



# Shame: Developmental, Cultural, and Clinical Realms

*Salman Akhtar*

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A late-comer to psychoanalytic theorizing, 'shame' results from a disjunction between the ego and the ego-ideal. A complex psychosocial experience, it is comprised of a painful exposure of one's vulnerable aspects, rupture of self-continuity, and a sense of isolation. The figure-ground harmony of 'going-on-being' is disrupted and the individual feels alone and watched by others. Shame pushes for hiding and thus intensifies the experience of isolation. Seeking to advance clinicians' empathy and therapeutic skills in this realm, in this book ten distinguished analysts discuss shame from various perspectives. These include its developmental substrate, its vicissitudes during adolescence, and its manifestations in the course of aging and infirmity. The authors discuss shame from a cross-cultural viewpoint and note how shame-driven search for power and glory can turn malignant and societally destructive. They also address shamelessness, the link between shame and laziness, and the shame that underlies the inability to apologize. They devote attention to shame in the transference-countertransference axis and highlight the technical challenges in dealing with shame in clinical encounters.

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