

When shame isn't yours

by Connie Brisson

Shame came to see me last week.

She surprised me, as she always does. But I knew her as soon as I saw her. You see, Shame and I have history.

I never expect Shame or invite her because we aren't friends. And there have been very long periods where I even forget that she exists... But she has never forgotten me.

For me Shame invokes a feeling that I am not good enough, that I've done something wrong or that I'm bad.

One of my first big memories of Shame was a Christmas when I was six or seven years old. I was trying to physically stop a fight that was starting between one of my brothers and my Dad, and in response, that brother hit me so hard - not once, but twice - that it changed me forever. I didn't expect it, I didn't understand why he did it and, because I was just a little girl who didn't grasp the complexity of what was going on, I just felt shamed - that it was somehow *my* fault.

After all these years of self-development, I consciously know that Shame can *not* come to visit me without some type of personal invitation from me.

Coincidentally (if there is such a thing), just days later, I had an epiphany in an iRest yoga class taught by Darlene Klassen (www.fullcirclewt.com). Darlene asked us to bring up something that was an issue for us (in our mind) and to hold it on one side. For me, that was the recent visit from Shame.

Then she asked us to hold something opposite up (for me, the things I am proud of) and it wasn't until that moment that I realized that I've been grouping 'shame' and 'ashamed' as one feeling/thing all my life. There are things in my life where I felt 'ashamed' because of what I've done (and I can try to make amends for those) and then there are other times in my life where I feel I have been 'shamed' by someone else in a circumstance where I didn't feel that I'd done anything wrong. Then there were the moments when Shame merged effortlessly into ashamed and the two became blurred as one for me.

This was an 'aha' moment for me because I know that energy follows energy (the Law of Attraction). I know that I've been attracting Shame into my life but I didn't know why - where was the core, the root?

Then I remembered my mother telling me that her mother (my Baba) 'scolded' her when she found out that Mom was pregnant with me. After all, my mother was almost 40 years old and in the early 1960's, it was apparently a 'disgrace' for someone so old to be having another child - especially when she already had another four children that were already all in school.

In response, my mother felt very shamed... Because I was inside her, I felt that too. As a result, Shame and I bonded and have been meeting (in very vulnerable places) ever since.

My most recent visit with Shame was painfully routine. While I was trying to do the 'right' thing in another challenging family situation, I was surprised and then devastated by how this person treated me. I was so hurt that Shame could not HELP but jump in to say hello.

Whenever I'm traumatized, I now faithfully turn to bodywork to help me because I know that much of who we are is held in our unconscious. Bodywork is a way to release long held patterns that we do not consciously understand or remember.

In a Rosen Method session with Mariette Berinstein (www.rosenmethod.ca), she told me something life changing - she said that *only someone else can shame you*. We can NOT 'shame' ourselves. So when someone else tries to shame you, it actually isn't about you - it's *only* about *them*. When I tested her theory against my old Shame memories, I knew it was true. People who 'shame' you or me are really ashamed of themselves on some level, consciously or unconsciously.

Then, I instantly remembered recently holding a beautiful new baby, thinking how innocent she was. It made me remember that I was once innocent too. When I was in utero and later a newborn, when my Mom was feeling all of this shame, I was innocent. I didn't do anything wrong; that was her stuff, my Baba's stuff and who knows how many generations of women in our family before that (with all their 'right' and 'wrong' rules).

And as soon as I had that awareness, it was like a swoosh of energy came from my head and swept through my chest, down into my body. In that moment, my body experienced a peacefulness that was so blissful and unusual, that I could feel it changing me, healing me.

We can never change what's happened to us in life, but we can change how we experience it. When we find the truth, the root, we are always set free by it. And even adversaries like Shame can come to free us...



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