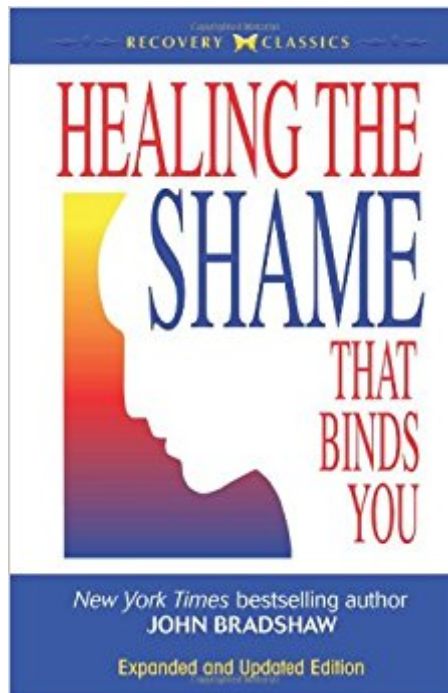




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# Healing The Shame That Binds You (Recovery Classics)



## Synopsis

This classic book, written 17 years ago but still selling more than 13,000 copies every year, has been completely updated and expanded by the author. "I used to drink," writes John Bradshaw, "to solve the problems caused by drinking. The more I drank to relieve my shame-based loneliness and hurt, the more I felt ashamed." Shame is the motivator behind our toxic behaviors: the compulsion, co-dependency, addiction and drive to superachieve that breaks down the family and destroys personal lives. This book has helped millions identify their personal shame, understand the underlying reasons for it, address these root causes and release themselves from the shame that binds them to their past failures.

## Customer Reviews

[View larger](#) Shame is the heartbeat of addiction. Shame is a healthy emotion, but for addicts shame is an emotion that festers. It destroys our ability to love, to find happiness, to be spontaneous and it reinforces feelings of self-loathing and unworthiness. In recovery we learn to admit our defects and make amends, to identify the trauma and pain we have experienced and which we have caused. In Bradshaw's groundbreaking book we learn how to rid ourselves of toxic shame and to experience shame as a healthy emotion, essential to our recovery. Healthy shame reinforces our sense of self and worthiness, allowing us to acknowledge and defend our boundaries, to feel happiness and pleasure in a life of sobriety.

John Bradshaw is a counselor, speaker and one of the leading voices of the recovery movement, especially inner child and family issues. His classic books include *Healing the Shame that Binds You* (1.3 million copies sold), *Bradshaw on: The Family* (1.2 million copies sold) and *Homecoming* (3 million copies sold).

**PART I The Problem** •Spiritual Bankruptcy • We have no imagination for Evil, but Evil has us in its grip. •C. G. Jung Introduction: Shame as Demonic (The Internalization Process) • As I've delved deeper into the destructive power of toxic shame, I've come to see that it directly touches the age-old theological and metaphysical discussion generally referred to as the problem of evil. The problem of evil may be more accurately described as the mystery of evil. No one has ever explained the existence of evil in the world. Centuries ago in the Judeo-Christian West, evil was considered the domain of the Devil, or Satan, the fallen angel. Biblical scholars tell us that the idea of a purely evil being like the Devil or Satan was a late development in the Bible. In the book of Job, Satan was

the heavenly district attorney whose job it was to test the faith of those who, like Job, were specially blessed. Â Â Â Â During the Persian conquest of the Israelites, the Satan of Job became fused with the Zoroastrian dualistic theology adopted by the Persians, where two opposing forces, one of good, Ahura Mazda, the Supreme Creator deity, was in a constant battle with Ahriman, the absolute god of evil. This polarized dualism was present in the theology of the Essenes and took hold in Christianity where God and his Son Jesus were in constant battle with the highest fallen angel, Satan, for human souls. This dualism persists today only in fundamentalist religions (Muslim terrorists, the Taliban, the extreme Christian Right and a major part of evangelical Christianity). Â Â Â Â The figure of Satan and the fires of hell have been demythologized by modern Christian biblical scholars, theologians and Â-philosophers. Â Â Â Â The mystery of evil has not been dismissed by the demythologizing of the Devil. Rather, it has been intensified in the twentieth century by two world wars, Nazism, Stalinism, the genocidal regime of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, and the heinous and ruthless extermination of Tibetans and Tibetan Buddhism by Pol Pot. These reigns of evil form what has been called a collective shadow, and it has been shown how naïve and unconscious the people of the world have been in relation to these evils. Â Â Â Â The denial of evil seems to be a learned behavior. The idea of evil is always subject to denial as a coping mechanism. Â Â Â Â Evil is real and is a permanent part of the human condition. 'To deny that evil is a permanent affliction of humankind,' says the philosopher Ernst Becker in his book *Escape from Evil*, 'is perhaps the most dangerous kind of thinking.' He goes on to suggest that in denying evil, humans have heaped evil on the world. Historically, great misfortunes have resulted from humans, blinded by the full reality of evil, thinking they were doing good but dispensing miseries far worse than the evil they thought to eradicate. The Crusades during the Middle Ages and the Vietnam War are Â- examples that come to mind. Â Â Â Â While demons, Satan and hellfire have been demythologized by any critically thinking person, the awesome collective power of evil remains. Many theologians and psychologists refer to evil as the demonic in human life. They call us to personal wholeness and self-awareness, especially in relation to our own toxic shame or shadow, which goes unconscious and in hiding because it is so painful to bear. These men warn against duality and polarization. 'We must beware of thinking of Good and Evil as absolute opposites,' writes Carl Jung. Good and evil are potentials in every human being; they are halves of a paradoxical whole. Each represents a judgment, and 'we cannot believe that we will always judge rightly.' Â Â Â Â Nothing can spare us the torment of ethical decision. In the past, prior to the patriarchies of Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot, it was believed that moral evaluation was built and founded on the certitude of a moral code that pretended to know exactly what is good and what is

evil. But now we know how any patriarchy, even religious ones, can make cruel and violent decisions. Ethical decision is an uncertain and ultimately a creative act. My new book on moral intelligence calls these patriarchies 'cultures of obedience,' and presents an ethics of virtues as a way to avoid such moral totalism. The Jews who killed their Nazi guards or SS troopers coming to search their homes are now considered ethically good, no matter what the absolutist moral code says about killing. There is a structure of evil that transcends the malice of any single individual. The Augustinian priest Gregory Baum was the man I first heard call it 'the demonic.' It can begin with the best of intentions, with a sincere belief that one is doing good and fighting to eradicate evil, as in the Vietnam War but it ends with heinous evil. 'Life consists of achieving Good, not apart from Evil, but in spite of it,' says the psychologist Rollo May. There is no such thing as pure good in human affairs. Those who claim it are seriously deluded and will likely be the next perpetrators of evil. As I pointed out in the preface to this revised edition, the affect shame has the potential for the depths of human evil or the heights of human good. In this regard shame is demonic. 'The daimonic,' says the psychologist Steven A. Diamond, 'is any natural function which has the power to take over the whole person.' Shame is a natural feeling that, when allowed to function well, monitors a person's sense of excitement or pleasure. But when the feeling of shame is violated by a coercive and perfectionistic religion and culture especially by shame-based source figures who mediate religion and culture it becomes an all-embracing identity. A person with internalized shame believes he is inherently flawed, inferior and defective. Such a feeling is so painful that defending scripts (or strategies) are developed to cover it up. These scripts are the roots of violence, criminality, war and all forms of addiction. What I'll mainly describe in the first part of this book is how the affect shame can become the source of self-loathing, hatred of others, cruelty, violence, brutality, prejudice and all forms of destructive addictions. As an internalized identity, toxic shame is one of the major sources of the demonic in human life.

1 The Healthy Faces of Shame (HDL Shame) Everyone needs a sense of shame, but no one needs to feel ashamed. •Frederick Nietzsche Because of its preverbal origins, shame is difficult to define. It is a healthy human feeling that can become a true sickness of the soul. Just as there are two kinds of cholesterol, HDL (healthy) and LDL (toxic), so also are there two forms of shame: innate shame and toxic/life-destroying shame. When shame is toxic, it is an excruciatingly internal experience of unexpected exposure. It is a deep cut felt primarily from the inside. It divides us from ourselves and from others. When our feeling of shame becomes toxic shame, we disown ourselves. And this disowning demands a cover-up. Toxic shame parades in many garbs and get-ups. It loves darkness and secretiveness. It is the dark, secret aspect of shame that has evaded our study.

Because toxic shame stays in hiding and covers itself up, we have to track it down by learning to recognize its many faces and its many distracting behavioral cover-ups. SHAME AS A HEALTHY HUMAN FEELING The idea of shame as healthy seems foreign to English-speaking people because we have only one word for shame in English. To my knowledge, most other languages have at least two words for shame (see Figure 1.1).

The Languages of Shame	
DISCRETION	DISGRACE
Before an Action	After an Action
SHAME	LDL SHAME
Latin Pudor	
Latin Foedus	
Verecundia	Macula
Greek Entrope	
Greek Aischyne	
Aidos	
French Pudeur	
French Honte	German

Scham German Schande

Annibale POCATERRA The earliest treatise on shame was written by Annibale Pocaterra, born in 1562. My awareness of Pocaterra’s book, Two Dialogues on Shame, came from Donald Nathanson’s comprehensive book Shame and Pride. According to Nathanson, Pocaterra wrote his book on shame at age thirty. His book was the only scholarly work on shame until Darwin wrote about it three hundred years later. Pocaterra died a few months after publishing his book. Only thirty-eight copies are known to exist today. Nathanson owns one of them, and I’m indebted to him for what follows (see Shame and Pride, pages 443–445). In the beginning of his book, Pocaterra tells us that ‘in the end shame is a good thing, a part of everyday existence.’ Shame, according to Pocaterra, makes us timorous, humble and contrite and causes outrage against the self. When we are attacked by shame, Pocaterra says we ‘would like nothing better than to run and hide from the eyes of the world.’ He also describes shame as the ‘fear of infamy,’ which can lead a person to attack his enemy with passion. Shame is thus capable of both cowardice and bravery. Long before Silvan Tomkins’s treatise on shame, Pocaterra posited that our emotions are innate and that ‘they are only good or evil as the end to which they are used.’ There is an innate and

a learned component to all emotion. 'Therefore,' Pocatererra writes, 'there must be two shames, one natural and free from awareness and the other acquired.' Â Â Â Â Pocatererra understood shame to be our teacher. He thought the shame of children was like a seed that will become a small plant in youth and leads to virtue at maturity. Pocatererra looked at blushing as the external sign of shame and believed that blushing was both the recognition of having made a mistake as well as the desire to make amends. Three hundred years later Darwin would posit blushing as that which distinguishes us from all other animals. Darwin knew that the mother of the blush was shame. For Darwin, shame defines our essential humanity. Silvan Tomkins views shame as an innate feeling that limits our experience of interest, curiosity and pleasure. SHAME AS PERMISSION TO BE HUMAN Â Â Â Â Healthy shame lets us know that we are limited. It tells us that to be human is to be limited. Actually, humans are essentially limited. Not one of us has, or can ever have, unlimited power. The unlimited power that many modern gurus offer is false hope. Their programs calling us to unlimited power have made them rich, not us. They touch our false selves and tap our toxic shame. We humans are finite, 'perfectly imperfect.' Limitation is our essential nature. Grave problems result from refusing to accept our limits.

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