New Ideas on the Origins of Shame in Stuttering

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Introduction

The King's Speech
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Recognition of Shame as Part of Advanced Stuttering

- Bloodstein, 2007; Guitar, 2006; Sheehan, Cortese & Hadley, 1962; Starkweather, 2001; Van Riper, 1982
- One of a constellation of emotions
- Often overlooked, unacknowledged, and rarely ever talked about.

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Why?

- Complex and hidden
- Web of conflicting & confusing emotions
- Visceral response

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Premise and Purpose

- Shame drives the fear bus
- Coincidental timing of 3 developmental processes
- New shame theory – shame as a social emotion

- These ideas help to explain why:
  - Stuttering cuts to the soul
  - Powerlessness over stuttering
  - Reclaiming power requires addressing shame
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- Fulcrum on which my theory balances:
  - Fear of loss of control develops early and causes shame (Judith, 2006)
  - Shame = fear of loss of connection and unworthiness (Brown, 2007; Scheff, 2000)
  - Loss of control is really about loss of connection and abandonment (Silverman, 2013)

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- Purpose
  - Introduce new information on shame theory
  - Review what we already know about
    - Early psychosocial development
    - Early speech & language development
    - Early stuttering development
  - Tie it all together and put a bow on it

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Understanding Shame

Defining Shame

- Personal Definitions
  - Webster’s Unabridged (1983) “Disturbed or painful feeling of guilt, incompetence, indecency, or blameworthiness.”
  - Bradshaw (1988) “Painful feeling about myself as a person.”
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- **Social Definitions**
  - Scheff (2000) “I nominate shame as the premiere social emotion.”
  - Brown (2007; 2010; 2012) “The intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance & belonging.”
  - Fear of loss of connection – causes us to hide something about ourselves from others

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- **The Social Nature of Human Beings**
  - We are hardwired for connection (Brown, 2007; Hanson, 2009; Scheff, 2000)
    - Neural circuits thick with synapses
    - Threat to social connectivity sends strong signals through brain and body
    - Fight-flight-freeze

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- **Abraham Maslow’s Needs Hierarchy (1943)**
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- **3 Social/Cultural dimensions of shame**
  - **Power** (Brown, 2007; Judith, 2004)
    - Cultural definitions – holding sway over other people
      - Dualism of strong vs. weak
      - Internal battles of good vs. bad: greater angels vs. lesser angels
    - Original definition – ability to act, make changes, transform
      - "hero strength"
      - Fighting against ourselves leaves little energy for making changes
  - **Cultural definitions** – holding sway over other people
    - Dualism of strong vs. weak
    - Internal battles of good vs. bad: greater angels vs. lesser angels
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- **Worthiness (Brown, 2007; 2010; 2012; 2013)**
  - Definition – "quality of value, merit, esteem, or virtue"
  - A quality of the soul
  - Worthiness and Love & belonging
  - When we feel worthy of love & belonging we tend to
    - Have courage to be imperfect
    - Have compassion for ourselves and others
    - Are more authentic

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The Skin Horse on Being Real

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit.
"Real isn’t how you are made…It’s a thing that happens to you."
"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.
"Sometimes…When you are Real you don’t feel it."
"It takes a long time, Jack. That’s why it doesn’t always happen to people who break easily, Jack. But whoever you become, I know it’s going to be very important."
"Yes, indeed,” said the Rabbit. "It takes a long time, Jack."

(Williams, 1922)
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- Vulnerability (Brown, 2007; 2010)
  - Definition – “Capable of being wounded; open to attack.”
  - Seat of shame, fear, & worthlessness AND love, belonging, & joy
  - Opening self to wounding and attack requires courage, not weakness
  - Vulnerability and power

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The Grocery Store Incident - Alan Rabinswitz

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- Universality of Shame (Brown, 2007; Bradshaw, 1988; Judith, 2004; Scheff, 2000)
  - Everyone experiences shame except sociopaths
  - Every encounter we have contains the potential for rejection
  - Rarely identified, acknowledged, or talked about
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- Shame needs 3 conditions

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The Individual’s Experience of Shame

- Physiological & Physical
  - Fight-flight-freeze
  - Posture

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- Emotional – “swampland of the soul” (Scheff, 2000)
  - Multiple emotions – embarrassment, guilt, humiliation, shyness, failure, rejection, blame, anger
  - Easy to name these emotions; not easy to recognize the shame underneath
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- Mental/Cognitive
  - Mental fog; confusion
  - Frontal lobe shuts down with 3F response (Hanson, 2009)

Catastrophic scene - Voice in Exile

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- Spiritual
  - Spirituality = Finding meaning in our lives through relationships with self, others, and higher power of some kind (Frankl, 1959/2006)
  - Inextricably connected to one another by a force greater than ourselves (Brown, 2012)
  - Wholeness and completeness
  - Shame ruptures all 3 relationships

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Psycho-social development and shame

- Stage 2 Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt (Erikson, 1963)
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- 18 mo.– 4 yrs.
- Physical & cognitive development
  - Voluntary muscle control
  - Cognitive thought and development of language
  - Speech & language form connection between thought and action (Erikson, 1963; Judith, 2004)
  - Beginnings of the will and willful action (vs. reflexive)

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- Potty Training
  - 2 energetic principles
  - "We experience shame if we cannot adequately control what comes out of us." (Judith, 2004, p. 206)

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- Summary
  - Shame is a social emotion
  - Fear of loss of connection—loss of love, rejection, abandonment, feeling unworthy of love and connection
  - Universal
  - Causes hiding
  - Capacity for shame develops early in life (18 mo – 4 yrs)
  - We experience shame if we cannot adequately control what comes out of us
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The Pencil Incident - Rabinowitz

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Shame as a Driving Force in Stuttering Development

Review of What Know and Don’t Know

- Shame is recognized as part of advanced stuttering
- Bloodstein – Phases 3 & 4; Guitar – Intermediate
- Fear gets top billing among emotions
- No writings on when, how, or why shame gets attached to stuttering

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Why so much fear?

- "Why is it so bad when _____ ?
- "Because the other person might reject me."
- Fear of rejection & feeling unworthy

shame
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- My Thought:
  - Shame is premiere emotion of stuttering
  - Loss of control separates SLDs from NDs
    - When we can’t control what comes out of us, we feel shame
    - Shame tied to early experiences of loss of control

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Stuttering, Shame, & Fear of Loss of Control

- Primal fear

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- Ellen-Marie Silverman (2013, p. 5)
  - “...When we are 3 or 4 years old...with limited experience and an immature cognitive system, we may first experience the primal fear that arises from believing we may perish if we stutter. We may, quite literally, fear stuttering may kill us.... The loss of control of our bodies that we experience as we stutter could lead to death on the spot.”
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- Primal fear overlooked by adults and by PWS when they become adults
- This primal fear may be the largest contributing factor to stuttering in adulthood (Silverman, 2013).

“Broken stuttering boy”

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- Shame’s relationship to other fears associated with stuttering (Corcoran & Stewart, 1998; Sheehan, et al., 1962; Starkweather, 2001)
- Fear is most common manifestation of shame
- Cycle back to primal fear
- Addressing fears may not be enough to help replace the primal fear

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Shame’s Relationship with Other Emotions and Secondary Behaviors

- High correlation between shame and anger, depression, and others (Brown, 2007).
- Embarrassment, humiliation, helplessness (Corcoran & Stewart, 1998)
- Self-esteem (Daniels & Gabel, 2004; Ginsberg, 2000)
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- Secondary behaviors
  - Silverman (2013) loss of control

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Conclusion
- Shame is the central emotion in stuttering
- Very young children can and do experience shame
- Loss of control in stuttering leads to primal fear of abandonment (social definition of shame) and death
- Primal fear (shame) imprinted deep in psyche and leads to a cascade of emotions and secondary behaviors
- It is a very big deal for children & adults who stutter

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- What to do about it?????

Stay tuned for Part 2 in 2015
References


References