

The Shame After Trauma

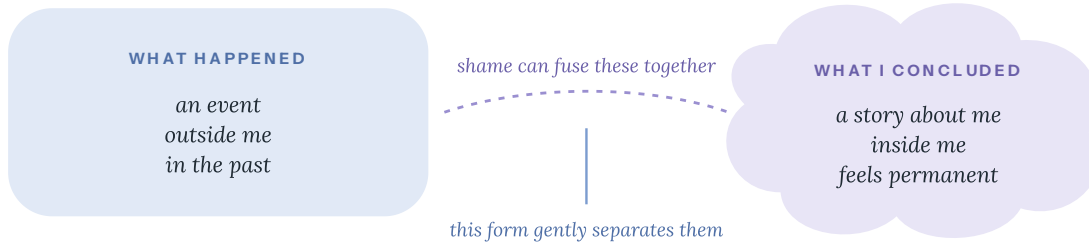
What happened, versus what I concluded about myself

After something frightening or hurtful, it's common to be left with shame, and with painful conclusions about ourselves formed in moments of threat or powerlessness. **They can feel like facts, but they are understandable responses, not the full truth about who you are.**

Before you begin

- **You don't need to describe what happened in detail.** A few words, or a label only you understand, is enough.
- Choose a **manageable** moment, not the most painful one. Larger memories are best explored together in session.
- Ground yourself before and after: feet on the floor, slow breaths.
- **You can stop at any point.** Leaving parts blank is completely fine.

01 Two different things



Separating them doesn't make what happened any less serious. It helps you see that it happened to you; it isn't who you are.

02 Separating the two

keep the left side brief

WHAT HAPPENED <i>a few words is enough</i>	WHAT I CONCLUDED ABOUT MYSELF <i>the belief that came with it</i>

03 Conclusions shame often brings

tick any that feel familiar

- ☐ It was my fault
 ☐ I should have stopped it
 ☐ I should have reacted differently
 ☐ I'm damaged or broken
 ☐ I'm weak
 ☐ I'm unlovable
- ☐ I'm worthless
 ☐ Something is wrong with me
 ☐ I can't trust myself
 ☐ Other: _____

04 Looking again, gently

there are no right answers

What did I know then, and what could I realistically do?

Hindsight gives us information we didn't have at the time.

Where might this conclusion have come from?

Something I was told, how others reacted, or a way to make sense of it.

What was in my control, and what wasn't?

Freezing, going along or shutting down are automatic survival responses.

If this had happened to someone I care about, what would I want them to know?

A kinder, more accurate way of seeing it

It doesn't need to feel true yet. It can be something you're willing to consider.

Caring for myself afterwards

- ☐ feet on the floor
 ☐ slow out-breaths
 ☐ name 5 things I can see
 ☐ a warm drink
 ☐ gentle movement
 ☐ time with someone safe

Someone I can reach out to: _____

SOURCES

Gilbert, P. (2009). *The compassionate mind*. Constable.

Lee, D. A., Scragg, P., & Turner, S. (2001). The role of shame and guilt in traumatic events: A clinical model of shame-based and guilt-based PTSD. *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 74(4), 451–466.