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Shame Can be an Opportunity for Healing

Taos News Article

The Taos News has committed to implement a weekly column to help educate our community about emotional healing through grief. People may write questions to Golden Willow Retreat and they will be answered privately to you and possibly as a future article for others. Please list a first name that grants permission for printing.

Dear Ted,

The other day I heard you on a radio and was surprised by a statement you made in which you said that experiencing shame may provide the chance for healing. Can you please say more about this; I have always seen shame as a bad thing, maybe even a shameful aspect of my life? Thanks, Checking in from Santa Fe

Dear Checking In,

What a great question and topic, thank you. Shame can be a double edge sword. It can totally paralyze you emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually or it can be an opportunity of being broken wide open and allowing emotional work to happen that nurtures healing, maturity, and serenity. Shame is taught at a very young age. If you look at the letters of SHAME you can see the acronym of Should Have Already Mastered Everything. This is the message we have been given from the external world since we were very young. You felt the irritation that that you weren't potty-trained quick enough, or didn't catch the ball or you were aware of the hassle caused when you got sick and had to say home. Sometimes when you felt sad you were told to "man up" and the list goes on and on. When someone else is moved out of their comfort zone, there is often frustration and irritation. In this frustration and irritation you learn that it is shameful to express emotions, feel pain, be sick, not know the answer, and even get old or be in a dying process.

Shame can rob a person from actually authentically living! From these consistent external messages you slowly ingest these tapes within your psyche and they become your own internal tapes. The fear of making a mistake or not presenting "correctly" can leave you isolated and frozen. An event within your life that you feel was a mistake, wrong, or embarrassing can cause a shameful bubble in which you don't feel deserving to have a life that is of quality and happiness. It is almost as if you are put in a jail of shame in which you are the warden of your own jail and do not deserve to be seen, heard, or valued.

Moving through the healing process of shame can be difficult as it takes bravery to reach out and get help for historical wounds that have led to isolation and the illusionary jail of "not deserving." It also goes against all these unconscious indoctrinated tapes that are saying I should not be in the state I am in this moment as it may cause irritation to another and I am not deserving to heal and grow. On the other side of the same coin, shame can give you the opportunity to become humble, vulnerable and step from the

comfortably miserable jail of these tapes and choose to do the work to stand in your true self.

In this humility and empowerment, you can do the healing of internal wounds, be authentic, emotionally mature and have the permission to be wherever you happen to be in your human condition. To hear someone say they are sorry for being sick, or in the dying process, or for not knowing something; negates the natural and normal process of life.

In stepping from shame you will be able to realize you deserve to be striving for you potential and in your perfect imperfections be a true human being doing the best you can in that moment with permission to make mistake and have victories while gleaning more and more wisdom from each experience. With humility and bravery, you are able to experience life rather than present expectations and, in this, you are a teacher to everybody else.

Until next week, take care.

Golden Willow Retreat is a nonprofit organization focused on emotional healing and recovery from any type of loss. Direct any questions to Ted Wiard, LPCC, CGC, Founder of Golden Willow Retreat at (575) 776-2024 or GWR@newmex.com