



Kerry Armstrong

HEALING

Basic Feelings & Meanings

Loved - A sense of feeling valued, understood, and heard. Listened to. Feeling safe with another. Warmth in the Heart. Lightness of body.

Fear/Anger - Fear is usually masked by anger. Fear---pounding heartbeat, dilated pupils, increased breathing, tightened skin, extreme alertness.

Anger - tightened jaw, upwelling in the chest, gritted teeth, dilated pupils, angry thoughts.

Shame or Ashamed - An intense sense of being faulty, wrong, or inferior at the core of our being. A feeling of being ruptured. A burning feeling in the stomach. Constricted throat. A sensation of the body shrinking. Spiraling inward in the stomach or chest or both. Difficulty in speaking. Heaviness on the chest and difficulty breathing. Feeling glared at by others.

Guilt - A sense of unease or regret for a wrongful or neglectful act against another. Different from shame because guilt is usually about something we have done rather than a statement of who we are.

Amused - A light feeling of humor or good spirits. Grins and smiles. God's Medicine. Abandoned - A sense of loss, being left, pushed out, forgotten, minimized, betrayed, feeling vulnerable. Feeling physically small. A dot. Lost at sea.

Embarrassed - An emotion rising from being exposed, caught in the act, confronted, ridiculed. Feeling flushed. Heat or redness in the face. Shortened breath. Involuntary stomach flutters.

Betrayed - Similar to abandonment; lied to, being deceived in meaning, feeling fooled, spiraling inward. Weakness in the limbs. Praying is difficult.

Satisfied - A sense of feeling full inside, rested, not worried, trustful thoughts. Being in the moment. Not wandering. Being in the body. Centered to Earth. Grounded in the Earth.

Hopeful - An expectation that things will work out, trusting oneself and others, energy level rises. Breathing is easier. Hitting all green lights.

Inspired - A sense of hope and wonderment of people and things, colors seem brighter, problems seem to find their right size. More energy in the body. Lightness of foot. Obstacles are secondary to solutions.

Humiliated - A sense of having the inner self exposed, abused, or taken away by the act of another or self. Vacuumed out. Void. Soul theft. Loss or **Grief** - A sense that something has been taken, a longing for feeling, given the answers to life but unsure of the questions. A school yard without children.

Joy - A Sense of integration of the survival traits/common behaviors. Coming out of the dark night of the soul with sureness of foot. Divided self reunited. Inner peace. Recognizing the True Self within. Knowing you can trust yourself. Seeing light in self and others. Energy and warmth throughout the body.

Family.Secrets.Inventory

Almost every dysfunctional family has a story or image that family members present to friends and outsiders. For example the Martin side of my family was famous for, "Family sticks together and loves each other, NO MATTER WHAT!" Another common story or image is "The Rodriguez family believes in education and challenge. We never give up."

Beneath the storyline is the reality of the dysfunctional home. There are secrets, inconsistencies, and wrongs that are contrary to the family image. Family denial supports the family image and denies the hidden story. In this exercise I ask you to list your family secrets. The secrets can involve attempts by parents to hide addiction, inappropriate touching, mishandling of money, lying, and infidelity.

In some cases seemingly insignificant events can also be secrets. In the space below list all memories, incidents, and messages that were considered family secrets or inconsistent with the family image.



Shame Inventory

ACA states that shame is so potent that a few drops can create a lifetime of lost self. Shame often was on the scene before abandonment, which is perhaps the second most troublesome abuse we have faced as children of unhealthy parenting. Shame and abandonment serve as the fear-based launching pad for an outward search for love and security which we never find in other people, places, or things. Shame blinds us to the fact that love is inside each of us waiting to be discovered.

To shame a child is to abandon a child. A parent can shame and abandon a child without ever leaving the room because a shamed child feels unlovable and alone at a deep level.

Adult children of trauma not only feel shame at the molecule level, but we also carry inherent shame. That means that most of us carry a deep sense of inadequacy, embarrassment or sense of uniqueness without having to interact with another person. We not only feel shame, we believe we are SHAME. When shamed as adults we can literally vibrate with shame as if being struck like a bell. We can feel shame burning in our stomach and our face. When shamed we can spiral inward to an unreachable spot. In some cases a shame spiral is so intense that the adult child's vision is distorted and perceptions change. Room lighting can seem more intense or dense and the expression on peoples faces seem over exaggerated. Shame of this nature has accumulated over many years.

In the space below, list examples of shame. Try to include as many details of the incidents as possible, including age, where you were, what was said, and how your body reacted to the shame.

Abandonment

Abandonment is the bookend to shame when growing up in a dysfunctional family.

Abandonment can be a physical abandonment in which our parents left us with friends, relatives, or daycare centers while they practiced their addictions or dependence. Some children have been left at home for days while a parent or parents stayed away partying or chasing a loveless relationship. There is a story of an adult child who cut her finger badly as a child and hid in the bathroom instead of running to her mother for comfort. The girl intuitively knew that her bleeding finger would bring a harsh and blaming response from her mother and it did. Instead of comforting the child, the overwhelmed mother howled at her husband and her child as he rushed the girl to the ER. The frightened mother shamed the injured child while also abandoning her emotionally.

In the space below, list the times you felt abandoned by your parents or caregivers

