



Shame Mapping Worksheet

Understanding Shame

Shame is a deeply human emotion. At its core, shame developed to help us stay connected to our community. When we step outside social expectations or norms, shame signals us to pause, reflect, and move back toward connection. In this way, shame serves an adaptive purpose — reminding us that belonging matters.

But when trauma enters the picture, shame can get twisted. Instead of being a momentary signal about behaviour, it can become a heavy story about identity: “I am bad,” “I’m broken,” “I’m not enough.” These distorted shame stories often come from past experiences of rejection, neglect, or harsh criticism — and they can show up in parenting when we feel we’re falling short, even in small ways.

For example, imagine you lose your patience and yell at your child. A moment of frustration becomes more than just regret about your behaviour — shame rushes in and whispers, “I’m a terrible parent, I’m just like my mom/dad, I’ll never break this cycle.” The shame isn’t just about the yelling; it carries the weight of the past and makes you question your worth as a parent.

By mapping shame — noticing how it feels in the body, the stories it tells, and the patterns it creates — we begin to untangle its distorted messages. We learn to see shame not as proof of our unworthiness, but as an invitation to pause, understand, and choose a different way forward.

Step 1: Notice Body Sensations

Shame often shows up in the body before we even name it. Take a moment to reflect on what shame feels like for you.

- Where do you feel shame in your body? (e.g., chest tightening, stomach sinking, flushed face)
- What is the intensity — mild, moderate, or overwhelming?
- What do you usually want to do in your body when shame appears? (e.g., hide, lash out, freeze, leave the room)

When I feel shame, my body...

Step 2: Identify Shame Stories

Shame often comes with words or beliefs that play in our mind. Write down the common shame stories that show up for you in parenting.

- What does shame say about you? (e.g., “I’m failing,” “I’m unworthy,”)

- Are these messages familiar from your childhood or past relationships?
- Whose voice do they remind you of?

When shame speaks, the story is...

Step 3: Recognize Shame Triggers in Parenting

Shame tends to show up in predictable moments. Identifying your personal triggers helps you prepare for them with more compassion.

- What situations or behaviors trigger shame? (e.g., child meltdown in public, when I yell)
- How do I usually respond in those moments?
- How does shame affect my ability to stay present with my child?

My shame triggers include...

Step 4: Practice Compassionate Response

Shame thrives in secrecy and silence, but it softens when met with compassion. Practice creating a compassionate counter-message.

- If your best friend felt the same shame, what would you say to them?
- What gentle, truthful reminder could you offer yourself? (e.g., "I made a mistake, but I am learning")
- What helps me return to connection after shame? (deep breath, hug, journaling, reaching out)

A compassionate truth I can remind myself of is...

Final Reflection

Look back at what you've written. Notice the patterns — in your body, in your stories, in your triggers.

- What stands out to you most?
- How might it change your parenting if, instead of believing shame's story, you could pause and respond with compassion?
- What's one small step you can take to interrupt shame the next time it shows up?

■ Remember: shame is not proof that you are broken. It's a signal that you care deeply about connection. By mapping it, you begin to reclaim your story — and parent from a place of compassion instead of fear.