

Brene' Brown, PhD, LMSW is the leading researcher on shame. Her TED Talk about shame resilience is the most watched TED Talk on record. There are many available clips of Ms. Brown talking about shame and shame resilience and we recommend that you take a moment to Google and/or YouTube some of her talks.

Brown with Oprah:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdtabNt4S7E>

Brown's shame TED talk:
http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_listening_to_shame

Brown's vulnerability TED talk:
http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability

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A few years ago, I heard Brene' Brown describe the difference between guilt and shame: "Guilt is I did bad," she said. "Shame is I am bad." Wow, what a distinction. No wonder shame is so powerfully destructive. It cuts us to the core, to the very heart of who we are as people.

But shame, fortunately, is not all-powerful. In her book *I Thought It Was Just Me (but it isn't): Making the Journey from "What Will People Think?" to "I Am Enough"*, Brene' talks about the concept of shame resilience: the ability to be aware of shame as it's happening and move through it constructively. In her research, she found four common elements in women who had high levels of shame resilience:

1. *They could identify their shame triggers.* For instance, for years I hid my OCD, because having a mental illness was a big shame trigger for me.
2. *They reality checked the "social-community expectations" which drive shame.* I recognize the unfortunate stigma around mental illness, but I can:
 - a. Normalize and recognize I am not the only one: there are millions of people with OCD.
 - b. Contextualize and see the big picture: I am not my OCD.
 - c. Demystify and share my knowledge about OCD with others, which I do as a therapist and an advocate for people who have OCD.
3. *They shared their stories.* One of my goals is to advocate for others who have OCD through sharing my own story, so that others with OCD know they are not alone, and that they can reclaim their lives.
4. *They spoke with honesty about shame.* While I have developed shame resilience, I still have moments of shame. We all do! However, I have a small group of friends with whom I can "speak shame": when I'm feeling shamed, I can share my true feelings with them and ask for the empathy I need to move constructively forward.

As therapists, one of the most frequent feelings our clients encounter is shame. Brene' offers groundbreaking advice for how to help them, and us, move through this all-too-common experience. SN

Guilt verses Shame; is there a difference? Guilt alerts us that we may have hurt or wronged ourselves or someone else. If we are "guilty" of a wrong we can take responsibility and do something about it by changing our behavior and asking for forgiveness. It involves something we do. Shame is more sinister because it involves who we believe ourselves to be. In her book, *Released from Shame*, Sandra D. Wilson defines shame as "a strong sense of being uniquely, hopelessly different and less than other human beings". She says shame is physiological, spiritual, and psychological. The first two are often resolved through growth and grace. Psychological or binding shame are often rooted in childhood experiences in the family and the individual's limited capacity to accurately interpret them. Healthy, properly functioning families offer resilience to feelings of inferiority and shame, but are not problem free. The distinction from unhealthy families is how healthy families handle inevitable problems. Healthy parents work toward solving problems and dealing with the emotions that go along with them. In order to do that, parents must be emotionally available to their children, helping them learn to handle their feeling instead of shaming them for experiencing emotions. That is often difficult if parents have not learned to handle their own emotions. If you grew up in a "shaming", unhealthy family, this book is an excellent resource to help you work through a painful past and learn healthier ways to approach life. Learning to deal with our own emotions and "shame" is a preemptive measure that will help lead our children towards healthier lives. TW