

WORKING WITH SHAME

Four traditions · one shared movement

a companion to the Shame handout

THE COMMON THREAD

Shame survives on three conditions: **identification** (I am the flaw), **totality** (all of me, always), and **isolation** (no one can know). The four traditions below arrive from different directions and break different conditions. Used together, they cover all three.

SHAME RESILIENCE Brené Brown

The fear of disconnection — an identity-level belief that we are unworthy of belonging.

- Recognize the body's signal; name the trigger
- Reality-check it: whose voice? Is it attainable?
- Tell someone who has earned the right to hear it
- Ask for what you need, out loud

hiding » empathy

NARRATIVE THERAPY White & Epston

An internalized cultural story, mistaken for the truth about a person.

- Externalize: the person is not the problem
- Deconstruct: whose standard? Whose interests?
- Hunt unique outcomes: when shame did not win
- Re-tell the preferred story before witnesses

"I am" » "it says"

IFS Schwartz

Shame is a burden carried by exiled parts — and enforced by a protector trying to prevent rejection.

- Unblend: *a part of me feels worthless, not I am*
- No bad parts — the critic protects, not attacks
- Ask the protector what it fears if it stopped
- With permission, witness the exile and unburden

blended » Self-led

BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGY

Aversion turned inward; it needs a fixed self to convict. Conscience is not self-hatred.

- Tell moral care (*hiri, ottappa*) from self-contempt
- The second arrow: self-attack about the pain
- Say *shame is here*, not *I am shameful*
- RAIN — recognize, allow, investigate, nurture

self-hatred » compassionate awareness

THE SHARED MOVEMENT

1 NOTICE

Name what is arriving: sensation, story, part

2 SEPARATE

It is carried, not who you are

3 CHECK

Whose standard is this? What is it protecting?

4 TURN TOWARD

Witness it, speak it, meet it with warmth

Where they disagree — worth holding. Brown moves toward disclosure early; IFS would first ask the protectors' permission, since speaking before the system consents can flood an exile and provoke backlash. Narrative therapy locates the standard in culture, IFS in burdens the system took on — legacy burdens bridge the two. Buddhist psychology doubts there is a fixed self to judge at all, where IFS offers a Self to do the witnessing. Inside first or outside first is the clinical call.