

25 Managing shame



If you are working through *The Warrior Within*, these three exercises and further useful information to help you in your recovery can be found on pages 99-102. These three exercises assume you have completed exercise sheet **1 Starting an activity journal.**

Separating the sources of shame

To help you separate the shame you feel about yourself and your abuser(s), make two columns in your journal. Column one is for the abuser's shame and column two is for yours. Identify and list any shameful acts in each column.

Look at these two lists. You will probably find that your list contains relatively small amounts of shame, most of which will be as a result of acts forced on you. This will show how your shame is tied to the shameless acts of your abuser(s).

You may also ask yourself whether there is anyone else who has behaved in a shameless way. Or is there anyone else's shame that you have taken on? This could include other family members, or authorities who had a duty of care to safeguard you such as the police, social services, school or, in the case of clerical abuse, the church.

To give this shame back to them, write a letter or a poem to the person(s), without sending it. Or you could express this by drawing or painting, or by talking to a trusted friend.

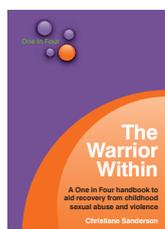
Understanding the impact of shame

To understand how shame has impacted on you, make a list in your journal of how shame has affected you. Make a list of how you feel about yourself, your body and how you feel in relation to others. Think about how shame has affected your beliefs about yourself and how these have restricted your relationships with others, including your sexuality. This will guide you in identifying how shame has impacted on your sense of self.

Sharing your shame

In your journal make a list of trusted people that you could talk to about your sense of shame. Next, check whether you are ready to explore your shame. You will need to make sure that you have developed some control over your trauma reactions, and feel relatively stable. You must also be mindful of any potential risks involved.

Make a list in your journal of the advantages and disadvantages of exploring your shame and how you can get appropriate support. You may feel it is easier to explore your shame early on in your recovery, or you may prefer to leave this near the end. When you have identified the right time, and person, for you, you will need to arrange how, where and when you can begin your exploration of the shame.



The content of this exercise sheet is based on *The Warrior Within: A One in Four handbook to aid recovery from childhood sexual abuse and violence* by Christiane Sanderson

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One in Four
219 Bromley Rd, Catford SE6 2PG
Telephone 020 8697 2112
Email admin@oneinfour.org.uk
www.oneinfour.org.uk

Registered charity number 1081726