

FUNNY CUZ IT'S TRUE

Breaking the Cycle of Shame

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We all have our “vicious” cycles we get caught up in—patterns and behaviors and relationships that just aren’t good for us. It’s a tale as old as time. Fortunately, we have a way out of those cycles.

MESSAGE NOTES AND HIGHLIGHTS

- We all have “vicious” cycles that we repeat—patterns that are unhealthy, harmful, and weigh us down. These cycles are fueled by shame.
- Shame is when we fear that we’re unworthy of love, belonging, and connection.
- We need to recognize our shame cycles—if we don’t, it’s hard to get out of them.
- If you put shame in a petri dish, it needs three ingredients to grow exponentially: secrecy, silence, and judgment.” | Brené Brown
- Many of us don’t recognize the voice of shame, but we can recognize our responses to it. Being critically aware of our shame responses helps us to battle shame.
- The “Compass of Shame” highlights four common responses to shame: withdrawal, attacking self, attacking others, and avoidance.
- Withdrawal can look like isolating, hiding, and cutting off connections.
- Attacking self can look like self-criticism, anger at yourself, and conforming.
- Attacking others can look like blame, hostility, put-downs, and criticism.
- Avoidance can look like distraction, substance use, and thrill-seeking.
- “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.” | John 8:11
- Jesus comes to break our cycles of shame with the gift of grace and an invitation to live a better life.
- “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” | Matthew 11:28-30
- No matter how hard it might be to be vulnerable and honest and confront our shame, life is so much harder living with shame.
- God’s invitation is always there: to recognize our shame, to accept and live in his love and grace, to reach out for support, to be connected to God and community.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can you think back to a younger version of you and remember any patterns of thinking or behavior you now recognize as a “vicious” cycle?
2. The most common categories of shame responses are withdrawal from others, attacking self, attacking others, and avoidance. Do you recognize any of these shame responses in your life? Which one(s) do you feel are the most common for you?
3. Who in your life has permission to help you confront and see when you’re in a shame cycle? What do you think is the best way to do this to help you receive it?
4. As difficult as it might be to confront and deal with our shame, life is so much heavier living with it. Do you agree with that? Have you experienced that?