

Episode 43: Q&A #1 — The Voice (Shame) in Relationships

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Good morning and welcome to ConneXions Classroom Podcast for February 21st, 2015. I'm glad you could join us this morning. Today's podcast is going to be a little bit different. I'm going to be answering questions. I've had several come in from people around the country who would like answers to a variety of different questions. Most of them are on understanding this concept of shame—shame is tricky to understand and it's been my experience that as people learn about this concept and what it is and what it isn't, it takes them months of a lot of introspection, and education, and just listening for their own shame language and also the way that it feels inside their system.

And so, what's happening is that you're becoming very sensitive to how you feel when you talk, which is awesome because it means you're getting connected. We want to be connected to our emotions when we're interacting with ourselves and with other people.

Basically, we always want to have emotion and the Truth is, we always *do* have emotion. However, for some of us, we don't feel it, and so part of the reason that we are disconnected from emotion is because of shame. And so, shame is a very, very important concept to understand and so I want to start off this morning by answering a few questions.

Let me start off by sharing what shame is. There are several podcasts about shame but let me just give it a quick definition. When I feel shame or when I go into shame, it is this belief, understanding, “Truth”—it feels this way, it feels like a Truth, or a belief, or this knowledge I have about myself—that there's something at the core of me that's wrong. There's something about me that's just not enough and I don't know why I feel like that.

For some of us, we can't even get to that, it's like, *I don't feel that at all, I don't know what she's talking about*. However, I am fairly confident that if I could sit with you for a few minutes and ask you really specific questions about yourself, and if you would be emotionally honest about how you feel about yourself, most people would be able to connect a very deep feeling inside them that says *I just don't do things well enough or I'm not enough*. Some kind of understanding or verbalization of that point of there's something that's missing in me—that if I could do enough, think a certain way, graduate from a certain school, have enough money, have certain kinds of friends or a prestigious group that thought that I was really special, then I would feel differently than I feel now—I would feel enough, I would feel loved, I'd feel wanted, I'd be needed, I'd be important.

Shame also shows up in this very other extreme, where we would look at it and say that person's rather prideful, or arrogant, or full of themselves, or cocky, or stuck up, all those kinds of words—that is also shame because that kind of presentation of arrogance is actually a cover for the feelings of inadequacy. Though the person may not be able to feel that or initially come to an understanding that that's what they're trying to cover, it is a covering posture for incredible feelings of inadequacy or fear of inadequacy—because shame will come always with this incredible sense of fear. Again, though many of us don't feel it, it's just because we haven't been looking for it. But again, if I could sit with you and help you understand how when you speak like this, or you think like this, there are feelings underneath those words that are operating in you and that you *are* reacting to. And if you would be willing to really look at yourself in a real, honest, and forthright way—humble way, really, be willing—you would find it in yourself because there's not a soul on the planet that doesn't have it lurking someplace. You may not have it in all areas of your life, however it does and it will present itself in very demonstrative ways in certain areas of your life where you feel inadequate. And it's not just *I did inadequate*, it's *I am inadequate, I'm not enough, I am unlovable, I am invaluable, I am not seen, or wanted, or loved, or important*. That is the epicenter of what shame creates in us—these beliefs in us.

And so, if that still does not make sense, hang in there. You do have it in your life. Again, it may not be in every area of your life or in every relationship, however there are areas where you

get shaky about who you are. And that's okay, nobody on the planet is perfect and so because there is no perfection, it makes us vulnerable to believe these lies, these faulty beliefs about ourselves. And if they are not challenged they will remain inside us, and they will stay there. They can stay there from childhood on if we as adults don't hear them; and if we don't hear them, we can't know they're there, and if we don't know they're there, then we don't know how to get rid of them. It's kind of like opening a door in your house that you've never opened and it's just full of trash, and dirt, and clutter and you think *oh, my goodness, I've never been in this spot, I need to clean this out.*

That's what this podcast is about—it's an invitation to learn about shame, understand it, so therefore you have knowledge of its whereabouts in your life and in your psyche, and you can start cleaning that stuff out by challenging it with statements of Truth.

First question: *How do you repair and help heal a child that you have been unconsciously passing your shame onto?*

That is a great question. People will say, "How did I get loaded with this stuff? I had this stuff way before I got into a marriage, I had it before I hit 20, I remember thinking when I was a little child that I was unloved or I was bad. I remember leaving my bike out and my mom backing over it and just screaming at me like she was an insane woman. I remember thinking, my goodness—it's not just about the bike but Mom's splitting open, is that where this stuff came from?"

Yes. So, shame can begin and does begin when we're just little, little children. The minute you pop your head into the world, you start beginning to be vulnerable to shame. Vulnerable just means that you're susceptible to it. If I'm told all my life that $3 + 3$ is 7 and nobody corrects it and says, "No, no, it's 6," then I learn wrongly, I learn erroneously that those two numbers put together equal something that they don't. But if no one is there to say, "That's not accurate," then I just learn very, very firmly that that is the answer.

It's the same thing that happens with shame emotionally, is that when I have adults in my life, especially my care providers, my parents, people that I'm the most vulnerable to as a child, if I have those kind of people in my life that have a lot of shame—and so again, shame looks like I don't know how to ask for help, I don't apologize, I blame other people, I make other people responsible for my own emotions, or my own choices, or my outcomes of my choices. And when I do that, children around me—also adults but we're talking about kids—pick that stuff up and they feel like they're responsible for it, they feel like because Mom, or Dad, or someone in my environment that I respect is feeling a certain way, that I am the sole purpose for why they're feeling that way. So, if they're happy it's because of me, if they're sad it's because of me, if they're angry it's because of me. And not only is it because of me but I then am responsible to fix it for them, to make them happy, to make them not angry. I'm also responsible to make them

always be happy—not just in this one instance but always. And so, I learn very quickly how to do that. Maybe I learn just to keep my mouth shut because no matter what I say, they're going to react in a certain way that I don't like and when they react that way, then I feel badly about who I **am**.

Listen to me very closely. That is the difference. I go to a place of *it's about me, it's about who I am* instead of what I've done. So when I leave my bike out and my mother runs over it, that's something I've done. It's something she's done, too. However, when she get out of the car and slams the car door and she starts screaming about how could I leave my bike out, and don't I know how expensive that is, and now it's ruined, and it's my fault, and she's upset because it cost so much time and money to buy that. And so, I immediately go to *it's me, I am bad*. Not *I did wrongly* or *I made a mistake*, it's ***I am bad***. And I learn that very, very young.

Someone shared the other day that they went up to embrace their parent when they were a little kid—they remember this at three or four years old—and the parent pushed them away, like physically strong armed them and just said, “No.” That child learned from that young age that it's not safe to hug, or be emotional, or be close, or have those close feelings. So, here this child was feeling really vulnerable and wanted very naturally to be hugged, and held, and nurtured, and comforted, and told everything was going to be okay. And this parent wouldn't allow them.

And so, the parent's shame came towards them. Don't know what was driving that behavior because it's a very natural behavior for a child to want to engage in and it's also a very natural behavior for a parent to want to nurture, and to protect, and to comfort a child. However, the parent for whatever reason was not available—not that they couldn't do it—but they weren't emotionally available to invite that child in figuratively and literally, and nurture them because of their own shame. Maybe they had thoughts of *I don't want to get that vulnerable* or maybe they've had some kind of trauma happen to them and so they don't feel safe touching in that way. Whatever it was, it was being driven by distortion—their reality had been skewed and they were just reacting to their reality.

The problem is, is that when they did that, it affected that child in such a profound way that they remembered it. I mean, this was person was 55 years old and she remembered it very clearly because it was a trauma, it traumatized her that her parent was not available for her and she said, “I remember thinking I would never do that again.” That's a statement of trauma. That hurt so badly and it was so confusing to the child that she shut down at three or four years old and said, “I will never try to get affection from my parent again.”

Now, did a three and four year old have that kind of language? No. However, they knew that it was not safe and they knew that feeling vulnerable like that did not feel stable, and so she went to a place of *I won't ask for that again*.

So, it's very powerful. How do you repair and help a child heal when you've been unconsciously passing that stuff onto them? The way that you can do it—and the thing that's beautiful about this is that you can do it in any point in your life. You go to that child, you go to that adult child if they've grown, and you acknowledge the things that you've done, you acknowledge as you're healing your own shame, you tell them, “I was wrong in this area and in this area. And I sent you a message that you weren't important or I didn't love you.”

And then, you go into the Truth. So after you acknowledge what you've done, then you go into the Truth of the matter, which will always be *I was being driven by shame*. And it's not an excuse for you, it's an explanation because most of the time people don't even know they're reacting to this, they're just reacting, it's a reactive position, it's not a responding position, it's not a thoughtful position like *oh, I think that I will push my child away because I don't love them*. That's not what it is. People are trying to connect. We're all trying to do that. However, many of us have had so much shame passed down to us and have created our own shame through our own choices and so we've got a mixture of both those things going on, that we just react to ourselves, to our experiences, to other people. And when we react, it passes this stuff on to others.

Now, am I responsible for how it gets passed on? I'm not really responsible, I mean, if I don't know what I'm doing then I can't be responsible for doing what I don't know that I'm doing. And so, not really. However, if you're trying to repair it, you do need to own the things you've done. It's not that you did them in a deliberate sense, however you did do them. And so, you need to be willing to be humble—here's that humble piece, remember I'm talking about being honest, responsible, and humble—and open, and acknowledge the things that you have done. Now, listen to the language—things that you have done that have sent messages to others, and also to self, of who you *are*.

However, it's not that you are sending a message of who they are, it's that that's how they perceive it because that's how their shame picks it up and says *oh, because Mom did this to me, it means that I am*. That's the lie, the **am** part is the lie. The Truth part is because Mom did this, it wasn't **to** me, it's because Mom ran over my bike, *she* became very angry. It wasn't because of me or who I am that she became angry. She became angry at the situation and she did not know how to manage her anger or her upset, or her frustration and so it came flying at me—kind of in an effort to save her, like help her manage it.

However, as a child, I cannot do that. Maybe if I would have been an adult, I could have said, “Wow, wow, I understand you're upset and it makes sense why you feel really angry. And this isn't about me. Yes, I needed to put my bike away and at the same time, you're overly tired and you've been working long hours and you didn't walk behind the car to see if the bike was there. I mean, you need to take some culpability in this.”

That's how you start healing and repairing the shame that got passed on from you very unconsciously, is you go back to every situation you can remember and you also ask the child, "How have I offended you? How have I created sadness in you? What was my part in why you were upset the other day? Tell me." And then, you own it, and owning it is, you own the facts of what you did, you can't own the intention because I assume your intention wasn't to harm anyone. However, that's what happened.

I was at my son's basketball game yesterday and this didn't happen but it could have, what if I started yelling at the referees or something? Or maybe he played poorly and so I ignored him the rest of the evening. If I would have behaved in that way, it could have sent shaming messages to him that I disapproved of him, or that I was disappointed in him, or that he should have played better, if he would have played better, they would have won. Whatever. It could have sent those messages of he's not enough, he's inadequate, and so I would need to go clean that up, I would need to go to him and say, "You know what? My isolating behavior last night was completely inappropriate. I was just so disappointed and that's why I went into my room and shut my door. That really had nothing to do with you. However, that was very inappropriate and quite immature of me because you needed me there for you, you were sad because you guys lost and instead I was upstairs licking my wounds because I had this expectation that you guys should have won and I was just distraught because that didn't happen."

You get to go and be really mature about it and go acknowledge the things that you've done, and how you've affected other people, and if the person as well is humble and they're open, then they too can say, "Okay, I can see that. I've had experiences like that, I can appreciate disappointment and feelings of distraught. And you're right, that did send a really clear message to me that you were angry with me or you were disappointed in me."

And so, we both at that point get to own whether we went into shame. I did go into shame, I went in my room and shut my door because I was so upset about the outcome. It's an okay thing to do if you're conscious, if you say, "You know, I'm going to go take a few minutes in my room, I'm so upset about this. I'm going to go take a break." That's not shaming behavior because I'm owning it right on the front end. But if I'm silent to him and I go in the house and I slam my door and I make it very apparent. Or maybe I don't even slam my door, maybe I just say, "I'm going to go upstairs and just think about this for a while." And I stay up there for hours and hours and somebody wants to come in and I say, "No, just leave me alone." And I give off this presentation that woe is me and life is unfair. Usually, if I show up like that, I've got a pattern of showing up that way, this isn't usually just a one time thing. If it is a one time thing, you've never seen me do something like that, then it may not be shame. I mean, I may have something more that's actually happened that I need to acknowledge.

Shame typically comes in a pattern of behavior, so you kind of know where that person will go because you've been around them long enough and that's how they typically show up.

But that's how you heal it, is you go back and you own it. "These are the things that I've done, this is how I think it's affected you, tell me how it's affected you." And then you take responsibility for the ways that the person has been affected, like, "I can see why you felt scared when I went up and shut myself into my room, that makes sense why that would be frightening to you. I wasn't intending to punish you or scare you but I can see how that action did do that."

And so, if both people are willing to acknowledge their own parts of how they interpreted the experience, and you bring Truth into the experience, then shame leaves. Shame cannot be present when the facts are presented and the person or persons are willing to be humble about how they were impacted, and own that they did interpret that experience as personal. Because the only way for me to go into shame is I have to personalize something. So as a child, that's all children do is they personalize things, it's like it's my fault, it's *because of me*, I'm awesome *because of me*, I'm bad *because of me*, So-and-so is upset *because of me*. It's always about them.

However, children are also very forgiving, so if you were to go up and say, "That was wrong that I yelled at you," children very quickly will say, "Okay, that's fine," because they're so loving and it's so easy for them to let go and forgive. However, us as adults, because we've had more life experience and we've been through more "traumatic experiences" that we probably have not been able to get our shame out of, we sometimes get stuck in that stuff and so it's harder for us to humble ourselves, it's harder for us to say we're sorry, or acknowledge that something wasn't personal because it feels more threatening to get into that vulnerable spot of humility and forgiveness.

Another question is: *How do you put this information into child-like language?*

I don't know what the person meant by "child-like," I would teach your children at any age these words. I'd teach them about shame, I would teach them about manipulation, I would teach them about control, and how to surrender, and let go. I would use the same vernacular that you're using with adults with your kids. I mean, there's no reason to change that language.

Now, I understand that language can be very abstract and very complex. And so, the way you describe the word might be something that you use more simple terms with. Like, "So, that's manipulative." And they're like, "Huh?" And you can say, "Manipulation is about taking something in reality and turning it into something that's not in reality."

So, if I were to say to you, "There's ice cream in the refrigerator," and I knew there was no ice cream in the refrigerator, but I'm trying to manipulate you to believe that there is, then that would be taking something in reality like there's ice cream in the refrigerator, and turning it, and finding out there is no ice cream—that's not reality. So, the reality is, is that that was not true.

Or if a child goes to Mom and says, "Hey, can I have this?" And she says, "No." And then, they go to Dad and he says, "Yes," then you teach them how they've just manipulated, that the reality

was Mom said no, and so because you wanted what you wanted, you then tried to make reality what you wanted, so you went to Dad and he said yes or vice versa.

So, I would teach them these terms. I'd tell them that's really shaming behavior or language, so if they don't get something that they want and they say, "I hate you," or, "It's your fault that I'm mad," or, "You did this to me," then you can teach them. "It's not possible for me to cause your anger," you validate them, "I understand why you're angry, it makes sense why you're angry, I know you really wanted to have that toy or have that playdate with that person and it's not going to happen, so I understand, and you get to choose to be angry or not. I'm not *making* you do that."

So, you're teaching them these concepts from a very young age because though they are very abstract and because our brains are not fully developed until 25, we have a difficult time abstracting as children. However, we can be taught to some level to abstract. We won't be able to do it quite naturally until our brains are fully developed. However, we can have someone educate us on that.

So, I would encourage you to teach them these words. Now, I know I have not gone into a ton of detail about shame. If you want more detail about what shame is, I would encourage you to listen to the [podcast on shame](#) or the [podcast on faulty core beliefs](#).

Here's another question: *How do you validate someone who is mad at you for something you've done wrong?*

Same answer. How do you validate someone who is angry with you because you've done something wrong? Let's say I show up late to the basketball game and he has asked me, "Please be on time. This is really important." And I have a pattern of showing up late and so there's a lot of mistrust around that. And so, I show up late and so I've done something inappropriate, I've done something wrong—I committed that I'd show up and then I didn't. And so, how do I validate my son after I've just done something that's so disappointing, or from his vantage point would be I've done something wrong—or even from my vantage point because I made a commitment I'd show up and I didn't.

And so, here's how you do it. You must listen to what they say and be willing—here's your humble piece again—be willing to take responsibility for what you've done wrong, that's the first thing you've got to do. You've got to listen to how it affected them. Now, they might be sharing with you in a shame-based position, they might be saying, "I can't go play the game now. When I saw you walk in late, it was really distracting and it threw my shot off for the rest of my game, and that's why I was shooting so badly. You caused me to be distracted."

Those kinds of statements of a very personalized experience are not the Truth. The Truth is, is that I absolutely affect him. And so, what he was telling me is that when I did not show up on

time, it was so disappointing, or so it was so sad, or it was so reminiscent of his whole growing up years that it affected him tremendously. But it did not *cause* him—I don't have the power to *cause* him to be distracted.

There's a line between **affecting** and **causing**, and because we are all individual agents, there is no way for me to *make* someone else *feel* something or to *make* someone else *do* something. I don't have that power, thank goodness. We'd really be in trouble if we all could control people like that.

Now, can we affect them tremendously? Absolutely. The more vulnerable the relationship, the more intimately / emotionally close and raw the relationship is—when I say raw, it's like I depend on that person—the higher propensity of affect I have on the person. And so, being affected is very, very powerful, however, the person still gets to choose how they are going to hold that effect.

If he shares with me in a way that's shaming, for example, *I did this to him*, that's a shaming presentation because what I'm saying is you did to me, it's personal to me, you did it to me. That is shaming language. And so, how do I validate him? I listen to how he's been impacted, and even though he's presenting it in shame, I still listen and I validate and say, "I get it. I totally understand where you're coming from. That makes complete sense. I understand that your shooting was thrown off as a result of me showing up late, it sounds like you were super disappointed and I don't have any excuses for it."

So, after you validate and you own it, you acknowledge that you have a history of this, if you do. If you don't, then after they feel validated and heard, you can say to them, "This is why I showed up late. This is not a pattern of mine." And if it's not a pattern of yours, you'll probably be forgiven much more quickly than if it is. If it's a pattern, you have no place to go. That's just you making choices to show up late and it's probably your shame that's driving you to keep showing up late like that.

So, you have to acknowledge your history and the emotional pain you're "causing"—I put that in quotes because it's actually the emotional pain that is being presented to him; it feels like you're causing it. He gets to choose whether he's going to pick that up or not. You get to acknowledge the disappointment, and the only way to heal that, if you want to salvage that relationship, is you've got to change. You cannot stay being late with this particular person—really with anybody in your life—but it's playing out with this person.

So, if you want that relationship to heal and to eventually have safety and trust in it, you must change why you keep showing up late in your life. And so, it's really a gift: it shows you where you need to humble, where you need to acknowledge, and where you need to change, if you're willing to be wise and acknowledge it in that vein. You could just get defensive and think *gaul*, *he's just not appreciative*. *I mean, I was at work and I did all these things, it took me 30 minutes*

to get across town, he doesn't even understand how hard it is, bla bla bla. The Truth is, is that he doesn't want to hear that. Nobody wants to hear about how hard you've worked and why this is such a sacrifice for you. When you love someone, you want to be there for them and for their special events.

And so, don't go there; don't go making excuses for yourself or you will further isolate this person from you instead of bringing them closer to you.

So, how do you validate someone who is upset because of something you've done wrong? That's how you do it. You acknowledge what you've done, you acknowledge your history, and you let them know that you're going to be making changes, and do not excuse your behavior because there really is no excuse for what you just did yet again.

And how do you make changes? That's a whole other podcast. What I would say to you quickly is you have to acknowledge the Truth of what you keep doing and then you've got to see where your shame is, because somehow you're sabotaging yourself to keep showing up late.

Last question for this podcast: *How do you heal from extremely toxic relationships?*

So, when I hear that word “toxic” I think of extremely shameful or shame-based relationships. So, if you grew up in toxic relationships, how do you heal from those relationships when those people don't have the same awarenesses of their own behavior or why you showed up the way you did? And then, what does healthy interaction look like with unhealthy individuals? That's kind of a different question.

The first question: how do you heal from shame-based relationships that you grew up in when they don't have awareness of their own behavior? Again, prior to you becoming aware, you didn't know either so you both were just engaging in shame back and forth, and that's what created the toxicity.

You can heal from those kinds of relationships by yourself. You don't need the other person in order to heal. It would be really nice to have the other person to join you in this endeavor, however if they're not willing—there's that humble piece again—if they're not humble and willing to look at their own behavior and understand why they react the way they do, and why they think the way they do, and why they are unwilling at times to behave, or think, or feel, or own their own behavior, there's no way to help them—none. What they're saying is *I'm not ready to go into that place of personal awareness and don't push me.* That's what they're telling you.

You can heal. And the way you heal is by what we've just been talking about. You can literally / figuratively sit with someone and go through your relationships, go through why you show up in the ways that you do in relationships. I would pick one relationship at a time and start looking at

it, like, *how do I show up with Mom?* Pick your most intimate relationships and I'd start from childhood, I wouldn't start from adulthood—though for some people, it's too intimidating or too frightening to go back into childhood, so if that's the case for you then start in adulthood. Say *why do I show up this way with my spouse? Why do I get so reactionary with my friend? How come when I go to work my boss just drives me up a wall?* Those kinds of curious questions are going to walk you right into where your distorted beliefs are. Faulty core beliefs / distorted beliefs is another way to talk about shame.

I need to know what I believe and why I keep reacting the way I do. So, every time you react to something, you need to know where it's coming from. Every time. Anytime you say to yourself, *oh that's so upsetting*, or *I feel frustrated*, or *I'm sad*, or *I feel anxious*, or *I feel lonely*, or *I'm bored*. Those kinds of emotions that are uncomfortable, any kind of uncomfortable emotion. And happy might be uncomfortable for you. It's not all the “negative emotions,” it's any emotion could be uncomfortable. I need to understand why I'm uncomfortable. That's *my* charge is to understand what's going on inside me.

And as I do that, I start asking those kinds of questions like *why*. I start getting curious about my interpretations, my meanings—I've put meaning onto certain things. When I walk into the room and I see that the closet door is open, all of a sudden I feel fear. Well, why? Why would I feel fear? I might have a thought of *I remember when I was seven, our house was broken into and anytime I walk into a space and it's not exactly the way I've left it, it scares me because I have those feelings of, oh my goodness, I remember how frightened I was when our house was broken into*.

That's a fine memory but why is it causing me fear now? I've got five kids running around the house, maybe one of them opened the closet door, so why all of a sudden am I feeling fear? If I'm feeling fear, then I have some kind of distortion still connected to that kind of memory and the distortion might be *you're still in danger because the closet door has been moved since when you left it—you're in danger*. That may not be the Truth and so I'm looking for the Truth, like, “Who moved the closet door?” Somebody could say, “I did. I went in to get some paper.” “Oh, okay.” All of a sudden, the fear went away. But I need to understand why I have that fear in the first place because I'm reacting to something that may not be accurate **and that's where your shame lies**. So, you have to understand that, you have to understand why you react the way you do. And that's how you heal those toxic relationships.

Like I said at the beginning, it would be really nice if they were willing to join you in that because then you could actually heal the relationship, but you can get well on your own and you can reframe all the shame that either you have or came at you from that relationship by working with someone, sitting with someone, and having them give you possibly another angle from whence that person was coming from. So, instead of it being *this person never liked me, they were always mean to me in high school, they were always teasing me, I'd hear them gossip about*

me in the hallways. That's my only interpretation of who this person is, is that they're mean and they're unkind, and they're unloving, and they're a bully.

And so, I need another person to sit with me and say, "Well, maybe they were in some kind of a relationship where they were being bullied, maybe they didn't have parents growing up. Maybe their parents were physically there but they weren't emotionally there to support them."

Because it's not the Truth that people are just consciously trying to hurt you. Now, are you being affected by people's behavior? You bet. However, if you had an opportunity to glance into their life and understood what was going on in their life, you would appreciate or have a larger context to understand why they're reacting to you the way that they are. When that happens, at least for me when I'm being given an opportunity to understand something on a larger context, I may not be completely fine with their behaviors. In fact, I still might say, "No, I'm **not** okay with their behaviors." But I have a level of empathy that comes into my heart that says *okay, I understand logically now why they behave the way they do. It's still not alright, I want them to change, I don't want to be around them. I'm going to choose to divorce them or separate myself from them. **And** I still can appreciate why they are showing up the way that they are in their life.*

And so, we need more information because if we only have our rendition of what happened, then we will be stuck. We'll be stuck in a trap, in shame, indefinitely. And I don't know about you, but I don't want to live like that. I don't want to live believing that my interpretation is the right and only interpretation of why that person or those things happened to me the way that they did, because the Truth is, I'm wrong. It's not that simple.

It's not **only** the way that I saw it, there is much more information that I know nothing about. And so, I'm willing to give people a larger space, a larger benefit of the doubt, if you will, to move around in. Not so much for them but for me, so that I can get out of this lie that's causing incredible pain in my life. Every time I think about that person from high school, I feel hurt and I feel devastated, and I feel betrayed. And I don't want that. I want to be released from that and so I need to be willing to further that context and acknowledge that there was more going on than what I saw, that it was not personal to me—because remember, shame shows up like that, it says *this is about you, this is because of you, they're doing this to you.* There's always a "me" in there and I've got to get that me out and say, "They did do that. And it wasn't personal to me. As shrapnel was flying, I got hit by it and it wasn't personal to me, I just was in the wrong place."

Those were a few questions. I think over the next couple of podcasts, I will answer the rest of these questions. But that is how you can heal a toxic relationship, is that I take myself out of the relationship and I really examine why I'm thinking and feeling the way I am, and then I get it reframed. Usually, I need someone else's help to do that, a therapist, a coach, a good friend, maybe somebody who has a lot of empathy and love that can help me see it in a broader context so that I can free myself from those distortions and lies.

I hope this has been helpful and I look forward to speaking again with you next week. Between now and then, take care of yourself and stay connected. Bye bye.

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