

# SHIFT: A Step-by-Step Process to Move from Shame to Self-Respect

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Shame is one of the most painful human emotions. It can leave us feeling small, unworthy, or cut off from others. But shame is not who we are — it is a protective response we learned long ago. The SHIFT Process is a simple, trauma-informed way to notice, name, and loosen shame's grip, while building self-respect and compassion.

## S — Sense it

Notice where shame lands in the body. Give it a number (0–10). Say: “A shame wave is here.”

## H — Hold & ground

Steady yourself with an anchor: - Slow breathing (in 4, out 6–8) - Hand on heart or chest - Gentle tapping or stretching - Name 5 things you see, 3 you feel

## I — Identify: shame vs. guilt

• Guilt = “I did something wrong” → calls for repair. • Shame = “I am wrong” → needs compassion.  
Tick which you feel: ■ Guilt ■ Shame ■ Both

## F — Fact-check the story

Ask: - Whose rule/standard am I using? - What's evidence vs. fear? - Would I say this to a friend? - What old memory does this feel like? Posture cue: soften jaw, open chest slightly.

## T — Talk back with compassion

Boundary: “You can talk, but you don't get to drive.” Compassion: - “Even when I struggle, I'm still worthy.” - “This is hard and I am human.”

## Next Steps

- If it's guilt → make a clean repair (acknowledge, apologise once, offer one fix, let go). - If it's shame → reconnect with your values (honesty, loyalty, care) and choose one small action today.

## ■■ Safety Note

Stay within your window of tolerance. If intensity remains high (7+/10), return to grounding first. For deep shame linked to trauma, work with a trained therapist.

## **Why SHIFT Works**

- Somatic — starts with the body, not just thoughts.
- Compassion-based — moves from self-attack to self-support.
- Practical — clear steps to use anytime.

■ *SHIFT is a free resource created by A Positive Start CIC. Therapists are welcome to integrate it into sessions, and individuals can use it as a self-help tool. Please share with credit to support trauma-informed healing.*