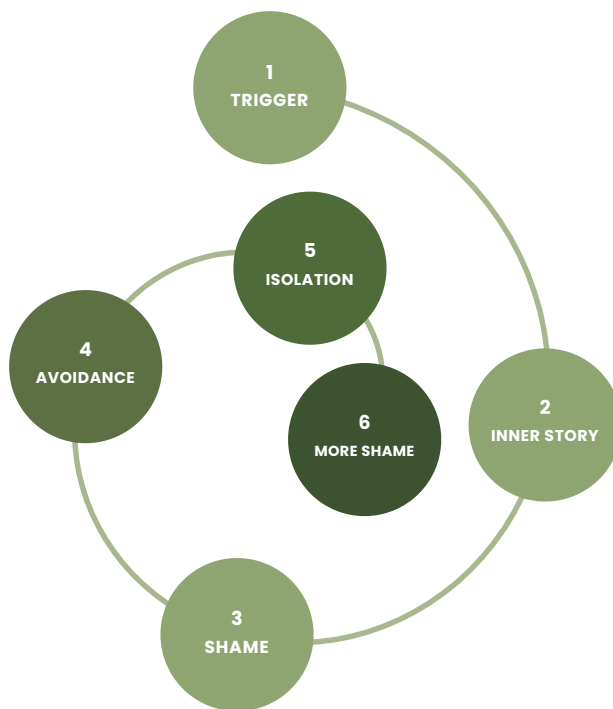


The Shame Spiral

UNDERSTANDING THE CYCLE · FINDING A DIFFERENT WAY

Shame can feel heavy and consuming. It often convinces us that something is fundamentally wrong with us — and the more we try to hide or avoid it, the stronger it tends to grow. Understanding the spiral can help you notice it earlier and choose a more compassionate response.



The more we hide, the tighter the spiral turns.

WHAT FUELS THE SPIRAL

- Harsh self-criticism
- Perfectionism
- Fear of judgment
- Past experiences of shame or rejection
- Comparing yourself to others
- Feeling you must hide parts of yourself
- A lack of safe connection

WHAT SHAME CAN FEEL LIKE

- A heavy, sinking feeling
- Wanting to disappear
- Feeling not good enough
- Self-blame
- A sense of defectiveness
- Anxiety or low mood
- Urges to hide, avoid or go numb
- Feeling disconnected from yourself and others

Breaking the Spiral

A KINDER, BRAVER WAY

1

NOTICE

Become aware of shame and the inner story it is telling you.

"I'm feeling shame right now."

2

NAME

Give the emotion a name. It's a feeling, not a fact.

"This is shame, not the truth."

3

NORMALISE

Shame is a universal human experience. It often surfaces when we care.

"Many people feel this way."

4

CONNECT

Reach out to someone safe. Sharing shame can reduce its power.

"I can let someone in."

5

CHOOSE

Respond with self-compassion. Speak to yourself as you would to someone you love.

"I am more than this moment."

Shame loses its power when it is met with kindness, understanding and connection.

GENTLE REMINDERS

- Shame is a feeling, not a fact
- You are not alone in feeling this way
- It's okay to be imperfect
- Connection can help ease shame

YOU MIGHT NOTICE

- A sense of relief when you are honest
- Greater self-acceptance
- More confidence to be yourself
- Stronger, more authentic relationships

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

- Everyone experiences shame at times — it is a natural part of being human
- The goal is not to never feel shame, but to recognise, respond with compassion, and stay connected to yourself and others

SOURCES

Brown, B. (2012). *Daring Greatly*. Gotham Books. · Gilbert, P. (2010). *The Compassionate Mind*. Constable.