

SHAME

THE IMPACT OF SHAME ON A SURVIVOR'S LIFE

Shame is a common result of child sexual abuse.¹ Understanding the impact that shame has on varied and interconnected aspects of your life as a survivor can help you see that many of your experiences may result from your abuse, not because you are weak or flawed.

1 Feiring, C., & Taska, L. S. (2005). The persistence of shame following sexual abuse: A longitudinal look at risk and recovery. *Child Maltreatment*, 10(4), p. 337.

01 *Self-Worth*

People who were sexually abused often see themselves as fundamentally bad even though they are not responsible for what happened.²

2 Feiring, C. (2005). Emotional development, shame, and adaptation to child maltreatment. *Child Maltreatment*, 10(4), p. 308.337.

02 *Emotional Health*

Shame contributes to the development of PTSD symptoms.³ More specifically, shame can lead to anger, sadness, anxiety, and depression.⁴

3 Deblinger, E., & Runyon, M. K. (2005). Understanding and treating feelings of shame in children who have experienced maltreatment. *Child Maltreatment*, 10(4), p. 364.; Feiring & Taska, p. 345; Pineles, S. L., Street, A. E., & Koenen, K. C. (2006). The differential relationships of shame-proneness and guilt-proneness to psychological and somatization symptoms. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 25(6), p. 695.

4 Deblinger & Runyon, p. 364; Feiring, p. 308; Pineles, Street, & Koenen, p. 689.

03 *Physical Health*

Sexual abuse in childhood is strongly associated with physical symptoms that don't have a clear medical explanation,⁵ and shame plays a role in these symptoms.⁶

5 Stone, L. (2014). Blame, shame and hopelessness: Medically unexplained symptoms and the 'heartsink' experience. *Australian Family Physician*, 43(4), p. 193.

6 Deblinger & Runyon, p. 364.

04 *Sexual Health*

Survivors often subconsciously associate sexual acts with shame.⁷ This shame can manifest itself as either an avoidance of sex or engagement in risky sexual behavior.⁸

7 Rellini, A. (2008). Review of empirical evidence for a theoretical model to understand the sexual problems of women with a history of CSA. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 5, p. 34-35.

8 Rellini, p. 32.

05 *Relationships*

Shame is "fueled by concerns about how one is perceived by others,"⁹ and that concern can make it difficult to establish healthy and fulfilling relationships.

9 Deblinger & Runyon, p. 369.

