

Shame and Embarrassment

First Parish Church of Stow and Action, MA, April 2018

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

“If we have one or two people in our lives who can sit with us and hold space for our shame stories, and love us for our strengths and struggles, we are incredibly lucky. If we have a friend, or small group of friends, or family who embraces our imperfections, vulnerabilities, and power, and fills us with a sense of belonging, we are incredibly lucky.” — *Brené Brown*

Check-in/ Sharing: This is a time to mention briefly any major issue or event on your mind that you would like to share. This would be a good time to brainstorm possible community service opportunities.

Topic: Shame and Embarrassment

“[She] had heard it said that there was only one emotion which, in recollection, was capable of resurrecting the full immediacy and power of the original—one emotion that time could never fade, and that would drag you back any number of years into the pure, undiluted feeling, as if you were living it anew. It wasn’t love... and it wasn’t hate, or anger, or happiness, or even grief. Memories of those were but echoes of the true feeling. It was shame. Shame never faded.” — *Laini Taylor*

“Love is not something we give or get; it is something that we nurture and grow, a connection that can only be cultivated between two people when it exists within each one of them – we can only love others as much as we love ourselves. Shame, blame, disrespect, betrayal, and the withholding of affection damage the roots from which love grows. Love can only survive these injuries if they are acknowledged, healed and rare.” — *Brené Brown*

“Shame is a murky awareness of being deficient or undesirable in the eyes of someone we hope might deeply enjoy us. We are sure we will eventually be found out. As a result, we begin to hate our longing to be wanted and enjoyed.” -- *Mark Bonham*

“The world is like a reverse casino. In a casino, if you gamble long enough, you're certainly going to lose. But in the real world, where the only thing you're gambling is, say, your time or your embarrassment, then the more stuff you do, the more you give luck a chance to find you.” -- *Scott Adams*

“I believe that mothers should tell the truth, even - no, especially - when the truth is difficult. It's always easier, and in the short term can even feel right, to pretend everything is okay, and to encourage your children to do the same. But concealment leads to shame, and of all hurts shame is the most painful.” -- *Ayelet Waldman*

“For my first show at 'SNL', I wrote a Bill Clinton sketch, and during our read-through, it wasn't getting any laughs. This weight of embarrassment came over me, and I felt like I was sweating from my spine out. But I realized, 'Okay, that happened, and I did not die.' You've got to experience failure to understand that you can survive it.” -- *Tina Fey*

“You show me a woman who can actually sit with a man in real vulnerability and fear, I’ll show you a woman who’s done incredible work. You show me a man who can sit with a woman who’s just had it, she can’t do it all anymore, and his first response is not, “I unloaded the dishwasher,” but he really listens — because that’s all we need — I’ll show you a guy who’s done a lot of work.” — *Brené Brown*

“But I learned that there's a certain character that can be built from embarrassing yourself endlessly. If you can sit happy with embarrassment, there's not much else that can really get to ya.” -- *Christian Bale*

Embarrassment is sometimes considered “self-consciousness”, but to many, it is really “other-consciousness” – a hyperawareness of what other might be thinking about us. Embarrassment is often attached to a behavior or event. It is public! Shame, on the other hand, seems to stem from the consciousness of the self as “bad” or “inadequate. Shame is frequently private, something that we hide and protect from discovery. Both embarrassment and shame can limit our behaviors, in both helpful and frequently unhelpful ways.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Can you relate any experiences or events that were embarrassing?
2. How has feeling embarrassed multiple times helped you? Hurt you?
3. What have you felt shame about? Did you have to learn to be ashamed about it?
4. Have you found any antidotes to shame or embarrassment?
5. How do you respond when someone else is embarrassed?
6. How would you complete the sentence:
“If I were to let go of shame or embarrassment ...”

(Group will take a few minutes to consider topic and questions followed by sharing)

Wrapping Up: How did you like this topic and session?

Closing Words:

“An exciting and inspiring future awaits you beyond the noise in your mind, beyond the guilt, doubt, fear, shame, insecurity and heaviness of the past you carry around.” -- *Debbie Ford*