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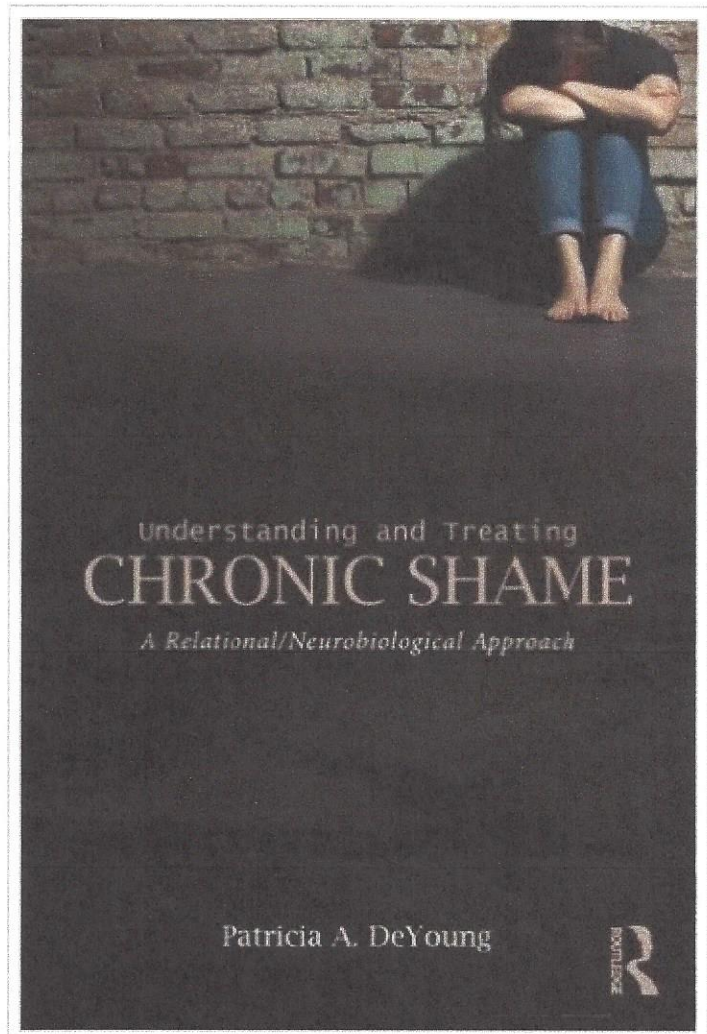
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## Chronic Shame

Posted Nov 14th, 2015 in [Mental Health](#), [Depression](#), [Shame](#)

At a meeting of my professional organization, The Ontario Society of Psychotherapists, one of our valued members, Pat DeYoung, presented her new book on shame. Here is an introduction, description and discussion of the book.

Pat talked briefly about healthy shame to start. When a child does something hurtful to a sibling, (maybe pinches her sister) and her father frowns at her and says "don't pinch your sister, you know that's not OK," the child, for that moment, feels shame. She knows what she's done is not acceptable to the family. This could be a daily occurrence as the child is taught to socialize with others. Soon after, the father scoops her up and loves her for something she has done that he approves of or just loves her for who she is and the repair is complete. All is well once again in the child and her connection to her family.



Healthy shame is not the book's focus. The book addresses chronic shame. Pat describes it as painful, corrosive and elusive. She integrates new brain science into her relational psychotherapy approach in addressing the treatment of chronic shame. She delves into the myriad of symptoms of shame and what lies behind them. Pat discusses how shame is wired into the brain and developed in personality.

This book is a professional guide for therapists versus a read for the general public. I know I will get a copy and read it as one of my clients in particular was popping to mind repeatedly during Pat's presentation. Shame may be what is underlying this client's self contempt and inability to move forward in her life and her creativity.

I will keep you posted as to the gems in the book that I think may be helpful to my readers. One of the main points that I got from the presentation is that shame isn't who we are but a negative outcome of something harmful that was done to us. We can work on it in therapy as a 'part' of the self that is hurting and needs help to heal. Within that shame work there may be anger, hopelessness, disappointment, grief and many other emotions needing expression and understanding and ultimately, love and acceptance.

A member asked Pat a question about the shame that we develop pre-cognitively (before our thinking brain is developed) and before we have learned to speak. As a relational therapist, Pat works in a talking based therapy method. I had the same question brewing during the presentation.

My personal opinion is that the beginnings of chronic shame can be so early in life that words won't access it and that body work is the way to most effectively approach it. But I loved the additional information Pat had to offer the world on chronic shame. We need to bring it out of the shadows and help people to heal from it's crippling effects.

Brené Brown is another wonderful resource on shame and she presents it in a simpler form that the public can more readily understand. Here is a link to one of her TED talks. She talks about vulnerability as a strength and not a weakness. I recommend her on line courses. They are very informative and won't break the bank.

[https://www.ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_listening\\_to\\_shame?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_listening_to_shame?language=en)

I had a discussion with a fellow therapist over the lunch table. She was wondering about the shame a fetus experiences in the womb when the mother has attempted to abort the child without success. There is no end to shame and where it may originate or how it may negatively impact one's life.

The good news is that there is help for it. You don't have to live a half life, carrying chronic shame around on your shoulders, weighing you down.