

Shame

a game of ritual humiliation

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

– Genesis 3:7 (New International Version)

Inspiration & Ingredients

This is fundamentally a game about how the moral choices we make are often more about social expectations than personal reflection. In the “2013 theme” picture, I see a blind man (or a man missing a big chunk of his head or a man whose head is indistinguishable from the background, all of these possibilities work) who is faced with a choice (the arrows) between distinguishing himself (“up”) and degrading himself (“down”). This mirrors the “yes” and “no” structure of the game and the central theme of shame.

My idea to make a game about shame was inspired by the picture of the apple with the serpentine creature and picture of the shirt (tunic?). When I saw these pictures, I thought almost immediately of the myth of Adam and Even in the Garden of Eden and the moment when, after eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they realize that they are naked and feel ashamed for the first time.

The game was also inspired by the drinking game “Never Have I Ever” and, of course, strip poker.

Shame is a simple game about humiliation. It's a short, cheap game that requires very little to play besides the clothes on your back. (Psychological costs may vary.)

What You'll Need:

- *People willing to play.* Make sure that they know exactly what they are getting into.
- *Extra clothes.* Hats and jackets and other items that can worn over each player's current clothes are best.
- *Red, Green, and Yellow tokens.* It doesn't matter what you use, but make sure you have enough for each player to get one token of each color.

The Conversation

Before the game begins, the players should have a conversation about their values. Talk about the beliefs that you share. It doesn't matter what these beliefs are, so long as they are shared by all of the players. They could be traditional virtues, like modesty and chastity, or they could be modern social ideals, like inclusiveness and tolerance, or they could be more pragmatic or materialistic standards, like hard work and self-discipline. The important thing is that the group settle on a few broad ideas that they believe are right. You don't need absolute consensus, or a set of perfect principles, just a few big, vague ideas to inspire your questions once the game begins. Don't let this go on for too long. Try to keep the conversation under half an hour.

Preparation

Each player should begin the game wearing the same number of articles of clothing. As a group, pick a number of articles of clothing, taking into consideration how long you would like the game to last. Then each player should dress up (using the extra clothes) or dress down until they are wearing that many articles of clothing.

Give each player one green token, one yellow token, and one red token.

All players should sit around a table or in a circle.

The Game

1. One player should volunteer to ask the first question. That player should target another player—it can be any other player—and ask them a question. The question should begin with “Have you ever ...” and conclude with an action. It should be a simple “yes” or “no” question about something the player might have done. The question must be tied to at least one of the moral ideals your group agreed on at the beginning of the game.

- Examples: If your group decided sexual chastity was important, you might ask, “Have you ever masturbated in a public place?” If your group felt that it was important to build a more inclusive, accepting society, you could ask, “Have you ever used the word 'faggot' in a derogatory way?”

2. The player being questioned should answer “yes” or “no.” Answer honestly. The game doesn't work if you lie. If the player answers “no,” it's time for the next player to ask a question. If the player answers “yes,” they must remove one article of clothing, or use one of their tokens.

3. If the player chooses to turn in a token instead of removing an article of clothing, they must offer an excuse for their behavior. This excuse can be convincing or it can be flimsy, but it must directly address the behavior that they have just admitted to. If they turn in their **green token**, they must begin their excuse with “Everyone else was” If they turn in their **yellow token**, they must begin with “I had no choice” If they turn in their **red token**, they must begin with “I was forced to” *Once a token has been used, that player cannot use the same token again.* Once a player has used all their tokens, they have no choice but to remove an article of clothing.

4. Once the question has been asked and answered, play passes to the player to the right of the person who just asked a question. It's that player's turn to ask a question. They can pick anyone at the table to interrogate, and the question is asked and answered just as it was in the steps above.

5. Continue asking and answering questions until one player is completely naked. Once someone has been fully undressed, move on to the shaming, described below.

Shaming

Once one player is naked, it's time for the humiliation to begin. That player must stand up, facing the other players with their feet a few inches apart, and place their hands behind their head with their fingers intertwined, so that they can not use their limbs to cover themselves.

Now each player has the opportunity to ask one final question of the person being shamed. Going clockwise from player to player, each player interrogates the naked player, beginning their with "Tell me about" You can ask the player to tell you about anything you wish, but it should be designed to make them embarrassed or uncomfortable.

- Examples: "Tell me about your first sexual experience," "tell me about you opinions on same sex marriage," "tell me about that bruise on the inside of your thigh."

Once everyone has had a chance to interrogate the naked player, the game is over. Put your clothes back on. Talk about the game you just played. Or don't. Yeah, it's probably better if you don't.