

## Terms Resource Sheet

<b>Shame</b>	<b>Guilt</b>
Feeling of being inherently bad, wrong or unredeemable because of <i>who you are</i> .	Feeling of being culpable or responsible for <i>something one has done</i> and feels is wrong.
White privilege shame looks like... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feeling bad about yourself because you are uncomfortable in a diverse setting and have trouble relating to people</li> <li>• feeling like you're not who you should be, that you're not good enough (and maybe will never be good enough) because of your whiteness and all it brings with it</li> </ul>	White guilt can look like... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feeling guilty for not saying something when someone says a racist joke</li> <li>• feeling bad about being treated well because you don't get judged regularly based on negative stereotypes</li> <li>• feeling guilty for having access to material resources (which is often linked directly to a history of racism)</li> </ul>

### Privilege Shame

“So often I find that our feelings of unearned privilege kill empathy. By unearned privilege I mean the privileges afforded us simply because we are white or straight or members of certain groups. We get stuck in what I call **privilege shame**. This is very different from privilege guilt (or white guilt). It's appropriate to feel guilt over forwarding a racist e-mail or telling a hurtful joke. Guilt can motivate change. Guilt helps us reconcile our choices with our values...

Shame doesn't help. If we feel shamed because we don't know how to relate to someone who is different or connect with someone who faces unfair discrimination, we get stuck. If we think, 'I'm a bad person because I can't relate to her' or 'I'm a bad person because I have this and these people don't' – we get paralyzed. For me, I've come to a place in my life where unlearning prejudice is more important than avoiding situations where I might be accused of saying or doing the wrong thing. I've learned that it is better for me to accept the fact that I struggle with many of the same learned biases that other people do. This has allowed me to spend my energy unlearning and changing my prejudices rather than proving that I don't have any.” – Brené Brown

### Shame Kills Empathy

“When we are honest about our struggles, we are much less likely to get stuck in shame. **This is critical because shame diminishes our capacity to practice empathy.** Ultimately, feeling shame about privilege actually perpetuates racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ageism, etc. I don't have to know “exactly how you feel” – I just have to touch a part of my life that opens me up to hearing your experience. If I can touch that place, I stay out of judgment and I can reach out with empathy. This is where both personal and social healing can begin.” – Brené Brown

### Responses to Shame

Moving Away	Moving Toward	Moving Against
Disconnecting through...	Seeking approval through...	Shaming others through...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Withdrawing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appeasing others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggression</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Silencing ourselves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trying too hard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Condescension</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping secrets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needing validation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competitiveness</li> </ul>
"I feel so uncomfortable being white. It's just awful."	"Please help me. I really want to do this right!"	"A good ally wouldn't have done that."
"Never mind. Just forget I said anything."	"Did you see me at that march this weekend? It felt so important for me to be there."	"How can you think that?"

### Disconnected Bystanders and Guilt

Not all white people experience shame. It's not required. In fact, avoiding shame altogether would be a good thing. Those who have access to supportive role models who exemplify healthy racial identity often delve into race issues without ever feeling shame. What requires reflection, however, is the degree to which people avoid feeling shame (and guilt) by dissociating themselves from race altogether. It's essential that we explore to what degree we are bystanders to injustice, unable to *feel* because of the following defense mechanisms:

1. Distancing ourselves from racism and its damage
2. Failing to recognize our relationship to racism
3. Focusing on our personal experience, longings, and/or our salvation
4. Closing down our feelings and focusing on intellectual thoughts in the face of suffering
5. Normalizing violence

If we look at ourselves honestly, we might be able to distinguish the degree to which our reactions are reflective of disconnection, immobilizing, or useful expressions of guilt.

Disconnection Response	Immobilizing Guilt Response	Useful Guilt Response
<i>"You can't make me feel guilty about that. Her reaction had nothing to do with me."</i>	<i>"I don't want to risk making that mistake again, so I will be super cautious if I talk to her in the future."</i>	<i>"I feel bad about making that mistake and offending her. I don't understand though. I need to learn why what I said was offensive."</i>
<i>"If you really think about it, this issue has affected people across the globe for thousands of years."</i>	<i>"I'm complicit with systemic injustice no matter what I do, and nothing I do is going to help anyway."</i>	<i>"It bothers me so much that I'm complicit with systemic injustice that I have to take action and do something."</i>

### References:

Brené Brown, *I Thought It Was Just Me (But It Isn't)* --- Guilt and Shame

M. Watkins & H. Shulman, *Toward Psychologies of Liberation* --- Disconnected Bystanders