

DO Therapy

Catch the Shame Story

Difficult experiences can quickly become stories about ourselves. A mistake becomes “*I’m a failure.*” Rejection becomes “*I’m not enough.*” Struggling becomes “*There’s something wrong with me.*” This exercise helps you practice **separating what happened from what you are making it mean about who you are.**

NOTICE

Choose a recent experience that left you feeling embarrassed, inadequate, exposed, rejected, disappointed in yourself, or wanting to hide. Notice what you started saying about yourself.

Maybe:

- I’m a failure.
- I’m not good enough.
- I’m a bad partner / parent / friend.
- Something is wrong with me.
- Everyone else can handle this.
- I should be better than this.
- If people really knew me, they'd think differently about me.

Ask: “**What happened and what did I make it mean about ME?**”

Choose **one conclusion about yourself** to examine.

REVIEW THE GAME TAPE

Separate the **event** from the **identity story**.

WHAT HAPPENED - *I made a mistake.*

- **SHAME STORY** - *I’m incompetent.*

WHAT HAPPENED - *Someone rejected me.*

- **SHAME STORY** - *I’m not desirable.*

WHAT HAPPENED - *I lost my patience with my child.*

- **SHAME STORY** - *I’m a terrible parent.*

Ask:

- What are the observable facts?
- What did I add about what those facts supposedly say about me?
- Am I turning one behavior, experience, or outcome into an identity?
- What responsibility actually belongs to me?
- What can I learn without making myself the problem?

Then ask: “**Can something be mine to own without becoming who I am?**”

PRACTICE

Practice replacing the **identity conclusion** with a more specific description of what happened.

Instead of: *"I'm a failure."*

- Try: **"Something I tried didn't work."**

Instead of: *"I'm a bad partner."*

- Try: **"I didn't handle that interaction the way I wanted to."**

Instead of: *"I'm weak."*

- Try: **"I'm having difficulty with something that matters to me."**

This isn't about letting yourself off the hook. Specificity often makes responsibility **more actionable**.

Then ask: **"What do I want to own, learn, repair, or do differently?"**

Choose **one action**.

BUILD REPS

Notice when your mind moves from describing an experience to defining you by it.

Ask:

- Am I describing what happened—or describing who I am?
- Am I turning one moment into a global conclusion?
- Can I take responsibility without attacking my identity?
- What did this experience actually teach me?
- Is there something I want to repair or practice differently?
- What happens when I respond with curiosity instead of condemnation?

The goal isn't: **"I did nothing wrong."**

It is: **"Something can matter, hurt, or require accountability without becoming evidence that I am fundamentally bad or inadequate."**

WHAT HAPPENED → SHAME STORY → SEPARATE → OWN WHAT'S MINE → CHOOSE WHAT'S NEXT

DO Therapy

NOTICE → REVIEW THE GAME TAPE → PRACTICE → BUILD REPS → TEST & LEARN

Notice what's happening. **Review the game tape** with curiosity rather than judgment. Choose something to **practice**. **Build reps** by trying it more than once and noticing what happens. Then **test & learn**—keep what helps, adjust what doesn't, and try again.

The goal isn't to get it right. The goal is to learn from what happens.