



OVERCOMING SHAME

Helping Supporters *Undertand Shame*

A challenging aspect of experiencing shame can be feelings of isolation. Reaching out to compassionate people who love and support you can help. But knowing what to say is hard. Below are some suggestions for ways to talk to others about your experiences.

1 Share Your Experience With Shame

The first step in reaching out to others is explaining your feelings and experiences. Here are some things you might want to share. Shame can make you:

- Feel responsible for things that aren't your fault.
- Feel like there is something fundamentally wrong with you.
- Feel like you can't change.
- Feel alone even when you're surrounded by loving people.

What aspects of your experience do you want to share with a loved one? Can you think of an analogy that might make it easier to describe your feelings?

2 Have a Conversation

Explaining how you feel is a great first step, but then you might want to keep discussing your experiences. Here are some follow-up questions you can ask to start a conversation.

- How can I clarify anything that I've told you?
- In what ways do any of my experiences or feelings resonate with you?
- When have you experienced any feelings like this that you want to share with me?
- What questions do you have for me?

What other questions do you think would lead to a productive conversation?

3 Offer Suggestions for Ways to Help

Your loved one might struggle to know how they can be most helpful. Give them some ideas for things they can do to support you in your efforts to overcome shame. You might suggest things like:

- Be willing to listen and validate feelings.
- Help find professional resources like a therapist that can help with shame.
- Give sincere compliments.

Spend some time thinking about what would be most helpful to you and write down a couple of your ideas.
