Examining Shame Resilience: Applying Brené Brown’s Theory to Personal and Professional Counselor Development

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INTRODUCTIONS

Who are we?

Who’s in the room?

Familiarity with Brené Brown’s Research:
1-- None
2-- I’ve seen a Ted Talk
3-- I’ve read her books
4– I’ve watched and read everything that she has done!
AGENDA

• Why are we talking about Shame??
• Shame and Professional Counseling
• Shame Resilience Theory (SRT)
• Key Concepts
• Shame and Counselor Training
• Take-Aways for Professional Counselors
We can’t give people what we don’t have. Who we are matters immeasurably more than what we know or who we want to be.

- Brené Brown
WHAT KEEPS US OUT OF CONNECTION?

THE GIFTS OF IMPERFECTION: LIVING WITH COURAGE, COMPASSION AND
CONNECTION

https://youtu.be/s6xb4H5ueKs
Counselors have Immunity, right???

Breakout Time!

How do these concepts influence our work as counselors?

- Boundaries
- Gratitude
- Worthiness
- Perfectionism
- Lack of Connection
COUNSELOR BURNOUT

- Counselors are at high-risk for professional burnout
- As many as 2 out of every 3 mental health workers may be experiencing high levels of burnout
- Burnout significantly impacts our ability to provide effective and ethical care
- Counselors may feel shame about burnout and refrain from asking for support
- We have an ethical obligation to engage in physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual self-care
WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT SHAME?

- Prevalence
- Implications for mental health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shame</th>
<th>Guilt</th>
<th>Humiliation</th>
<th>Embarrassment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I am bad”</td>
<td>“What I did was bad”</td>
<td>“I don’t deserve to feel this bad for this”</td>
<td>“Anyone might feel bad, too”</td>
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“Wholehearted living is about engaging in our lives from a place of worthiness. It means cultivating the courage, compassion, and connection to wake up in the morning and think, *No matter what gets done and how much is left undone, I am enough. It’s going to bed at night thinking, Yes, I am imperfect and vulnerable and sometimes afraid, but that doesn’t change the fact that I am also brave and worthy of love and belonging.*”
Shame Resilience Theory (SRT)

Acknowledgment of Personal Vulnerability

Critical Awareness/Socio-Cultural Expectations

Mutually Empathic Relationships

Speaking Shame
Vulnerability is…

How would you describe it???
KEY CONCEPT: Vulnerability

Vulnerability = Uncertainty, Risk, and Emotional Exposure - Brené Brown

Professional Counseling is an inherently vulnerable profession!

** Shame keeps us from experiencing vulnerability and keep us out of connection!**
KEY CONCEPT: Shame Shields
Strategies for Disconnection

Moving Away: Withdrawing/hiding
Moving Against: Power over others
Moving Towards: People Pleasing
Shame Shields (cont.)

✓ Foreboding Joy vs. Gratitude
✓ Perfectionism vs. Self Compassion
✓ Numbing vs. Leaning into Discomfort
KEY CONCEPT: Authenticity

Authenticity is a daily practice. Choosing authenticity means cultivating the courage to be imperfect, to set boundaries, and to allow ourselves to be vulnerable; exercising the compassion that comes from knowing that we are all made of strength and struggle and connected to each other through a loving and resilient human spirit; nurturing the connection and sense of belonging that can only happen when we let go of what we are supposed to be and embrace who we are.

Authenticity demands wholehearted living and loving - even when it's hard, even when we're wrestling with the shame and fear of not being good enough, and especially when the joy is so intense that we're afraid to let ourselves feel it.

Mindfully practicing authenticity during our most soul-searching struggles is how we invite grace, joy, and gratitude into our lives.

— Brene Brown, Ph.D.
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KEY CONCEPT: Critical Awareness/Socio-Cultural Expectations

- Authenticity is impacted by cultural messages of who we are supposed to be

  “Shame can only rise so far in any system before people disengage to protect themselves. When we’re disengaged, we don’t show up, we don’t contribute, and we stop caring.” (Brené Brown, 2012, pg. 192)

- What messages do we get as counselors that might feed shame? (e.g. What are counselors “supposed” to be like?)
KEY CONCEPT: Mutually Empathic Relationships

Empathy vs. Sympathy

✓ Feeling WITH not FOR people
✓ Empathic Misses (At least, one-upping, “I feel sorry for you”)

https://brenebrown.com/videos/rsa-short-empathy/
KEY CONCEPT: Speaking Shame

“Marble Jar” Friends
People who have earned the right to hear your story
KEY CONCEPT: Cultivating Trust

B.R.A.V.I.N.G.
That’s Boundaries.
Reliability. Accountability.
The Vault. Integrity.
Non-judgment. And
Generosity. This is the
anatomy of trust.

- BRENÉ BROWN
B.R.A.V.I.N.G (cont.)

**B:** Be clear about what is okay and NOT okay for you!

**R:** Don’t overcommit and not produce!

**A:** Hold yourself accountable and model HUMANNESS along the way!

**V:** Surround yourself with trusting people and BE a trustworthy person!

**I:** Choose Courage over Comfort!

**N:** We can’t be open to others while we are judging ourselves!

**G:** Lend the most generous assumptions about people’s behaviors!
How are we training our counselors??

• Shame keeps us out of connection
• Imposter syndrome is rampant in training and early professional work
• How do we model what “doing your own work” looks like?
• Parallel process - how do students learn to create spaces to “show-up” and be vulnerable?
DEVELOPMENT OF COURAGEOUS CONNECTIONS

- Purpose of the class:
  - 1) to educate students around shame and its consequences for future client populations
  - 2) to help students understand how shame in their own lives may be impacting their professional development as counselors
- Shelby’s experience
- Notable results from our study
- LAC – how this work applies to provisionally licensed counselor
Take-Aways for Counselors

• Identify and Clarify your Values

• Practice authenticity in your personal and professional life
  - Choose an “Arena” in which you want to show up and be seen
  - Let your values help you choose courage over comfort

• Set healthy boundaries (Be clear about what’s okay and not okay)

• Acknowledge Shame and avoid using shame shields.

• Choose Marble jar friends wisely

• Practice Self-compassion and Gratitude: Talk to yourself like you’d talk to your client.