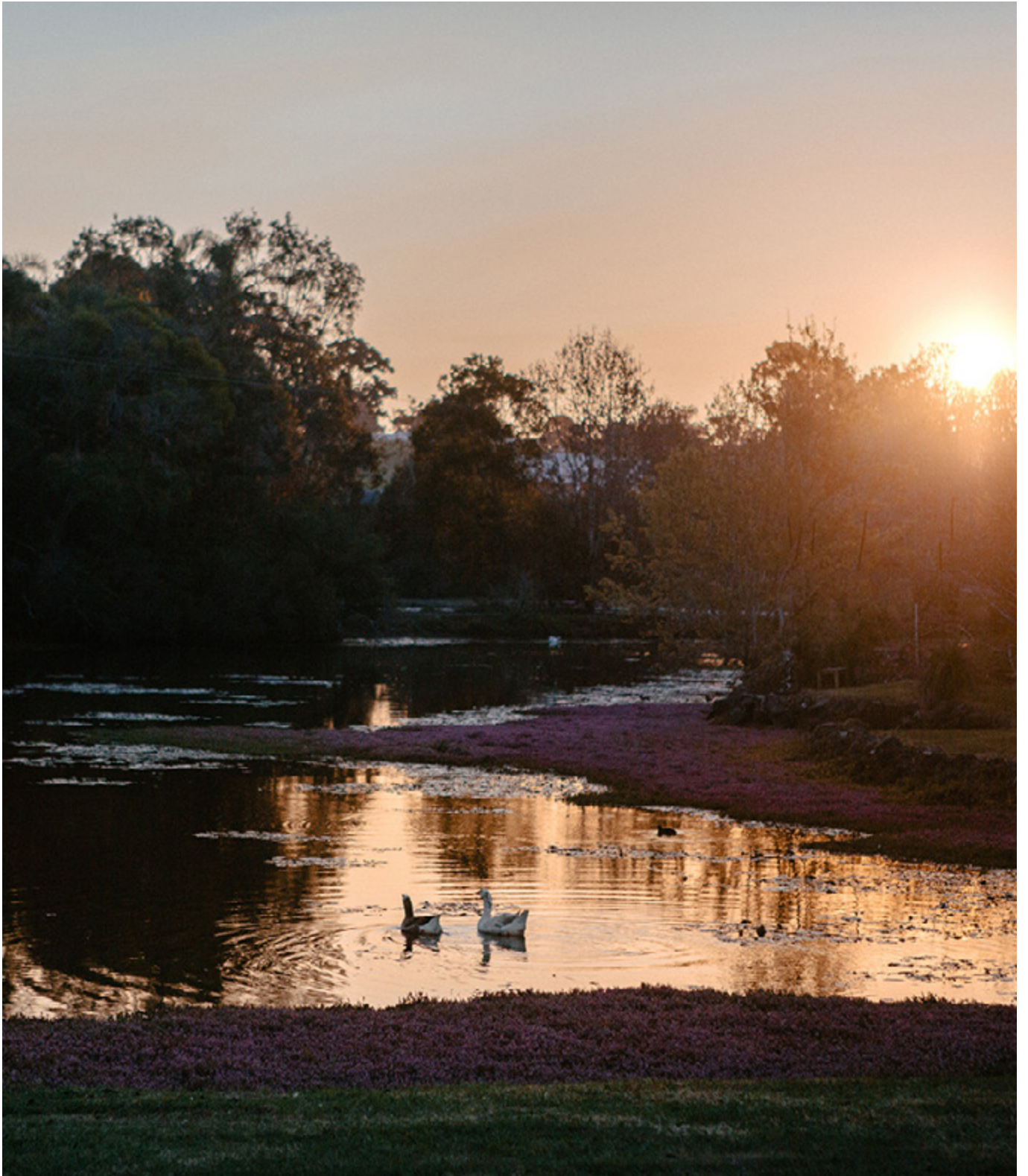


Palladium Private

MAKE THE CHANGE FOR GOOD



THE UNDERLYING CAUSE
OF ANXIETY & DEPRESSION

We're taking a deep dive into 'perception'
and looking closely at guilt and shame.

“I believe the differences between shame and guilt are critical in informing everything from the way we parent and engage in relationships, to the way we give feedback at work and school.”

Brene Brown

An Introduction to Shame and Guilt

Guilt and shame are common human emotions that we all experience at times during our life.

However, despite the fact that they are part of the human experience, you may find them quite uncomfortable and struggle to manage them in effective ways. Moving forward, we will explore these emotions, how they differ, and how they present themselves in your life.

Shame and guilt are not the lightest of topics, in fact it has been a bit tricky to condense our information as it's a big topic and we don't want to over simplify it.

Shame can have a strong power over us and lead us into destructive patterns of behaviours. Shame is highly correlated with addiction, depression, violence, aggression, bullying, suicide, eating disorders and other dysfunctional coping strategies that are prevalent in our societies today.

When we get to a point of wanting to change these behaviours it can be really helpful to know that they are often the result of shame. Often the conclusions we come to about why we are acting out in certain ways only further exacerbates this shame and therefore the behaviour.

We want you to think about it now, what are some of the main beliefs people have towards people using dysfunctional coping strategies such as the ones I just listed?

Some common conclusions I hear people come to are things like 'I'm stupid, weak, have no resilience, an addict, broken, selfish, lazy, just don't want to change, spoilt, manipulative.

Not very nice things.

Our unhealthy behaviours are an attempt to reduce emotional discomfort, to avoid shame. And this is only human, we cannot blame ourselves for wanting to minimise discomfort especially when have evolved with this instinct.

But that said, these behaviours do not serve us long term. While they might be effective in the short term, a lifetime lived in this way leads to deeper and more prolonged suffering.

By better understanding our shame we can become more comfortable with it and begin to respond in more functional ways.

When we become comfortable, we can be with them instead of numbing through dysfunctional behaviours.

Shame vs. Guilt

Firstly, we are going to explore what guilt and shame actually are, then we will look at how they can impact your life negatively but also positively if kept within a healthy level. We'll then explore two options you can practice when dealing with shame.

Guilt and shame are both natural human emotions. We will all experience them to varying degrees throughout our life.

As with all emotions, guilt and shame can be used to give us an insight into how we and others are experiencing a situation and use this information to respond with awareness as opposed to reacting out of habit. There are many theories on emotions. What are they, and where do they come from? Most theories will agree that emotions are a combination of a subjective experience, a physiological response and an expressive behaviour.

When we collect information from our outer environment it is subjectively interpreted and creates a physiological response in our body, or bodily sensations, and then this will lead to a behavioural response. Our bodily sensations are interpreted by our mind as emotions and give meaning and feeling to our experience.

A concept that Palladium Private explores a lot is **perception**. How we perceive an experience a situation is unique to us. For example, two colleagues get pulled into their superior's office and given the same news on poor performance and one feels shame while the other feels guilt, they then exhibit different behavioural responses.

The information that was given to them was the same, but the interpretation and perceptions was unique to each colleague. This story is no doubt something you have heard many times, but we feel it is important to reiterate many times because we often forget it in an emotional crisis.

We feel our interpretation – and the emotions that go along with it – are the only logical ones so we habitually react on autopilot, without questioning it.

If we could begin to question and challenge our interpretations when we experience emotions such as shame, then we begin to change our automatic responses that are destructive and conflict with our values.

There are general interpretations or thoughts that lead to certain emotions.

So, the interpretation that can generally lead to guilt is – “I have done something wrong”. “I should not have done that”. It is a feeling of remorse for some offence, or wrongdoing. It usually arises as a result of violating one's personal standards, morals, values or ethics.

We can feel guilty for things we have done, are about to do, or things we have thought. Guilt usually arises when we feel we have hurt another person either physically, emotionally or materially.

Guilt is usually focused on an action or behaviour. ‘I feel bad because I acted in such a way’.

Shame is different because it does not condemn the behaviour, it condemns the person. Shame is interpreting a situation as ‘I am bad for doing such a behaviour’.

As shame researcher Brene Brown says, shame has two main self-talks – “never good enough” and, if you can talk yourself out of that one, “who do you think you are?”

Shame is a feeling of inferiority. It is connected to low self-esteem and usually is a learned behaviour from childhood, meaning that people who experience shame were usually put down as children and made to feel inferior.

Again, as Brene Brown defines it. ‘Shame is a focus on self, guilt is a focus on behaviour. Shame is “I am bad.” Guilt is “I did something bad.” Guilt: I’m sorry. I *made* a mistake. Shame: I’m sorry. I *am* a mistake.

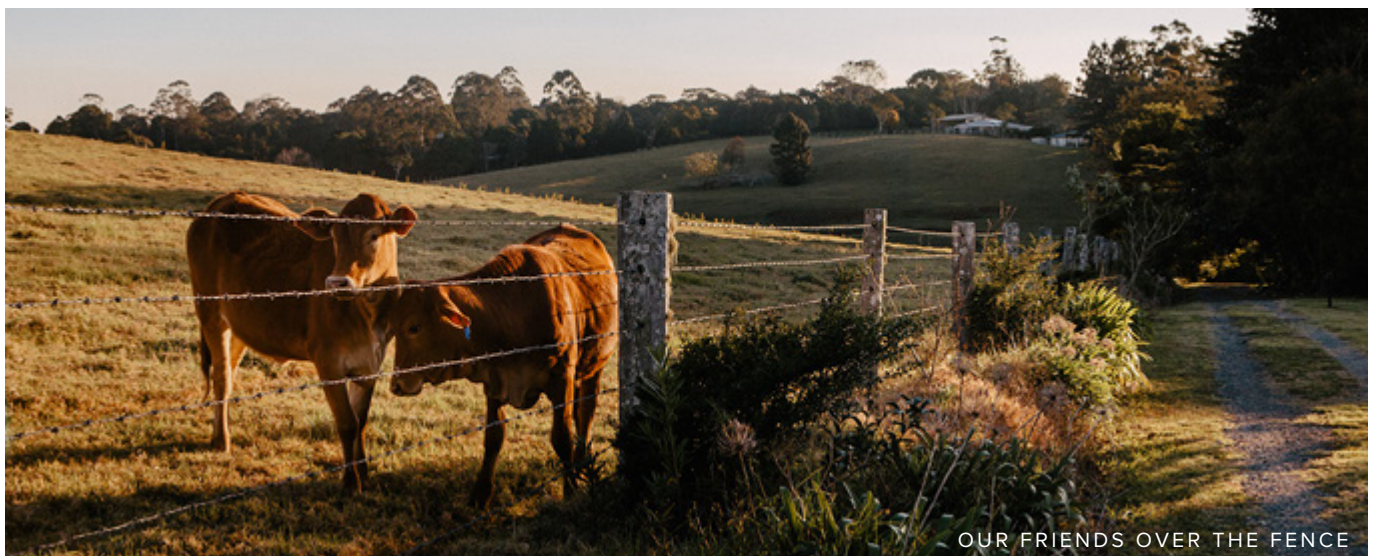
Shame usually results in hiding away or covering up to avoid criticism or judgement.

Guilt can be a helpful emotion to course correct, by either avoiding repeat offences, and making amends which can strengthen our relationships and aid in our personal growth.

Guilt inversely correlates with the behaviours I mentioned before – addiction, depression, violence, aggression, bullying, suicide, eating disorders, etc.

This shows that the ability to identify and accept we have done something – but not make it about who we are – allows us to be adaptive. While guilt is uncomfortable, it allows us to grow. With guilt, as soon as we have made amends and/or apologised, the emotion usually dissipates. However shame may prevent us from even trying to make amends.

If we do try to make up for the wrong, shame can still continue to stay with us because we have the belief that it was not just the act itself that was bad, but our *self* as well. We are identified as the behaviour, so even if we make amends, we still feel flawed.



Example Experience

There was a study done showed guilt and shame where quite good motivators for change.

They motivated us to change our behaviour. Shame proved to be a greater motivator than guilt and while that might seem like good news, my concern is that unless we do the work and acknowledge our worth, we will be stuck in this continued motivation to change but no change will ever be good enough. We see this a lot at our retreat and within our program – people really wanting to *change* who they are, but not *accepting* who they are.

We can always change how we act but we need to accept who we are – and see that person as worthy and loveable.

We need to change what we can in our outer world but most importantly we need to do the inner work. If you experience shame, then by all means use it as a motivator for change but also understand that you are human. We all make mistakes and no action or situation will ever determine or impact your values as a human being.

So, we need to find this happy medium between improving our behaviours as well as our esteem.

It is not about banishing shame, because in fact we can't, experts in the field of psychology are pretty sure that the only people who don't experience shame are people who have no capacity for connection or empathy.

So, let play with an example of shame;

Let's say you are at a social get together. There will be a few of them coming up, and these situations can be awkward and a little bit stressful for you. Everyone is usually on edge because there is so much pressure to make these functions fun and happy. There are usually a lot of personalities and alcohol is often involved. Now let's say you say something that offends someone else.

The inner critic in you then starts in saying....

“You never get it right do you? Why did you do that? You are a bad person, you should have known better. Why do you always drink too much? You will never change. Everybody else seems to be able to be normal, why can't you? What is wrong with you? This is such a waste, why did you even bother? Just be quiet and don't do anything else to cause a scene” etc. etc.

On a physical level, you probably feel sick in the stomach, you might feel hot, you can't keep eye contact, your body language closes down almost as though you are trying to make yourself invisible, you feel heavy in the chest. You can't think straight, you second guess yourself.

There can also arise other emotions such as embarrassment, anxiety, guilt, anger and sadness. This is your mind grabbing hold of the shame and stretching it out, coming to conclusions about how this event will impact your life.

Exploring Your Options

At this point there are two main roads we can travel. In fact, I think there are always two main road we can travel.

We can take the metaphorical stairway upwards or the metaphorical stairway downwards.

Either go into the darkness or into the light
Into fear or into love
Into personal growth or into avoidance
Into self-love or into self-punishment

We all take the stairs down at some point in time and for some of us it is a well ingrained behaviour when certain situations arise. Unfortunately, it has become a habitual automatic reaction.

Downward stairway behaviours usually take on four main forms, which are essentially just strategies for avoiding pain:

(1) NUMBING

(2) WITHDRAWING

(3) DISPLACEMENT

(4) RUMINATION

NUMBING is using a coping strategy like drugs or alcohol to drown out the emotional discomfort and stop the mind.

WITHDRAWING is to hide away, disconnect from others, and avoid situations where we might make a similar mistake and create more discomfort for ourselves. This behaviour is fed by the thought that we are flawed and inadequate and the likelihood of us screwing up again is inevitable.

DISPLACEMENT of the emotion involves blaming others, expressing extreme anger or rage, or even over achievement or perfectionism. All these create a bit of a smoke screen in front of the shame and make us not have to look at it.

RUMINATION is to go over the event and the story of our life again and again. This helps because if our mind is constantly on the threats that could appear then we believe we have a greater chance of avoiding them. This is why we try and explore the situation from all angles, looking at all the variables and possibilities.

This is based on the theory that our species has thrived based on the brain's ability to identify and pre-empt threats through experiences. This means this behaviour is relatively hardwired. Ruminating also keeps us in the shame cycle, which on a chemical level actually activates the brains reward centre, so there is some comfort and chemical payoff for ruminating in shame.

As we mentioned earlier, sometimes we do not realise that these four categories of behaviours came up as a result of shame, we don't make the connection. We also don't appreciate that we do these things to try and relieve the pain of the shame that has arisen as a result of our experiences.

This might not seem like it makes a lot of sense because – to a rational brain – these strategies clearly create pain. But in the short term – to a mind that has shut down its cognitive regions – it feels like the best option.

These strategies reduce current discomfort and or *attempt* to protect us from further future pain. These strategies are used because we buy into the thought that we are worthless and this is one of our biggest fears – you do not belong, you're not loveable, you're never going to be good enough. This fear causes us to see shame as bad and painful and therefore our natural inclination is to avoid it.

But what if we changed that logic? What if we could get comfortable with shame so that it could be part of our life at times?

What if we saw shame as part of being human and could reason that these emotions are based on unfounded mindsets of inferiority and low self-esteem that you can challenge and change?

This would allow us to take the alternative stairway up.

The upward stairway also involves a process of behaviours:

- **RECOGNISING**
- **NAMING**
- **ACCEPTING**
- **SOOTHING**
- **GROWING**

What if at this point you could **recognise** that you are experiencing an emotion, then **name** that emotion as shame? Once you have acknowledged how you are feeling, the next step is to then **allow it and accept it as a normal human experience that everyone goes through.**

How do we allow it? One of the simplest ways is to breathe into it and really feel the body sensations that occupy it and welcome it (another mindfulness practice).

This stops us from struggling against it or trying to numb it. We breathe into it. Knowing that it will go away because, *everything does.* We can practice patience, curiosity and tolerance.

Instead of launching into the negative self-talk that further reinforces the feeling of inferiority, we can bring in some **self-compassion and healthy self-soothing** to make the process easier.

This may look like: "I acknowledge that I am feeling shame about what has happened. This means I am interpreting this situation as evidence that I am flawed and inferior in some way. BUT I know my value is unconditional. I am human and I make mistakes so does everybody

else. This event is not evidence that I am lesser in some way, it is evidence that I am the same as everybody else. Uncomfortable situations help me to learn and grow. Why would I want to deprive myself of that?”

This is a big part of being able to be with shame. This process is you doing the work to know you are good enough.

Then we can start asking ourselves questions to **learn and grow from the experience**:

- *What did I do that I am actually feeling shame about?*
- *What values did I compromise?*
- *Do I need to make amends for this situation? If so, what can I do?*
- *Why did I act like that in the first place, and what can I do to avoid acting like that again?*

This process helps because when we recognise, we can act with awareness instead of reacting out of habit. We become familiar with our experience which helps us to engage the front part of our brain, that is more logical and able to problem solve.

Acceptance stops the struggle. Self-compassion soothes the discomfort, dilutes the negative self-talk and allows the shame to dissolve naturally. Introspection gives us growth and helps us to leave the past in the past and cease worrying about the future.

The upwards stairway does not take discomfort away, it just makes discomfort ok. It makes it valid, bearable and acknowledges its benefit.

Conclusion

We can do this. We do it all the time; when we watch sad or scary movies; when we push our bodies in the gym; when we engage in talk therapy; when we go to the dentist; when we go on thrill rides.

We willingly put ourselves through pain and discomfort because we see the value in the activity or circumstance, we know that the discomfort won't last and we are prepared for it, therefore it doesn't concern us.

We need to get up every morning with goals and the intention to have a good day, but also we need to acknowledge that discomfort is a natural part of any day. Especially in days where there is vulnerability, growth, creativity and many of the wonderful things that make life rich and meaningful.

We need to do the work on a daily basis to build and reinforce self-esteem by taking care of our self, respecting who we are, honouring our emotions, making our health and self a priority.

So, there is no way around it! Practicing your chosen form of mindfulness and building self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-worth, and practicing self-compassion are what the functional tools to pack into your daily toolkit and rebuild your mental health.



A PEACEFUL MORNING AT PALLADIUM PRIVATE

Client Stories

***Jenny tried to overcome alcohol addiction, anxiety and lack of self belief for 18 months on her own
She finally found relief***

– 4:01 mins



***Doug's life stresses developed into depression and halted life as he knew it
Hear how did he discovered the root cause and regained his life***

– 4:37 mins



How Palladium Private helped Angela take the time out for her, to recover from sexual abuse, depression, anxiety and PTSD

– 5:06 mins



Click [HERE](#) to view more of our client stories on YouTube

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For more information or to find out more about Palladium Private's holistic therapy programs please contact:

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