

Chapter 3.6 Shame and Guilt

This chapter is about the shame and guilt that sexual and physical abuse victims experience and how these feelings keep a victim from seeking help. Billy at first denied the physical abuse; however, even after he was able to talk about it, he still denied the sexual abuse. A major step in his recovery was a decision to tell all, which was made 24 years after the abuse occurred.

Victims of sexual and/or physical abuse feel shame and guilt about being a victim. This is pervasive and it is difficult to explain. Occasionally a child who does tell about sexual abuse will be admonished, "Why did you make up such a terrible lie? Shame on you." Often the reporting of sexual abuse can result in breakup of the family, and the victim can feel guilty for having caused that.

I think that society does tend to look down on sexual abuse victims. There are some cultures in which, when a woman's virginity has been violated before marriage even by rape, the family is disgraced and the woman is punished. When a man is raped, that is often viewed as a violation of his manhood. Victims are reluctant to tell their story.

Like many victims, Billy felt shame and guilt over having been physically and sexually abused. After Dahmer's arrest, Billy was interviewed by the press. His first reaction was to deny that anything unusual had happened. When I saw him in 1994, he admitted to the physical abuse, but when I asked him if there had been any sexual abuse, Billy replied, "No, if he had tried that I would have killed him." In 2004, a TV producer suggested doing a documentary film of his experience with Dahmer. Billy decided that this would be a step in getting his life back and decided to tell everything. Once he decided this, he was impatient for his story to get out. He was pleased and relieved when the following story was printed in the local paper.

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Victim of serial killer's abuse urges others to seek help early

"People should not be ashamed if they have been abused. It's not their fault, and they should get help as soon as possible." - Billy Joe Capshaw

BY JOHN LOVETT The Sentinel-Record

Physical abuse at the hands of a serial killer left a Hot Springs man

with years of panic attacks, agoraphobia, paranoia and nightmares. Now, he realizes his recovery would have been easier had he gotten help sooner. "People should not be ashamed if they have been abused," said Billy Joe Capshaw. "It's not their fault, and they should get help as soon as possible. There are a lot of new techniques they can use to help." Capshaw's tormentor, during a stint in the Army, was none other than serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer. The effects of more common domestic abuse – from rape and incest to spousal abuse – can also be extremely debilitating, said Dr. Gene Watermann of Community Counseling Services. These forms of abuse can lead to the same symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, from which Capshaw has suffered. Watermann became Capshaw's therapist at CCS in 1992 and continues to see him once a week. The therapy he used on Capshaw is called neurolinguistic programming, a technique developed by a linguist and a computer programmer. Waterman said he has had to spend more time with Capshaw than other victims of abuse, and Capshaw is adamant about its success. Capshaw provided documentation that he and Dahmer were roommates in the Army from 1980 to 1981, including a letter from their former platoon squad leader. It affirms Capshaw and Dahmer were assigned as medics to the 2 nd Battalion, 68 th Armor of the 8 th Infantry Division at Baumholder, Germany. Their room was at H.D. Smith Barracks. March 10, 1996, he wrote in a letter to the Veteran's Affairs Office, "I can state without hesitation that the actions of Pvt. Dahmer affected the performance and outcome of Pvt. Capshaw's short-lived military career."

Capshaw's medical evaluations were also provided to the newspaper in preparation for this article. Because of the repeated beatings by Dahmer during his time in the military, Capshaw receives disability income from the Army. During the time of his abuse, Capshaw made repeated attempts to alert his supervisors of what was going on. He wrote letters home, but they never got there, he says, possibly because Dahmer was intercepting the letters. Capshaw joined the Army when he was 17, an eighth grade dropout from a broken home. His father left when he was 2 and came back when he was 16. Capshaw got his GED and joined the Army to help take care of his family. One of his five sisters suffered from a heart problem, and Capshaw sent money home for treatment. The checks stopped after only a couple of months though, and it is still a mystery to him why that happened. "My whole family looked for me for two years and couldn't find me. At one point, I was even listed AWOL," Capshaw said. It took a year before the authorities finally came around to taking Capshaw's complaints of abuse seriously. He was spending most of his money to stay in motels off base, or crashing in the dorm rooms of

neighbors. Like many of his later victims, Dahmer used tranquilizers to incapacitate Capshaw. After tying him up, he would beat him with a steel slat used in Army bunk beds. "When I screamed, he would beat harder, so I learned not to scream," Capshaw said. His crooked fingers are grim reminders of the beatings. "They thought it was a big joke," Capshaw said. "I'd break windows to get out, but they would throw me back in the room with him." The scenario is eerily familiar to the one recounted in the 2002 movie "Dahmer," which shows one of Dahmer's drugged victims escaping and finding the police, only to be convinced by Dahmer to let him take the boy back home with him. "Jeff Dahmer was quiet, but very charismatic. He had them all fooled that he was taking care of me ... He was taking care of me all right," Capshaw said. By the time Dahmer was arrested in Milwaukee, Wisc., July 22, 1991, he had gruesomely killed at least 17 men and practiced unspeakable acts, namely cannibalism and necrophilia. Dahmer killed his first victim in 1978 near Bath, Ohio, not long after graduating high school. The Army gave a dishonorable discharge to Dahmer for alcoholism in 1981, at the same time Capshaw was released on a medical discharge. Capshaw said he was taken to "the field" one day, and Dahmer was gone when he got back. The abuse had ended, but Capshaw's pain would continue. He lost the ability to hold a steady job and a relationship. Having custody of his son, Vernon, is the one reason he did not take his own life. Mentally and physically scarred from the trauma, Capshaw began to drink heavily. At the time of Dahmer's final arrest in 1991 (he was arrested three other times for public drunkenness, lewd conduct and child molestation) Capshaw was serving six months of a one-year sentence for involuntary manslaughter. He had passed out drunk at a friend's house. The teenage step-daughter of the friend took his car and subsequently was involved in a fatal car accident. Three weeks later, that friend was killed in a motorcycle accident. While serving his sentence at the Garland County Detention Center, Capshaw was interviewed by several news outlets. "I don't know how they found me," Capshaw said on the lead that brought the press to him in 1991. "Jeff made a comment I guess ... I was working at the landfill and they called me in. It happened real fast. I was at a podium. I didn't know what to say." After commenting that Dahmer was "just an average guy" and that he didn't see Dahmer as someone who could do the things he did, Capshaw hinted at what really happened. At the end of the press conference, Capshaw said Dahmer had been stalking him and would attack him when he was drunk. Waterman said people who have been abused, especially sexually abused, are often ashamed and do not want to admit it. "I don't think it was repressed," Waterman said of Capshaw's initial denial of Dahmer's actions. "The male ego is just different. Males

generally just don't like to admit that they were abused. Like a lot of victims, they feel ashamed." Capshaw's bizarre story has been documented by a local filmmaker, but poor communication and disagreements between Capshaw and the filmmaker indicate an uncertain release.

He received money for doing interviews with the media, and he said that he felt guilty when he had that money; he gave it away to his siblings. He has given money or a vehicle to a person who is down on his luck and in desperate straits. He feels better when he does this.

Sometimes there is a logical reason for guilt and shame when someone has knowingly and willingly violated standards of behavior. However, people feel guilty when they have been subjected to violence and abuse. I think there is a largely unconscious bias against people who "allow" themselves to be victimized. Several men upon hearing Billy's story have responded with, "Well, I never would have let this happen to me." Many victims feel humiliated when they are in a helpless position. I have not been able to change a person's guilt or shame through logic or reasoning. I helped Billy change guilt feelings going back to early childhood, which was discussed in Chapter 3.8 Creating an alternate past Chapter 3.2 Fast phobia cure Chapter 3.8 Creation of an Alternate Past. In Chapter 3.2 Fast Phobia Cure I was able to have him experience the feelings of control and the feelings of sexual pleasure to replace some of the guilt feelings.

Individuals often feel guilty because they didn't know at the time what they know now. Billy felt guilty that he had not killed Dahmer. He had no way of knowing then, how many lives would have been saved, if he had killed him. A woman felt that she was at fault in her husband's death, because if she had not been late, then he would have left earlier, and would not have had the fatal accident. Why do so many people feel guilty following a catastrophic event over which they were in no way responsible? I think we all retain some of our childhood belief in magic. When there is a death or accident or the house burns down, we don't want to accept it, and we begin to think magically about how it could have been different. We think of how we could have acted differently, so that it would not have happened. Then we begin to mentally picture that the death or the accident did not occur, and then we feel guilty because it did.

Often guilt occurs when two standards of behavior are in conflict, and whatever is decided, one standard or the other is violated. A simple example would be that you're on the phone with someone who wants to talk and you have to leave now to be on time for an appointment. You believe in being polite and in being on time. You have to violate one standard or the other. Billy had seriously considered killing Dahmer when he was passed out drunk and trying to make it look like an accidental fall. However, he doubted if he could get away with it, and the consequence would have been that he would have spent his life in prison in

Germany, never seeing his family again.

The bridging over procedure is also described in Chapter 3.12 and was used to deal with this. Click on Chapter 3.12 Resentment

Emotional Management Suggestions

If guilt is because you knowingly violated a standard of behavior, then you should plan how to uphold your standards in the future. If someone pushed your button and you responded automatically, go to Chapter #1. If it was related to anger or resentment, I refer you to those chapters.

The procedure I use most frequently in changing guilt that is not reasonable or logical is that of “bridging over” which is also described in Chapter 12. In this procedure you make two mental images and become aware of the differences between the two images. Then you change the image that makes you feel guilty to be like the image that doesn’t make you feel guilty.

- . 1. Feel the guilt and then be aware of the mental image that produces that guilt. Where do you see it? How far away is it? Is it in the center or up or down or to the right or the left? How big is the image? Are the persons life-sized? Is it a movie or a still picture; is it in color or black and white? This is picture #.1
- . 2. Think of an analogous situation in which you don’t feel guilty. For the analogous situation of feeling guilty because there were conflicting standards of behavior, I use the example of being on the phone and the person doesn’t want to end the conversation, and you need to leave to make an appointment. Hopefully, you didn’t feel guilty when you had to hang up. If you are feeling guilty without any logical reason because you did or didn’t do something which would have prevented a tragedy, then remember a situation in which had you acted on hindsight and had done something differently, then some undesirable event would not have occurred. For example, you suggested going to a restaurant and your whole family came down with food poisoning, and you didn’t feel guilty about suggesting that restaurant. As with picture #1 become aware of where you see the image, etc.
- . 3. Then notice the differences between the two mental images. Usually distance, location and size are the most important.
- . 4. Then make picture #1 to be like picture #2. If you have any difficulty moving or changing the picture, ask yourself if there is any part of you that objects in anyway to the changes.

Then after a few minutes, test your results by making the image that formerly resulted in your feeling guilty. The guilty feeling should be gone or significantly reduced in intensity.