

Shame and Blame: A Close Connection

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 in the coffee shop I had a great conversation about blame and how our world has moved into a deep and dark canyon, for the need to blame and place fault on everyone and every action. I find this very difficult as it leaves no room for imperfection, creativity, and a feeling of being frozen to take a chance. How do you see this dance with blame and fault? Thanks A

Dear A:

Thank goodness for coffee shops if you are having deep discussions like the chat you had pertaining to a difficult issue that impacts everybody daily! I have to agree with you that the fear of being wrong or at fault has become an enormous problem that is destroying many relationships from couples to international relations. The high level of anxiety associated with possibly doing something "wrong" has caused people to move into a place of hiding from their potential and passion, as it seems too scary to take a chance and be out in a world that may throw a finger or even a rock saying it is your fault and you are to blame.

In your comment and question to me you used the word "frozen" which is a great choice as our brain, when emotionally dysregulated, will stay in survival mode of fight, flight, or freeze. As worldly and personal pressure seems to be impacting so many people, the brain wants to keep you safe and one of the ways to do that is to freeze and not take action as it seems too dangerous. Will I fail? Will I be abandoned? Will I be sued? Will I be humiliated? These types of questions may swarm through the brain and not allow for any type of movement as it all seems too risky.

From childhood we have been taught to be "good" and that might be downloaded into our brain as "I better not be at fault or I am bad". This leaves little room for risk taking such as being vulnerable, intimate, initiating, being creative and showing your authentic heart. Usually when you are blaming someone else there is a good chance it is because you are not the one that may have made a mistake. Shame can often lead to blame and in this, you may fuel fear internally and externally, leading to a difficult confinement of not being willing to take chances, be authentic, enjoy life, and love freely. Realizing that mistakes are part of life can help open you to taking chances that may help you find happiness, and if not, will give you new knowledge of who you are and who you are not.

To be vulnerable can be scary and yet within that vulnerability lives the potential for less anxiety and more happiness. Realizing that a loving action that does not work out is still action that allows you to continue to grow and evolve. Remember that non-action IS action, as it is a choice to not engage. Finding healthy discernment of when to act and when not to act is difficult, but if you pause and come from the heart, quite often you will know what choice is the correct action. Also, being able to be perfect in our imperfection may let defenses down, connection to happen, and the creativity to help make this world a better place to flourish. I believe this starts with the individual. Think how big the ripple effect of healing of healing might will be for all of us by dropping the swords and shields, and sharing from the heart. I wish you well. 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