rebelled against God. Instead, use this as a learning and growing opportunity, remembering to own your mistakes, confess and apologize for them, and set out to do better in the future. And remember, your mistakes do not define you or your worth.

How can I create an atmosphere of shame resilience?

Don't make any topic or area of life off-limits. Make sure your kids understand that they can come to you about **anything**. Start conversations on topics like sex or bullying as soon as your kids can talk. (Check out our [parent guides on these topics](#) for more thoughts on how to go about these discussions.) You must talk to your kids about uncomfortable topics for many reasons, but one of them is that [you will create shame](#) around anything you don't or won't talk to them about.

If you want to help your kids become shame resilient, you must not tolerate an attitude of contempt toward anyone. One man we talked to said that when he was growing up, his parents always talked about smokers with contempt. They didn't know it, but he was smoking at the time. By shaming people who smoked, all they did was ensure that he would do his best to hide his habit from them.

How can I know if I'm parenting from a place of shame?

In her book, [Unashamed: Healing Our Brokenness and Finding Freedom from Shame](#), Heather Davis Nelson writes:

[Shame-free parenting] implies knowing your children, staying emotionally attuned to them even in the midst of moments of instruction and correction, and also knowing yourself—where does shame have a hold on you, and how were you parented with shame?

Prayer is extremely important to shame-free parenting, as is confessing and repenting of how we've shamed our kids ([Eph. 6:4](#), [Col. 3:21](#)). A sign you're parenting from a place of shame is using phrases like:

- “Shame on you”/”You should be ashamed”
- “You always”/”You never”
- “You make me...”
- “You are X.”
- “Don't you know better?”

- “Don’t be a baby.”

Sarcasm is also a no-no when it comes to discipline.

[Dr. Brown says](#) that shame-based parenting can look like attacking who your kids are, making fun of them, or threatening them with loss of relationship. Nelson encourages parents to ask themselves the following questions:

- How often do I delight in my child?
- Do I discipline publicly or privately?
- When I discipline, do I distinguish between my kids’ behavior and their identities?
- Do I calm down so that I don’t discipline out of my emotions?
- Do I tell my kids I love them before, during, and after discipline?
- Do I tailor discipline to my kids’ developmental stages?
- Do I acknowledge and empathize with my kids’ feelings? (This creates connection, which as Brown points out, dispels shame.)

One man we spoke with has observed that his aunt habitually makes small criticisms about her daughter. When the daughter walks into a room, it’s more common for her mom to say something like, “Why did you choose that outfit?” instead of giving her a hug. By not making a habit of “delighting in” her daughter and by criticizing her instead, the mom is instilling shame in her, communicating the message that she never quite measures up.

On the other hand, one woman remembers that whenever her mom disciplined her as a child, she never did so out of anger. The mom made sure she understood ahead of time why the discipline was happening. After it happened and she was upset and crying, her mom comforted her.

You might parent in very loving way, but there are always dangers.

It’s essential to note that even if you correct your kids out of love, they could still be living out of shame. [Dr. Brown says](#) that if you haven’t taught them shame resilience, they’ll be defenseless against *other people* who might shame them.

Nelson concurs when she points out that even if you’re doing your very best and disciplining well, your kids can still feel shame. It’s important to look for signs that this is the case. If you see your kids withdrawing after you correct them, **make sure you pursue them** and try to figure out what’s going on. Remind them of God’s love and your love. She says, “Redemptive connection with your child after correction will go a

long way in dispelling the shame that follows wrongdoing and failure.”

Conversations are crucial.

Dr. Allender says that we must have conversations with our kids and educate them about shame. As with the most important conversations parents need to have in today’s world, you should start them as soon as your kids are able to talk. One of the most effective tactics you can take is to share your own stories. Remember, vulnerability and empathy are the antidotes to shame! If you are willing to be vulnerable with your kids about your own shame and failure, you are empathizing with them about their shame. You enable them to be connected and not isolated, helping to provide healing.

Final thoughts

[Dr. Brown writes:](#)

Of all the insights that emerged from this study, none was more powerful to me than the influence parents have on their children....Of all the voices shouting expectations or whispering quiet affirmations, the voices of parents were consistently reported to be among the most influential.

As parents, we have a significant and beautiful call to shape our kids’ views of themselves, yet we can take comfort in the fact that Jesus is the one who is ultimately in charge of their lives. None of us is perfect—and that’s ok! God is in the business of redeeming our shortcomings, failures, and ignorance. So as we do the best we can to parent out of love, let’s also diligently pray for ourselves and our kids, taking comfort that His omnipotent hand is over all our efforts.

Related Axis Resources

- [The Culture Translator](#), a **free** weekly email that offers biblical insight on all things teen-related
- [A Parent’s Guide to Tough Conversations](#)
- [A Parent’s Guide to Failure](#)

- Check out axis.org for even more resources!
- If you'd like access to all of our digital resources, both current and yet to come, for one low yearly or monthly fee, check out the [All Axis Pass](#)!

Additional Resources

- [*The Wounded Heart: Hope for Adult Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse*](#), Dan Allender
- [*The Healing Path: How the Hurts in Your Past Can Lead You to a More Abundant Life*](#), Dan Allender
- [*Craving Grace*](#), Ruthie Delk
- [“Shame and Vulnerability,”](#) The Work of the People
- [*Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*](#), Carol Dweck
- [The Allender Center](#) (website)
- Brené Brown's [website](#) (especially her [videos](#))

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Recap

- Shame is painful, isolating, and destructive. It tells us we are unworthy and can never change.
- We all experience shame, so it's essential that parents deal with their own shame in healthy ways, teach their kids to do the same, and avoid shame-based parenting.
- We can experience shame because of a fear we have or from observing someone else. Shame often underlies other problematic behaviors.
- The shame triggers for men and women are different.
- We need to be aware of the shaming messages we received from the families we grew up in, from culture, and from the church.
- Scripture shows us that shame is bound up in the brokenness of the world and that Christ bore our shame, giving us freedom, healing, and new identities.
- We can't overcome shame apart from vulnerability and empathy.
- Parents should beware of encouraging perfectionism, showing contempt for others, and judging themselves by their kids' behavior.
- In addition to avoiding parenting out of shame, parents need to educate their kids about shame resilience to protect their kids from others who might shame them.

Hint: Screen shot or print this page to refer back to later!



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Discussion Questions

- How would you describe shame? What does shame look like?
- What are ways our culture encourages shame?
- [Share something you, the parent, are tempted to feel shame about.]
What are the main things you are tempted to feel shame about?
- Are you able to identify how your body feels when you're experiencing shame?
- What's the difference between shame and guilt?
- Have we said or done anything that has ever made you feel ashamed?
What could we do differently?
- Do we do a good job of distinguishing between your behavior and your identity?
- Do we encourage you more than we criticize you?
- What does it look like to show someone empathy?
- What does it look like to pursue vulnerability with wisdom?
- Do you have someone you can trust to go to when you're experiencing shame?
- What are the most common lies you're tempted to believe that cause you shame?
- What are the truths you need to speak to yourself to combat those lies? What Scripture could you memorize when you find yourself believing lies?

Hint: Screen shot or print this page to refer back to later!

