

The Emotion of Shame.

The man sat trying to figure it out. Now, he knew that most emotions were learned from others.

The man cringed from the idea of learning when and how he learned to feel shame. No, he just wanted to stop feeling shame, for feeling shame kept him living in the past.

To his surprise, he noticed that moving shame out of his body was leaving a void, and he also knew that filling that space was his next step, but with what? He noticed that inserting emotions to see how they fit was much like painting color samples on house walls to see if there was one he liked best. But this wasn't that simple. No, this was about replacing blaming himself for an experience beyond his control and the consequential yet inappropriate shame he applied.

After trying several replacements, pride, honor, esteem, and dignity, none of which felt right, he tried confidence, and confidence caused his shame to evaporate.

Confidence felt good, much like he felt after showering, brushing his hair and teeth, and putting on clean clothes and socks. And, while he did those things almost daily, feeling good afterward never got old.

The man knew that to unlearn anything, mindfulness about rejecting what he wanted to change and remembering to insert its replacement was paramount. He wanted to reject shame and insert confidence in its void, both in thoughts and actions, until shame was unlearned and confidence learned. The man noticed that as shame was replaced by confidence, the memory of a particular experience changed from heart-breaking, guilt-ridden, shame-filled, and without positive meaning to now, while still containing his memory of the awful tragedy, there was a wholesome and understandable feeling surrounding the experience. He could finally see his dear friend smiling, even laughing, as was his norm. Yes, there was a tragedy, and if he got to repeat that experience today with what he had since learned, he would do things differently. But if he had to

repeat the experience with only the knowledge he then possessed, nothing would change, for he had done nothing wrong.

Finally, feeling confidence instead of shame in his thoughts and actions, he escaped the cocoon that shame had cloaked him in, and joy and happiness replaced shame and isolation.

Quite unexpectedly, he felt love again.

Written by Peter Skeels © 3-23-2025