

# STRENGTH, RESILIENCE & HIDDEN SHAME GUIDEBOOK



BY SHEILA RUBIN, LMFT, RDT/BCT

# STRENGTH, RESILIENCE & HIDDEN SHAME GUIDEBOOK

Have you ever been confused or unsure how you feel? Or perhaps you've had a strong reaction to something or someone and are not sure why? In this **Strength, Resilience and Hidden Shame Guidebook** you will learn indicators that may shed light on some of the relational blind spots of your thoughts, feelings, and actions.

This guidebook will introduce you to the mysterious emotion of shame. It can be extremely helpful to understand what shame is and how it affects your body, thoughts, actions and relationships. This kit will also teach you how to tap into your inner strengths and resilience as a foundation to support and expand on what's positive in your life.

The **Strength, Resilience and Hidden Shame Guidebook** has four parts:

- Part 1: Inner Discovery & Resilience Self-Assessment
- Part 2: Understanding and Identifying Hidden Shame
- Part 3: Transitioning to Feeling Safe and Having Healthy Responses
- Part 4: Getting Customized Support to Experience Transformation Around Your Reactions to Shame

It also includes writing exercises, which should take you about an hour to complete.

My hope is that you enjoy the process and learn more about yourself. This is the starting point for relationship improvements with yourself and others!



photo by Lea Delson

Warmly,

*Sheila Rubin*

**Sheila Rubin, LMFT, RDT/BCT**

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## PART 1: INNER DISCOVERY & RESILIENCE SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES

We would all like for self-discovery to be a positive experience. However, for some people a shaming voice comes up right away when they take a look at their lives, especially if they try to look at what's positive. Notice how far you can get through this assessment before the shaming voice comes up. Use a journal or extra paper if you like.

### **1. What do you do easily in life?**

### **2. Do you experience any self-talk or an inner voice that comes up when you are doing these things? What does it say?**

For example: If cooking comes easily to you, you might say to yourself "I don't need a recipe, I just combine ingredients and it ends up tasting good!"

### **3. What are some of the things that you love to do that make you happy?**

### **4. Does anything get in the way of your doing them?**

### **5. When you try something new and unfamiliar, do you experience any self-talk or an inner voice? What comes up for you?**

For example: If you are leading a group or teaching for the first time you might say to yourself, "Who do you think you are?" or "I know I'm going to make a mistake" or "They are going to know that I don't know anything."

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For the following questions, answer them and then rate yourself from 1 to 10 on the accompanying scale, according to whether you experience Inner Shaming, Protecting, or Resilience. Examples of each are included.

## 6. How do you deal with compliments? Can you take them in, how do you respond?



**Inner Shaming** = Some people may freeze, others may start to feel like an imposter.

**Protecting** = Ignoring the compliment, bypassing it, getting embarrassed by it, avoiding it, changing the subject.

**Resilience** = Letting in and feeling compliments easily; saying "Thank you."

## 7. How do you deal with making a mistake?



**Inner Shaming** = Freezing up (this could be slow freezing, where you can't think clearly, or extreme freezing, where you can't even respond), blaming yourself, putting yourself down, thinking others will find out that you are an imposter or that there is something wrong with you.

**Protecting** = Resistance, denial, hiding, avoiding, ignoring, or blaming others for the mistake.

**Resilience** = Noticing the error, getting curious about what happened, being able to make corrections, and talking to yourself in a kind voice if it happens again.

## 8. How do you deal with put-downs or insults?



**Inner Shaming** = Freezing up, reflecting on everything you've ever done wrong, putting yourself down, going down into a black hole of gunk where the shame/impostor mind comes up and you think "There's something wrong with me! Others will now know there's something wrong with me!" etc.

**Protecting** = Freezing, pulling away, suddenly getting shy, or getting defensive and attacking back.

**Resilience** = Not taking it personally, not believing it, challenging it, laughing at it, having compassion for the other; being able to assess it and use it as information, seeing if it has any basis in reality.

## 9. Do you have the resources to talk to yourself in a kind way?



**Inner Shaming** = Your voice says things like "What's wrong with you? You can't even do this exercise right! You can't even talk to yourself kindly!" This can be extreme.

**Protecting** = There's a pushy, condemning voice (like a punishing parent).

**Resilience** = There's a kind inner voice inside that speaks gently and can be reassuring and encouraging.

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### **10. When does your inner negative dialogue get triggered?**

For example, does it happen more often with your kids? Your partner? Your boss? A stranger?

Identifying what triggers your negative self-talk can help you become more aware and allow you to start to respond differently.

### **11. What patterns or insights into your strengths and resilience have you discovered through this self-assessment?**

### **12. What is one way you can start being kinder to yourself internally?**

Can you imagine having a kind coach or parent inside yourself talking to you when you are scared?



*“Coping with Difference” by Sheila Rubin*

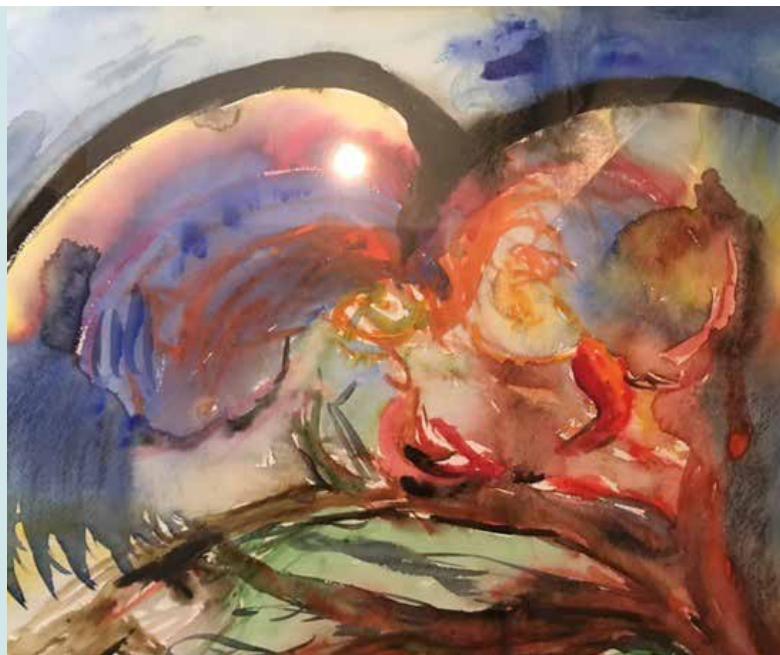
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## PART 2: UNDERSTANDING AND IDENTIFYING HIDDEN SHAME

### What is shame?

Shame is a primary emotion. Primary emotions are the deepest emotions. The Tomkins list of primary emotions includes sadness, fear, anger, interest, contempt, disgust, distress, fear, joy, shame and surprise.

Many are hyper-aware of shame. For others shame tends to be an invisible process. An example of an invisible process is where someone might suddenly start to feel very angry, very shy, or that they've been put down—and the key is that they find themselves suddenly blaming or yelling and not know why. They might not know that they feel disrespected or put down and they react abruptly, like suddenly quitting a project, or storming out of the room, or leaving a relationship. They also might have a little voice that whispers, "I knew there was something wrong with me" or "I've always known I was a fraud and faking it, and now other people are going to find out."



"The Bird" by Sheila Rubin

For some people shame comes up instantly. They start to hear what sounds like their own voice putting themselves down. Other people might get flashbacks of abuse, horrible memories, then go into a shame freeze and shut down. For others, shame may come up in a less obvious way, with a subtle discomfort, where they feel the need to change the subject, they drop a class without knowing why, or they suddenly break a promise. They don't know that there has been any shame—they aren't aware it's happening. For others there is no invisible process, but possibly a defensiveness or stony silence shows up to deny or hide the shame.

There are many indicators that are so subtle or so sudden or even invisible that it can be difficult to be aware of the presence of shame. The reason it can be invisible is because it's designed to protect us. For example, when we are angry, shame can come up to reduce the intensity of the anger so we don't end up hurting someone we don't want to hurt. Shame can protect us by reducing the intensity of our emotions. Often shame can be so invisible that it can cause a reaction that might seem confusing.

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## Common Shame Indicators

Here are some common physical, thought, and reaction markers that could be clues that you are experiencing the emotion of shame.

### Thought Markers:

- “There’s something wrong with me and they are going to find out”
- “I’m not good enough”
- “I’m a failure”
- “I can’t do it right”
- “What’s wrong with them?”



*“The Multi-Headed Hydra of Shame” by Sheila Rubin*

### Physical Markers

- A feeling of being vaguely or profoundly uncomfortable in your body
- Feeling shy and pulling away
- Flushed face
- Tight throat
- Hard to breathe
- Looking away, having trouble keeping eye contact
- Feeling like the bottom is falling out from underneath you

### Reaction Markers:

- Putting yourself down
- Attacking or blaming others
- Suddenly forgetting what you are going to say
- Going blank or freezing  
(a “deer in headlights” reaction)
- Denying, avoiding or disassociating
- Using an activity to numb out  
(eating, drinking, drugs, shopping, exercise, etc.)
- Withdrawing and pulling away or pulling in  
(which can lead to depression)

Again, these are just a few examples. Some people might have a feeling in the pit of their stomach. Some may imagine a feeling of being dragged through “the pits of hell”—like having an art teacher criticize their art or their parents tease them. Others might not notice anything, but they might find themselves reacting in a surprising way. For example, a student who forgets his homework may find himself getting into a fight without knowing why and getting out of class so that he doesn’t have to deal with the shame of not having his homework.

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Noticing the self-talk is important. Resilient self-talk sounds like “That happens in life” or “I’m stronger than that” or “I don’t have to feel put down by them.” Inner shaming self-talk might be a steady stream of criticism of what’s wrong with you. Or it might show up as a freeze in the whole nervous system where you can’t think or talk. Shame is often a freezing up and its job is to protect you. When you go into shame, there might be thoughts or self-talk like “What’s wrong with me?” or “I can’t even do...”—so going into shame can activate further shame. This is what’s known as a “shame spiral.”

## Some Shame Spiral Examples

- ~ A school teacher forgets a student’s name and feels embarrassed about it, but instead of asking the student’s name, the teacher finds himself suddenly reacting to the student’s behavior. Then the student becomes the problem and the teacher no longer feels embarrassed.
- ~ A father feels bad that he can’t afford to send his son on a trip that all his son’s friends are going on. Instead of explaining that to his son, he abruptly puts him down for not cleaning his room and yells, “You are asking for too much!” or “Money doesn’t grow on trees” or “You young people these days!”
- ~ A woman is on a date with her boyfriend, who doesn’t notice that she has a new haircut. She starts saying to herself, “What’s wrong with me?” or “I don’t know how to do this” or “Why do I pick these relationships?” Meanwhile, her boyfriend is in his own reaction to her silence, thinking, “What’s wrong with me?” or “Does she not like me anymore?”—and they both go through their own shame spirals.



“As Above, So Below” by Sheila Rubin

If you can notice these markers and then tap into your resilience, you can use shame as a marker for discomfort and vulnerability, so that rather than putting yourself or others down, you can step into a place where you can comfort yourself, move forward.

Once you understand your strengths and uncover hidden shame, it creates a solid foundation to explore and support safe, healthy responses in life.

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## PART 3: TRANSITIONING TO FEELING SAFE AND HAVING HEALTHY RESPONSES

Shame attacks, shyness attacks, or responding with outbursts of anger can be debilitating and overwhelming to you and to your partner or family. This can get in the way of your self expression and relationships. It's helpful to know what shame is and how it affects you.

Shame can also be healthy, in that it can protect you. It can be a sign to let you know when you've overstepped a boundary. For instance, perhaps you meet somebody and forget the person's name. The shame might come up to tell you that you need to slow down and ask the person's name again.

Or with a couple, if one person doesn't understand why the other is so upset and they're feeling shame because they feel that they should understand why the other person is upset, healthy shame can help them make a conscious effort to slow down and tune into the other.

Once you understand your strengths and uncover hidden shame, it creates a solid foundation to explore and support safe, healthy responses in life. There are important reasons why we have these emotions. Healthy shame responses are about being able to see the big picture and having compassion for ourselves and others, so that we understand what we can do to make different choices, while we hold onto a positive part of ourselves.

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"The Heart" by Sheila Rubin

## Healthy Shame Response Examples

### **1. Pause, feel, and check in with yourself.**

A teenage client of mine had a boy ask her out, and before the date he asked her to send him a naked picture of herself. She was able to tell me that she felt shy about that, and we were able to talk through that being an inappropriate request. So shame and shyness slowed her down so that she didn't send the naked picture. We restored her dignity by helping her realize that some part of her knew his request was wrong and that her shame protected her by slowing her down. The power of her dignity was that she had healthy boundaries, and shame can come up when boundaries are pushed or invaded. When she felt pushed, her shame came up to tell her to pause and check in with herself about whether what he was asking was okay.

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## **2. Understand the bigger picture and your place in it.**

I had a client who wanted to ask for a raise and began to get increasingly tongue-tied and depressed. We found out there was shame underneath. As we worked she realized she had a thought of "What if I get fired?" What came up for her was that she had been underperforming for the last year, and so the shame coming up was a warning that the reality was that she could get fired and it was not a good time to ask for a raise. The shame helped her pause, withdraw and pull away in order to see the bigger picture. Once we discovered her underlying fear, we were able to work on why she was underperforming and the embarrassment that was coming up that caused her to be in a frozen shame cycle. We restored her self-esteem so that she could do effective work consistently and then feel good about asking for a raise because she knew she deserved it.

## **3. Talk to yourself in a kind way, ask yourself "What do I think this is saying about me?" and "How can I not take it so personally?" and maybe get a reality check.**

A couple I was working with were out eating a pizza, and the guy asked, "Are you going to eat that?" pointing to the last piece. She just started screaming, crying and left the room. When we talked about it in the couple's session, she said, "He thinks I'm fat." His mouth dropped open and he said, "I don't think you're fat, I think you're beautiful. I just wanted to eat it if you didn't want it." She had gone into her story that he was thinking she was fat, while he just wanted the pizza. It was a missed communication and painful rupture that caused her shame and his confusion. After realizing this, he was sorry she felt shame, gave her a loving hug and told her how much he loved her body. Both were able to laugh about it, and she was able to look at the big picture and realize it wasn't about her—he just wanted another bite!

## **Coming Back to Your Safe Space**

After reading through these examples, you can see that understanding yourself is very powerful. My hope is that you enjoyed the process and learned more about yourself. It can be extremely helpful to understand what shame



is and how it affects your body, thoughts, actions and relationships. Acknowledge yourself that by doing this you are growing. In the beginning, when you are doing this work with shame, it can feel slightly uncomfortable or even disorganizing. It's important to talk to yourself in a kind way, even give yourself a hug. Look around the room and remind yourself that real growth takes time. It can help to understand a little more about shame as an important step in your life journey. For some people there might be a great relief or a feeling of "Aha! Finally, I understand this mysterious thing!" For others it may be the beginning for further self-discovery that could use some support.

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## PART 4: GETTING CUSTOMIZED SUPPORT TO EXPERIENCE TRANSFORMATION AROUND YOUR REACTIONS TO SHAME

Whether you are a therapist looking for deeper training on healing shame or an individual or couple wanting support on working with shame, there are several ways you can get the help that's right for you, including therapy, consulting and workshops. Some examples are listed below. More details can be found at [www.SheilaRubin.com](http://www.SheilaRubin.com) and [www.HealingShame.com](http://www.HealingShame.com)

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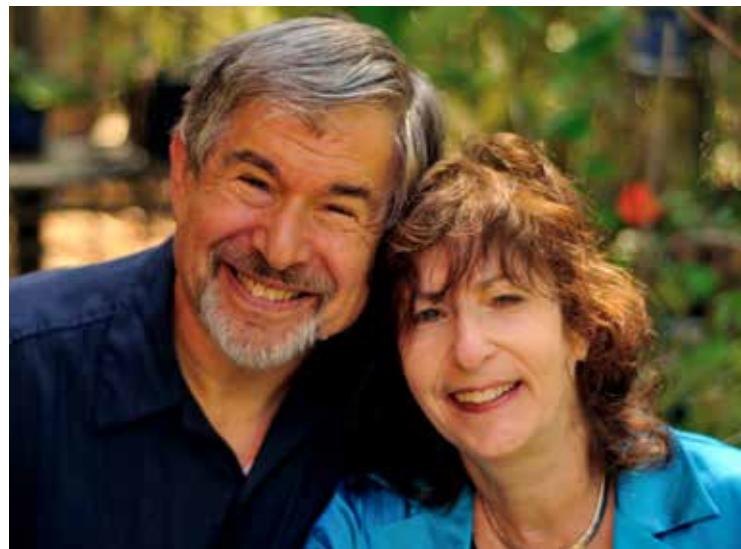
### Support and Training for Therapists and Healing Professionals

Details at [www.healingshame.com/workshops.html](http://www.healingshame.com/workshops.html)

My husband, Bret Lyon, PhD, SEP, BCC, and I are on a mission. Our mission is to serve the community by training therapists and other helping professionals in how to work with shame. The lack of expertise and understanding in working with shame has caused great hardship and pain to many individuals. We are trying to reach and educate as many people as possible. In addition to our **Healing Shame Workshops** for therapists and other helping professionals, we have a strong presence on the internet. We have free webinars and articles on our website, [www.HealingShame.com](http://www.HealingShame.com), as well as an annotated reading list, for anyone interested in learning about shame and how to work with it. We will also soon have a full online seminar.

We lead Healing Shame Workshops for Therapists in many cities in the U.S. and Canada, including New York, Portland, OR, Toronto, Ottawa, Victoria, B.C., and Montreal. We are based in Berkeley, California, where we offer workshops several times a year, as well as a full training program in Healing Shame for therapists and helping professionals. This can lead to certification as a **Healing Shame Practitioner - Lyon/Rubin Method**.

We also offer private consultation in person and via Skype for customized support and feedback to help therapists and healing professionals deepen their practice by learning to work with the emotion of shame in their clients.



*photograph by Lea Delson*



# STRENGTH, RESILIENCE AND HIDDEN SHAME GUIDEBOOK

## HEALING SHAME WORKSHOPS:

- Healing Shame - The Core Workshop
- Sex and Shame
- Melting the Shame Freeze: Using Somatic Techniques to Create Safety and Build Attunement
- Through the Looking Glass: Using Imaginal Resources to Heal Shame
- Healing Shame in Couples
- Giving Back the Shame: Advanced Experiential

These workshops can be taken individually for CE credit (CAMFT Approved CE Provider #134393) or collectively for CE credit and certification in the **Healing Shame - Lyon/Rubin Method**. Private Skype consultation packages are available worldwide.

Call (415) 820-3974 or email [sheila@healingshame.com](mailto:sheila@healingshame.com) to inquire about details, or visit [www.HealingShame.com](http://www.HealingShame.com).

*“Best workshop I attended all year. Essential knowledge for anyone who does any kind of emotionally based psychotherapy. Greatly needed information which will be immediately useful.”*

— Richard Doleman, MFT, Certified EFT Therapist

*“All therapists should attend your workshop. Truly – it was invaluable. Incredibly rich and unforgettable. I learned a tremendous amount and was spinning with excitement. It has already changed my practice. Your accessibility and authenticity made for the most invaluable learning for me. I really cannot thank you enough.”*

— Sara Wicks, LCSW, NY

*“Bret and Sheila provide a clear and helpful roadmap for understanding and healing shame. With extraordinary clarity and wisdom, they illuminate the ways that shame shows up and skillfully guide us to help our clients (and ourselves) move toward a fuller and richer life.”*

— John Amodeo, Ph.D., author of *Love & Betrayal*

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## INDIVIDUAL, COUPLES, AND FAMILY THERAPY

details at [www.SheilaRubin.com](http://www.SheilaRubin.com)

My clients usually come to me because they are in pain or they feel tremendously stuck, depressed, or because they think their partner is crazy. They want to do something different in their life and are not sure what that is. We figure it out together and heal everything from shyness to bullying, trauma, eating disorders and anxiety.

I can help them because even if they have sought support before, more often than not, they didn't work the shame piece underneath everything—that little voice of self doubt. I've created tools and techniques to help clients identify and heal shame.

My therapy sessions are customized to the exact needs of clients and can include a blend of Emotionally Focused Therapy, Accelerated Experiential-Dynamic Psychotherapy, Drama Therapy, Expressive Arts Therapy, Hakomi, Focusing and Somatic Therapy.

I have limited availability for private therapy sessions. Call **(415) 820- 3974** or email me at [sheila@healingshame.com](mailto:sheila@healingshame.com) today to schedule a 15-minute complimentary consultation to see if we are a good fit.



*"Emergence" photo by Sheila Rubin*

# STRENGTH, RESILIENCE AND HIDDEN SHAME GUIDEBOOK

## HEAL GENERATIONS OF SHAME — EXPERIENCE THE JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME

Attend an Embodied Life Story Workshop (CEUs available - CAMFT Approved CE Provider #134393)

details at [www.SheilaRubin.com](http://www.SheilaRubin.com)

As humans, we are natural storytellers. In my work with shame over the years, I've realized there is often a multi-generational transmission of shame. There is a way we unwittingly pass on and take on shame to and from other family members through the history and stories of our families. I've realized the importance of healing familial shame by helping individuals explore the shame that's been passed down over a lifetime and through generations to their own life. It's rooted in thoughts like "What's wrong with me?" and "Why can't I get that right?"

Building an empowered narrative and telling your story reduces shame, shyness and social anxiety. This unique process allows you to evoke your deeper Life Story for healing, creativity, confidence and self expression. The Embodied Life Story Process teaches you to be a powerful storyteller and to share your life in a way that is riveting and authentic.



photographs by Lea Delson

Join me on a 10-week journey or weekend workshop that supports and unfolds your creative process through a unique blend of improvisation, embodied storytelling, writing, guided visualization, dreamwork, Drama Therapy, somatic exercises, and the 7 Levels of Witnessing. You'll explore family history, dreams, and memories, like times you've wanted to say "No" in your life. You'll connect with moments of the past to create a different outcome. This is a counter-shaming process, where you'll learn how to rewrite your internal narrative and experience freedom, power, and energy for what's possible in your life.

**All Levels Are Welcome, Whether You Are A Returning Participant Or Doing It For The First Time. Shy People Are Encouraged.**

If you are a therapist, you will learn how to work with individuals, groups and their stories to develop a coherent embodied narrative with your clients. 20 CEUs Available - CAMFT Approved CE Provider #134393.

Call **(415) 820-3974** or email [sheila@healingshame.com](mailto:sheila@healingshame.com) today for information on dates and details.

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## ABOUT SHEILA RUBIN

**Sheila Rubin**, a master therapist with over 30 years of experience, is an internationally sought-after keynote speaker, author, teacher and director. Sheila is the therapist individuals, couples, and other therapists come to for support after they've tried everyone else. She's helped thousands of people and saved hundreds of relationships.

Through her private therapy sessions, therapist training programs, **Embodied Life Story** workshops and **Healing Shame** workshops, she helps people from all walks of life heal their self doubt, discover their creativity, and access their true voice.

Sheila has delivered talks, presentations, and workshops across the country and has spoken at conferences around the world, from Canada to Romania. She is a Board Certified Trainer through NADTA and adjunct faculty at John F. Kennedy University's Somatic

Psychology Department. Her expertise, teaching, and writing contributions have been featured in numerous publications, including six books and the internationally published book *The Self In Performance*.

Sheila is a leading authority on Healing Shame. She developed **Healing Shame Therapy** work over the last two decades and is the co-creator of **Healing Shame** workshops. She is also the creator of the **Embodied Life Story Workshops**, a theater for shy people and form of drama therapy she established 20 years ago, which weaves writing, Jungian dreamwork, imagination, and improvisation into embodied storytelling. She has directed over 25 full-length productions and hundreds of Embodied Life Stories Performances.

Sheila has offices in San Francisco and Berkeley. When she's not transforming lives, you can find her hiking, swimming, dancing, and painting.

Call **(415) 820-3974** or email **sheila@healingshame.com** today to schedule private therapy sessions, deepen your therapy practice with private consulting, or register for a workshop.



*photograph by Lea Delson*