

EXPERIENTIAL GROUP EXERCISES FOR SHAME-RESILIENCE

CIRCLE OF SHAME:

- Cut a piece blank white paper into a large circle
- Cut circle into as many pieces as they are participants
- (Pro tip - before distributing the pieces, number them so you can easily put the piece back together)
- As group members to draw their experience of shame on their piece
- When all members have completed their drawing, put the pieces back together to create one large, shame collage

Discussion:

- What was the experience like having to pictorialize shame?
- Do you notice any similarities with each of the drawings?
- What does the image look like when all the pieces are joined?

WEB OF SHAME:

- Ask participants to stand in a circle with one person holding a ball of yarn.
- Ask that participant to shout out a role they hold (father, sister, addict, boss, student, etc) as they toss the yarn to another member.
- Each member continues to toss the yarn until they run out of roles or yarn.
- Members take a few moments to try to untangle from the web they've created

Discussion:

- What did you notice about the roles that were named? How many of them did you also identify with?
- How was it to try to untangle yourselves from the web you created?

SHAME BOMBS AND SHIELDS:

- Participants stand in a circle and are asked to silently choose a person in the room who is their shame bomb (can't be facilitator).
- Then participants should walk around the room with the goal to stay

as far away from their shame bomb as possible. (It's helpful to give clients boundaries to adhere to or they will leave the room.)

- After giving some time for them to avoid their bomb, ask them to freeze and silently choose another person to be their shield. At this point in the game, the goal is to keep the shield in between them and the bomb for protection.
- The facilitator then counts down from 10 to 1 explaining that the bomb will go off at 1.

Discussion points:

- What did you notice/think/feel?
- Did you notice if you were the bomb or shield for someone else? How did that feel?

Exercise relevance to shame work: Represents our hustle for worthiness and brings attention to what we try to do to avoid shame and how obvious that hustle can be.

FREE WRITING TO MUSIC:

- Thinking of shame and shame resilience - therapist plays two different songs: one focusing on the negative aspects of shame and another focused on resilience.
- Ask participants to think of a shameful experience during the first song and free-write what the gremlins have to say. (Hidden Shame - Johnny Cash)
- During the second song, have participants call on their voice of self-compassion while free-writing again. (Everybody Hurts - REM)
- When the songs and writing are complete, ask the participants to take a look at both sets of writing. What do they want to hold on to as they move forward and what would they like to let go of?
- Ask them to crumple the paper they'd like to let go of and say out loud, "I choose to let go of this shame and believe that I am worthy of love and belonging."

IMAGE CIRCLE:

- Participants stand in a circle facing each other with their eyes closed
- Facilitator calls out a word and participants will use their bodies to create the image of that word
- Facilitator will tell participants to maintain their pose while opening their eyes to see other images
- Participants will close their eyes as facilitator calls out a new word
- Facilitator will start with easy, fun images and work into more challenging words/emotions

Discussion:

- What did you notice?
- How did it feel to see others images and to have your image be seen?
- What did you feel in your body?
- Were some words more intense to portray than others?

THE MACHINE OF SHAME:

- One volunteer goes into the center of the room and starts a repetitive movement and a sound that represents shame for them
- As motivated, one by one, the rest of the group members join and add on to the machine with their own movement and sound until all are involved
- The facilitator prompts that the machine is running out of fuel and slowing down - let machine react
- The facilitator prompts that the machine is being refueled with a turbo boost of shame - let machine react
- Facilitator then prompts that the machine is running out of shame fuel and is being refueled by self-compassion - let machine react

Discussion:

- What was it like to build the machine of shame?
- What happened when the machine was fueled with shame?
- What happened when the machine was fueled with self-compassion?
- What feelings did they notice in their bodies (during shame and during self-compassion)?

OBJECTIFYING SHAME:

- Ask members to look around the room and pick an object that represents shame (It can be any object from a coaster to a couch)
- Have the participants take a few minutes to explore their chosen object and discuss how their choice relates to their experiences with shame