

## ***INSIDE SHAME TRANSFORMATION***

**From the Desk of**

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of AST Model of Holistic Shame Resolution®**



### **Compassion in Shame Resolution Work**

I met Rita in her mid-forties. Bright and likable, she had developed a highly responsible career in the financial world. During her first session, however, she was distraught because she hadn't lived up to her self-determined job expectations. She was quite clear that she was only seeing me because of her bleeding ulcers—her doctor had insisted she work with someone who understood compulsivity. It was also quite clear that she was not interested in experiencing self-love or compassion.

When I asked her what she wanted to achieve during our time together, she responded, "I want to feel better so the doctor will get off my back, and I don't have to keep seeing him."

I asked her if she felt embarrassed about seeing the doctor.

*"Well yeah. He knows I'm a wreck. Nothing fun about that."*

"Do you think that he thinks less of you because you have ulcers and anxiety?"

*"Everybody knows people bring ulcers on themselves. It's not like a brain tumor that just appears. If I wasn't so screwy I wouldn't cause my stomach to bleed like this."*

"I don't know if that's how ulcers are formed or not, but let's assume you're right. Does that mean you don't deserve help? If you brought this on yourself then you have to suffer?"

*"Haven't you ever heard the saying, you made your bed, now lie in it?"*

"I have heard that, but as you know, I specialize in shame resolution so I don't buy into the idea that even if someone is at the root cause of her problem, whatever it may be, you don't deserve help or to experience some relief. Everyone deserves compassion."

She shook her head and clenched her jaw for a brief instant as if in a brawl. "Well, that's unsettling. How is anyone accountable then?"

### **Shame Faces Compassion**

Rita had survived years of early childhood shaming and daily abuse. Besides bleeding ulcers, she also suffered from sciatica, an ongoing skin condition, and vague anxiety. During our initial consult, we discovered that her professional life was, in fact, a re-enactment. Throughout her childhood, her father's constant haranguing left her feeling inadequate and incompetent even though she was fully prepared and had more knowledge and skills than her peers. Now Rita harangued herself. She focused on her need to live up to self-imposed professional standards. Daily verbal diatribes (hurtful self-talk) and personal attacks in conjunction with the volatility of the financial market re-created constant instability and out-of-control consequences.

I asked her straight out if she thought that suffering and recrimination were the same as accountability.

She stopped for a moment, thought and shrugged her shoulders. "*I guess those are different things.*"

Her moment of reflection was a gateway for compassion.

### **Compassion in Shame Resolution Work**

People ask me all the time about the importance of compassion in shame resolution work. My response is always the same: "It is crucial at the right time, in the right dose, and with the help of mirror neurons."

This is often met with a puzzled look, as if to say, "*How can compassion ever be wrong?*"

Compassion is never wrong; it's just not always useful.

How shame behaves is relevant to how the shame resolution process unfolds. It is often the case that people who have been conditioned into shame identities are often "trained" to be self-critical, to feel unworthy, deserving of punishment, and to feel like they are destined to bear the burden of shame. In fact, most shame survivors are taught to be worried and to feel as though they are in trouble if they feel good about themselves. This is the unfortunate reality that

chronic shame survivors live with every day and what forms the basis of their normalcy.

### **Enter AST Model's Law of Reversals**

These phenomena identify the difficulty for shame survivors to accept the fact that they are deserving of compassion, care, dignity, respect, kindness, love, and even existence on this earth. In fact, those who have suffered the onslaught of shame are often extremely compassionate individuals, but allowing that compassion to be directed toward themselves is tricky and can feel insurmountable.

Rita and I spent time somatically working between the difference of suffering and feeling accountable. Then we created a neutral space inside herself to consider her actions and consequences in an objective and balanced way, similar to how she considered financial portfolios.

Rita eventually took a deep, authentic breath. I saw her entire being experience some overall relief. At that point I asked her if she minded my placing my hand on my heart. I explained that I felt compassion for her struggle and how intense all that must have been for her. She nodded and without verbal explanation, I placed a hand on my stomach. When she saw me do that, she burst into tears, held her stomach, and started rocking back and forth. I reminded her that I was there and encouraged her to feel the rocking, to allow it to soothe her. From here on, her sessions included some level of compassion when mirrored. It took her about six months before she began actively initiating self-compassionate behaviors.

Had I directed her to self-compassion in the beginning of her session, when she still felt justified in feeling angry and punishing toward herself, she might have thrown these suggestions off, maybe even with contempt. Because we shifted her understanding of what was so and created a more neutral space for her to consider her actions, she was ready to experience some compassion when I reflected it back to her. Even more so when I mirrored compassion for the intensity of her physical suffering.

Again, compassion at the right time, in the right dose, and with a little help from mirror neurons can be life-changing!

**Caryn Scotto d' Luzia** is an innovative somatic facilitator, educator and trainer. She is developer of AST Model of Holistic Shame

neurobiologically–principled, attachment based approach that specializes in chronic shame relief, building shame and inner critic resilience, shame-based early trauma, shame-based attachment re-patterning, and life-affirming authentic self-expression and empowerment.

She is the author of the following ebooks and articles, *Alchemy of Shame Transformation for Therapists and Healing Professionals (AST)*, *The 5 Step Journey to Healing Social Phobia*, *The Yin/Yang of Abandonment Recovery*, and *Wound & Essence: A Call and Response Approach to Transformation*. She is leading a shame free living movement and training therapists, healers, life coaches, and community leaders how to facilitate shame resolution and cultivate acceptance, worth, and belonging.

Caryn works face to face with people around the world on Skype, and in-person in the California Bay Area and New York City where she sees adult clients. She offers phone case consults to therapists, healers, and coaches as well as teaches neurobiological principles through webinars online. On a wider scale, she collaborates with UN affiliated NGOs and Governments to heal collective trauma and post conflict PTSD. She is a Somatic Experiencing Practitioner, a member of the UN NGO Committee on Mental Health, presenter for USABP, Adjunct Faculty to the Somatic Experiencing Trauma Institute, and speaker at the United Nations on the issue of resolving shame in women and girls around the world.