

AVE  
MARIA  
PURISIMA

GUIDE

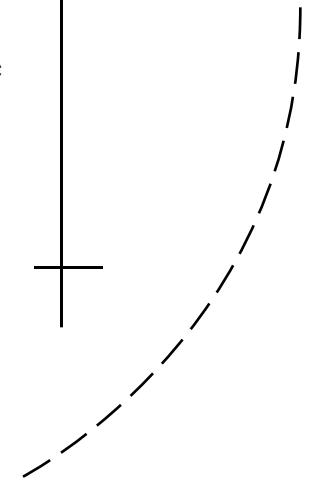
What is shame?

For some people, even bringing up shame causes them shame. Shame is often uncomfortable.

Shame and embarrassment are two different emotions. Philosopher Krista K. Thomason explains in her book *Naked: The Dark Side Of Shame and Moral Life*, that one might feel embarrassed if they trip on the stairs while walking with their friends. Your friends might check in on you or share a moment when they too have been clumsy. When we experience shame, it is different. "Moments of shame, however, are those we seek to hide from everyone. We rarely look back and chuckle over moments of shame. When we experience shame in front of others, we do not assume that others understand how we feel; in fact, we fear that others will never be able to see us in the same way again."

Brené Brown is a researcher and storyteller that has spent the past two decades researching shame, empathy, and courage. She defines shame as "the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging—something we've experienced, done, or failed to do makes us unworthy of connection."

How would you define shame in your own words?



Celia Alvarez Muñoz  
(American, b. 1937)  
*Ave María Purísima (Enlightenment 8)*, 1983  
Chromogenic development prints, plexiglass,  
and wood box

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, gift of  
Lannan Foundation, 1997.45.a-i

In *Ave María Purísima (Enlightenment 8)*, Celia Alvarez Muñoz explored a moment from her childhood. The sequence of photographs shows a shiny red apple progressively being eaten while the accompanying text running beneath the images describes an early encounter from Muñoz's youth. The last frame reveals a twisted snake, completing the allusion to the biblical story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The title of the work, *Ave Maria Purisima* (hail, immaculate Mary), is a phrase that may be used in many ways, including as a sacred statement imbued with religious meaning, as well as an exclamation of dismay or shock.

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1

# Where does shame come from?

Drag queens Trixie Mattel and Katya Zamolodchikova describe shame as a “landfill emotion” on their YouTube show *UNHhhh*. Trixie shared, “If you grew up in the woods alone, with nobody to tell you, you would never be ashamed.” Katya responded, “You learn it, it’s socialized.”

Sonya Renee Taylor is an award author, poet, spoken word artist, speaker, humanitarian and social justice activist, educator, and author of the book *The Body Is Not An Apology*. She believes that most of our feelings of shame stem from white supremacy, injustice, and violence.

Where do you think shame comes from? Why do you think we experience shame when we do?

Everyone has the capacity to feel shame.

Try telling a story of shame you have experienced. If you feel comfortable and supported, share this story with someone you trust.

# How can we move through shame?

In her book, *Atlas of the Heart*, Brene Brown shares that talking about shame brings a sense of control. That control gives us the strength to overcome our feelings and move forward with our lives. Researcher Shawn A Ginwright believes that when we talk about our shame and hurt in community setting, that we are more likely to heal.

In her piece *Ave Maria Purisima (Enlightenment 8)*, Celia Alvarez Muñoz reflects on the shame she experienced during her childhood and created an art piece. How do you think this helped her move through her shame?

2

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MARIA  
PURISIMA

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## SOURCES

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