

# Shame: the energy that feeds addiction

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Biological+Psychological+Social+Spiritual  
Vulnerability      Liability      Context      Bankruptcy

plus

Experience  
equals

# Addiction

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Drug of Choice  
Wrong  
Drug of addiction

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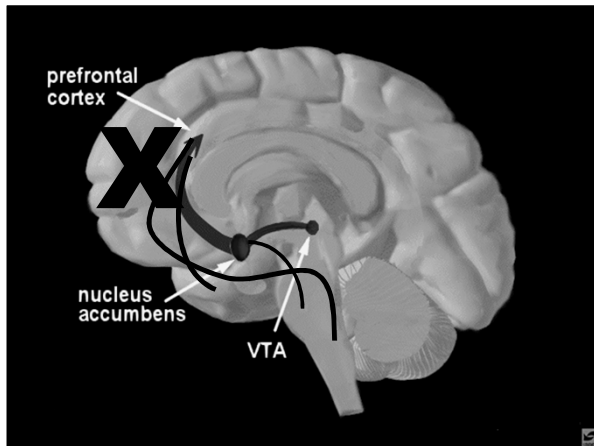
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### The emotional continuum

- **Affect**  
A biological limbic response below conscious awareness – immediate (or at least close)
- **Feeling**  
Affect registered in the neocortex
- **Emotion**  
Feeling given a psychological, relational and intellectual context
- **Mood**  
Emotion experienced over time

Tompkins, 1985 ©CECS

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### Affect – pairs

positive

Interest – Excitement

Enjoyment – Joy

neutral

Surprise – Startle

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Shame - Humiliation

Shame breaks all forms of connection

we lose face



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Biology of shame

shame = ↑ stress =  
glucocorticoid storm

the brain is traumatized

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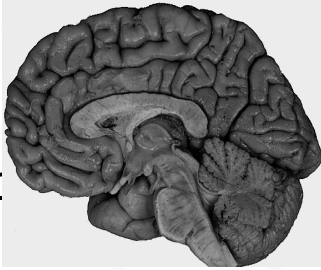
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Frontal cortex goes off line

Limbic and primitive parts of the brain take over – Polyvagal theory



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## Glucocorticoid Storm

- Memory is impaired (excitotoxicity in cells in hippocampus)
- Prefrontal cortex slows
- Amygdala takes over
- Sub cortical structures increased activity
- Global decrease in Serotonin
- Growing evidence that these biological vulnerabilities can be transmitted to the next generation (Sapolsky, 2008)

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## Shame - Humiliation

- The shame affect has the ability to disrupt all forms of mental activity.
- Shame forces us to consider who we were before the shame hit and to what we have returned as the shame subsides.
- Shame forces a painful self-awareness which strips us of happiness and leaves us alone and naked in our emptiness.
- “An internal hemorrhage, an immediate shutter” (Sartre)

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## Psychology of Shame

- Not merely a symptom of underlying Psychiatric condition.
- Gives energy to the Biological variable.
- Using a self Psychological frame - Heinz Kohut.
- Effort to combine the two extremes of the Freudian analytical continuum.

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**Psychology of Shame**  
the baby

boundless, powerful, magic vs. small, helpless, vulnerable  
narcissistic, exhibitionistic, grandiose needs

**Good Enough Parenting**

- Mirroring.
- Empathetic.
- Attending.
- Attuned.
- Self object
- Strong.
- Safe.
- Consistent.
- Soothing.
- Self object.

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**Parenting/object**

**Good Enough Parenting** = appropriate frustration

- Needs met: transmuted and internalized.
- Healthy self esteem.
- Appropriate ambition.
- Enthusiasm for life.
- Sense of wholeness.
- Needs met: transmuted and internalized.
- Personal ideals.
- Ability to identify feelings.
- Internal safety.
- Ability to self soothe.

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**Healthy Attachment**

**Clear Boundaries**

**Cohesive Self**

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**Psychology of Shame**  
the baby  
boundless, powerful, magic vs. small, helpless, vulnerable  
narcissistic, exhibitionistic, grandiose needs

**Not Good Enough Parenting**  
failures in

• Mirroring.	• Strong.
• Empathetic.	• Safe.
• Attending.	• Consistent.
• Attuned.	• Soothing.
• Self object involvement.	• Self object involvement.

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**Parenting/object**

Not Good Enough Parenting = inappropriate frustration  
abuse or neglect

• Needs not met: not transmuted and internalized.	• Insecurity.
• Feeling of inadequacy.	• Ill defined sense of self.
• Emptiness.	• Unclear personal values.
• Need for approval.	• “Black/white” thinking.
• Critical of self/others.	• Needs for external reassurance.
• Need to Control!	• Inability to internally self soothe.

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**Unclear Boundaries**  
**Fractured Sense of Self**  
**Failure of Attachment**

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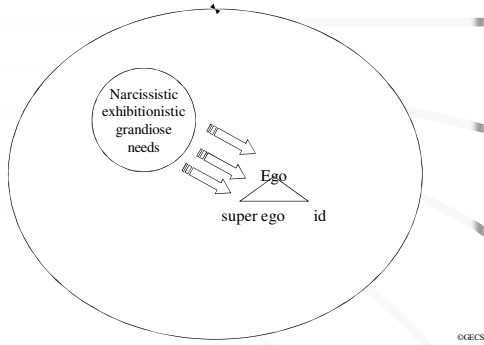
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## Psychology of Shame



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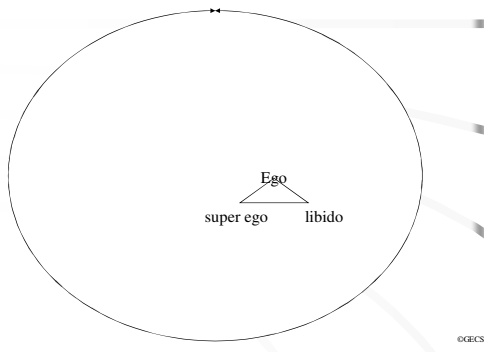
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## Psychology of Addiction



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## Psychology of Shame

### Manifestation of False Self Structure

- Low Self Esteem:
  - don't see me, don't notice me, don't attend to me, don't compliment me, "I am not worth your time."
- or
  - "I am the best", "you are nothing without me", "give me ALL of your attention", "praise me ALL of the time." Any criticism is experienced as an ego assault, life is a zero sum game.

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## Psychology of Shame

Manifestation of False Self Structure  
Guilt/Shame/Isolation

- Guilt - pangs of conscience over actions considered “wrong” or “harmful to others.”
- Shame - the internalized belief that I am not good enough.
  - An exaggerated sense of relational potency - believing that you can “make” others happy and feeling less than when you fail. (The only thing more dangerous than the desire to control other’s feelings is the belief that you can.)
  - Failed attachment in childhood.

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## Psychology of Shame

Manifestation of False Self Structure  
Guilt

- A little guilt is a good thing.
- Total lack of guilt is pathological.
- Feeling guilty is about what you have **done**  
NOT who you are.

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## Psychology of Shame

Manifestation of False Self Structure  
Isolation/Shame

- Modernity’s ubiquitous curse.
- The blind embrace of “individualism” as the primary value.
- Feeling different and/or disconnected.
- Inability to ask for help.
- Difficulty as a “team player.”
- Fear of intimacy (fear of being engulfed).

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The digital age

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## Psychology of Shame

Manifestation of False Self Structure

Shame

- The belief that at my core I am bad - therefore I must earn my value. "To be good I must do good."
- A need for constant external approval.
- A persistent fear of punishment.
- Nagging comparisons to others - "Do I measure up?"
- Extreme sensitivity to others expectations.
- People pleasing.

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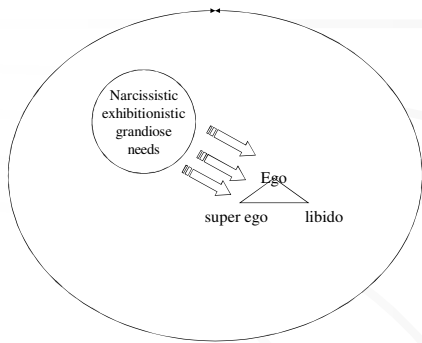
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## Psychology of Shame



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## Psychology of Addiction

Manifestation of False Self Structure

- Prone to Envy Attacks.
- Depreciation tendencies (self and others).
- Eating disorders - feeding the giant within.
- Insomnia.
- Either/Or thinking
  - splitting behaviors
  - gossiping - a way to project shame
  - blaming others for our difficulties (the devil made me do it).

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**Psychology of Shame**  
Manifestation of False Self Structure

- The belief that “it” is never enough.
- Compulsive behaviors:
  - workaholism
  - perfectionism
  - chronic lateness
  - self defeating rituals
  - addictions.
- Hyper-vigilance and needs for control.

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**Psychology of Shame**  
Manifestation of False Self Structure

**The Gift of shame gives birth to obligation which is always the safer side of freedom.**

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<b>Shame</b>	vs.	<b>Love</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need</li> <li>• full of expectations</li> <li>• obligations</li> <li>• conditional</li> <li>• assumes/projects</li> <li>• needs to control</li> <li>• sees flaws or faults</li> <li>• Slavery</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire</li> <li>• no expectations</li> <li>• wanting</li> <li>• unconditional</li> <li>• no assumptions</li> <li>• not controlling</li> <li>• sees perfection</li> <li>• Freedom</li> </ul>

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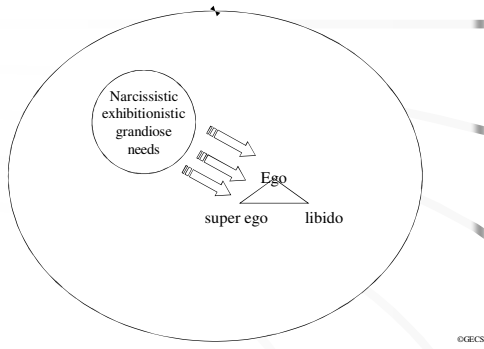
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## Psychology of Shame



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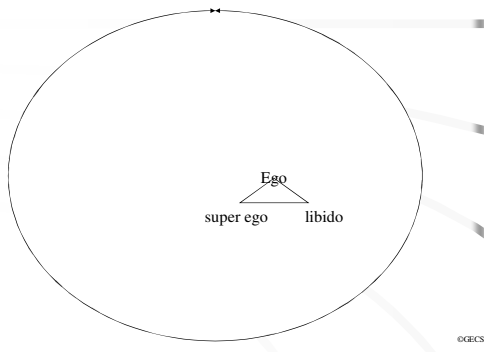
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## Psychology of Addiction



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## Psychology of Addiction

- Drugs of addiction, for the addicted, solve a fundamental structural problem within their psyche and they temporarily feel whole.
- The problem is that this fix is temporary and the behaviors, the lies, and broken promises give greater energy to the shame which then requires more "medication" just to survive.

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Biological + Psychological + Social + Spirituality Vulnerability  
Liability Context Bankruptcy

plus  
experience  
equals

# Addiction

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## Social Context

- We are thrust into our culture and defined by it.
- We can not separate ourselves or our identity from our social context.
- When we think we are “speaking” for ourselves, our personal truth is but an extension of context.

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## Social Context

Aspects of our Culture that Support Addiction

- Shame the internal emotional hemorrhage of addictive disease.
- We live in a shame based culture.
- Our inherited shame as individuals is projected on to those different than us.
- The “Isms” are real.
  - Racism.
  - Ageism
  - Sexism.
  - Heterosexism.
  - Classism.
  - Bodyism.

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## Social Context

Aspects of our Culture that Support Addiction

- The “isms” project shame which becomes a meme unless challenged.
- Our economy is shame dependent.
- If we all truly felt “good enough” our consumer economy would crumble.
- The cultural message we get is that “we are not enough”

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## Social Context

Aspects of our treatment Culture that Support  
Addiction

clean time  
drug of choice  
dirty urine  
Think  
you shouldn't have used in the first place

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## Social Context

Aspects of our Culture that Support Addiction

- Eventually the “shamed” end up believing the messages that society is telling them and shame themselves.
- We deserve our disease.
- We really are the bad people that everyone (including ourselves) believes us to be.
- I am truly so worthless not even God can love me.

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## Social Context Treatment Implications

- The acceptance of misery is NOT the goal.
- The tolerance of unavoidable pain is – but be gentle and still treat the symptoms.
- Honor the pain of early recovery and instill hope.
- Use alternative pain medications:
  - Meditation.
  - Self guided imagery.
  - Relaxation.
  - Yoga.
  - Exercise.
  - Dietary changes.

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## Psychology of Shame What do we do?

### Love

is the only true antidote to shame.  
We must have the courage to operationalize  
the word love into our professional lexicon  
and love our patients through healthy  
boundaries so they in time may love  
themselves.

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