

## Embracing Shame: A New Frontier in Counseling

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The absence of shame as a concept in mental health training creates a barrier to clinical education and therapist self-work in this area (Sanderson, 2015).

Brown, Rondero Hernandez, and Villarreal (2011) asserted that the “vast majority of clinicians have not studied shame” (p. 355). These authors argued that in order to ethically conduct shame work with clients, therapists must first explore their own areas of shame and vulnerability (Brown et al., 2011). “Either you understand shame and how it operates in your life or it operates your life” (Brown, 2007).

According to shame resilience theory (Brown, 2006) we can learn to move through feelings of shame by engaging in empirically identified practices. These practices entail examination of self, awareness of cultural context, and intentionality in interpersonal relationships. Regarding self-examination, by learning to recognize the physical experiences of shame (e.g., heart racing, feeling warm, throat tightening), individuals can more easily discern when they are “in shame” and thereby take steps to proactively cope and recover.

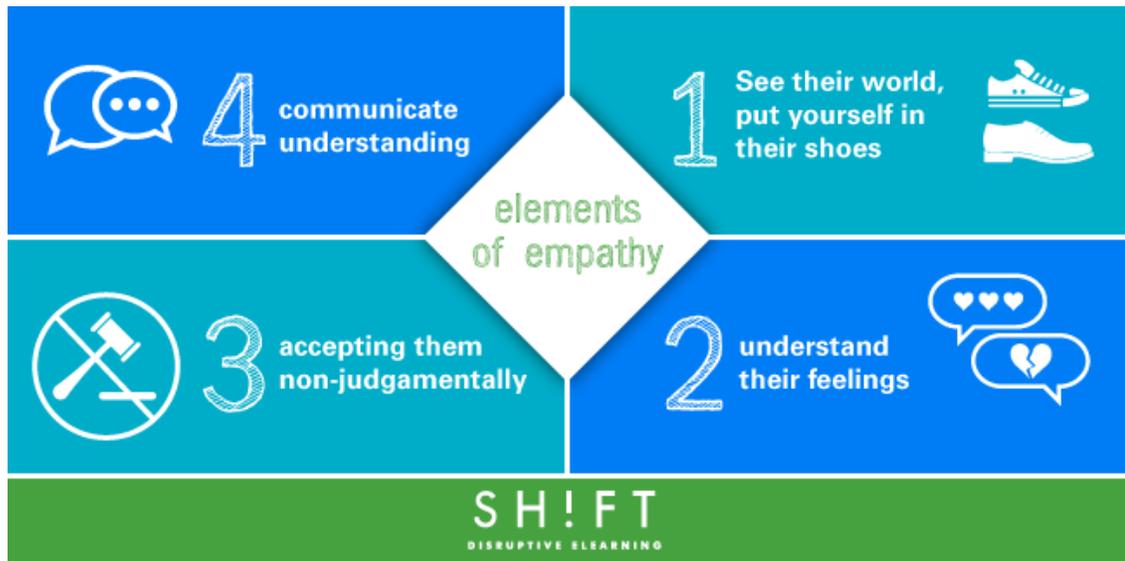
Brown defines shame resilience as “that ability to recognize shame when we experience it, and move through it in a constructive way that allows us to maintain our authenticity and grow from our experiences” (2007, p. 31).

Four ways to practice shame resiliency:

1. Recognizing Shame and Its Triggers
2. Practicing Critical Awareness
3. Reaching Out
4. Speaking Shame

Feedback on performance is the primary means of helping counseling students develop skills and competence in the counseling profession (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014).

Engaged feedback means to give feedback from a place of emotional engagement and to stay out of judgement. The engaged feedback list is based on the theory of strengths perspective and being with the person instead of pushing the problem to them. It operates on the premise of the relationship being a tool for being able to be honest about areas of growth, exploring a person’s strengths to understand their limitations, and being able to model vulnerability and openness while giving feedback (Brown, 2012).



Untitled image. Retrieved from <http://info.shiftelearning.com/blog/empathy-as-your-starting-point-for-great-clearning-design>

### References

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