

SHAME: How Adults Unintentionally Shame Students

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SPEAKERS

Seth Perler

S Seth Perler 00:00
Hey, what is up students? Parents and teachers, you'll want to watch this. But students, I'm making this one for you. My name is Seth Perler. I'm an executive function coach based in Maui and I help struggling students navigate this thing called education so that you can have good life now and have a good future, all those sorts of things. What's up students? I got a message for you today. And what I'm going to talk to you about today is called 'Shame.' Shame. Now some of you might not even think about the word shame ever. You might think, "Why would this even matter to me, Seth? Who cares about this? This doesn't impact me." And the thing is that shame, this thing called shame, can be what's called corrosive. Something that is corrosive eats at something over a long period of time. Something that's corrosive can make metal rustic, it can corrode it. And shame can be corrosive on us humans. On me, on your parents, on you, on your teachers, on all humans, shame, this thing called shame can be corrosive.

S Seth Perler 00:49
Why am I telling you this? Because the students that I work with often experience shame from adults. The adults, society, culture, parents, teachers, subcultures, they're not trying to shame you, usually. Usually it's very what's called 'unconscious', they don't even know that they're doing it. So what sort of students experienced this shame, well the ones that I

work with, what is that? Well, the students that I work with, if you're watching this, you might be able to relate to this. This is the type of student that I was, this is the type of student that I work with day in and day out, usually high school and college students, sometimes even elementary students. But the students that I work with are what's called resistant. So there's this thing called executive function, our brain helps us to get things done, to execute. To get our schoolwork done, to do things like that. Well the students that I work with don't get a lot of schoolwork done. They struggle with this stuff. So what do they resist? They resist doing homework, they resist their responsibilities or chores or things like that. Sometimes they resist being honest with their parents, or forthcoming with people about what's going on. They resist using planners, they resist getting organized, organizing things, cleaning things, checking their portals, dealing with emails in their inbox, they might resist reading, but they really resist a lot of things related to school. They don't want to do it. And the things that we say, that I say, when it comes to school, or that I used to say when I was a student, and that really got me in trouble.

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Seth Perler 02:17

But what I used to say is, "I don't feel like it. I got this homework to do. I don't feel like it. It's too overwhelming. Why do I have to do this? This is stupid. Why should I care about such and such topic? I'm never going to use this." And then I might say to my parents, "Why don't you just trust me? Get off my back. I'll do it later. Leave me alone. I've got this. I promise. I stopped being so annoying. I know. I turned it in. I swear I turned it in. I promise I turned it in. I remember turning it in. You can ask the teacher if I turned it in!" Well, actually, I wouldn't want them to even talk to the teacher. But then it turns out, "I didn't turn it in. I found it in the bottom of my backpack." And I might say, you know, blame the teacher on things, say the teacher lost it. Anyhow, all of these things that I would say were designed for me to resist. To be resistant. To resist doing my schoolwork and stuff like that. Well, that can be fine, except that the more I get out of school, the reality is, and of course there are teachers that weren't my favorite teachers or subjects I didn't like, but the more I got out of my education, the more opportunities I had in life.

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So what is this about any way? I'm talking about shame. Shame, shame. What do these things have to do with shame? Well, when you struggle with these things, when you are resistant to these things, the adults in our lives, make stories to explain why you're resistant. And those stories might come at you and tell you the following messages. The stories that adults say might convey to you the following messages. These were messages that I heard as a young person, and the messages were things like this: "Seth, you're lazy, you're unmotivated. Just motivate yourself. You're not trying hard enough. You need to try

harder. You're just undisciplined. You don't seem to care about school, why don't you care?" And I felt very misunderstood with those messages. So those messages tend to shame us. They shame us. They don't help us to change. They just feel bad. Because the message is, "I'm just choosing to be lazy. There's something wrong with me. I'm broken. I'm just unmotivated. I'm just undisciplined. I just don't try hard enough. I just don't care." And those things are misunderstandings. They don't understand the big picture.

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Seth Perler 04:29

Well, what's the problem with that when it comes to shame? You know, you might experience these things. Well, what's the problem with those messages if you're feeling those messages coming to you? The problem with those messages that I want to really convey to you is this. You and I, we can do what's called 'internalize' these messages. We can internalize these messages. What does that mean? Well, when we hear a message like "You're lazy, you're unmotivated. You don't try hard enough," we can internalize it, and think bad things about us like, "I'm bad. I'm a bad person. I'm not worthy, I'm not good enough. There's something wrong with me, I'm broken. I'm not smart, I'm stupid, I'm dumb, I just can't do anything right." And so it starts with the messages, the shaming messages, then we can internalize the shame and turn it against us, ourselves. And when we internalize those shaming messages, we start to say things like, "It's too hard and I can't do this and I give up."

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Seth Perler 05:30

I don't want you to ever give up. Sorry, "Alexa off," I'd set a timer. I don't want you to ever give up on yourself or the things. But the shame can be really what's called 'daunting'. It can feel big and heavy, and it can be unmotivating to try harder when it feels like we've tried so hard, and we're not getting anywhere. And then we're getting these messages that we need to even try harder. And we think that anything we do is not good enough. So it can be very daunting. Don't give up. NEGU. N-E-G-U. Never, Ever Give Up. So what do we do about it, though? We don't just think, "Oh, I don't want to have that shame feeling, I just decide it's not there anymore." That's called stuffing your feelings, and stuffing your feelings is never healthy. We find unhealthy ways to stuff our feelings and that doesn't work. But what we can do is what's called our own deep inner work. And this is where I'm talking to parents and teachers too. If there are parents and teachers watching, so students some of the parents and teachers are watching this, what I'm hoping is that they're going to really hear this message. So sometimes parents and teachers do this and they don't intend to. They were a student, a kid just like you. They were right where you're at, but they are not anymore. As we become grownups, we change and we forget what it was like. But when adults, and when you, and when I do the following thing it can help.

When we do our own deep inner work. What does that mean?

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Seth Perler 06:53

If you do your own deep inner work, meaning look at what makes you tick, what your thoughts are all about. Your emotions, look at yourself. Really be compassionate and empathetic with other people. When we learn to do our own deep inner work and work on ourselves, do what's called self-development, we have the opportunity to respond differently in situations rather than be what's called 'reactive'. So reactive means that when we feel shamed, we just react. "I can't do it. I'm stupid, this is stupid. I hate this. Get off my back, leave me alone. I'm just lazy, I'm just a failure." When we react, we just do it instantly and there's not a lot of thought. But when we respond, when we do our work on ourselves and work on who we are, work on journaling, or getting a counselor, or reading books to develop ourselves, or things like this. When we work on ourselves and do our own deep inner work to get the truth about ourselves, we can respond rather than react. We can respond what's called 'consciously' or with 'intention,' or mindfully. So we can respond with awareness rather than blinders on. We can respond with self awareness so that we can have better responses for ourselves. But also our responses help us make more of an impact in the world. Because you, literally, you are the future. You are either going to contribute to the future of this world and making it a better place, every day we have an opportunity to do that, or not.

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Seth Perler 08:28

You have a lot of power as a human being to do whatever you want. So the things that matter to you, and that you're interested in, and passionate about, or curious about, or even the things that you're angry about, that tells you what your passions are. Because if you're angry, for example, about how animals are treated, or climate change, or certain things, that actually can tell you something you're passionate about. But the more we can do our deep inner work, the more we can respond rather than react. Which means the more you can have a better life for yourself, and the more of an impact you get to make in your life.

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Seth Perler 09:03

Again, my name is Seth Perler. I'm an executive function coach, I help struggling students navigate this thing called education so that you can have a better life now, and a better future. I wish you the best this year. I hope it's filled with peace and joy. I hope that any shame that you experience you can move through and learn from and not internalize and do your own deep inner work to see how crazy awesome you are and how much you

matter. Take care. Oh, all the things. If you like what I'm doing, share it right now; leave a comment below. What do you think of this video? What was one thought that came into your head while you're listening to this? Give it a like and the thumbs up and stuff like that. If you like what I'm doing, please support my work. Take care.