



# It's time to talk about shame

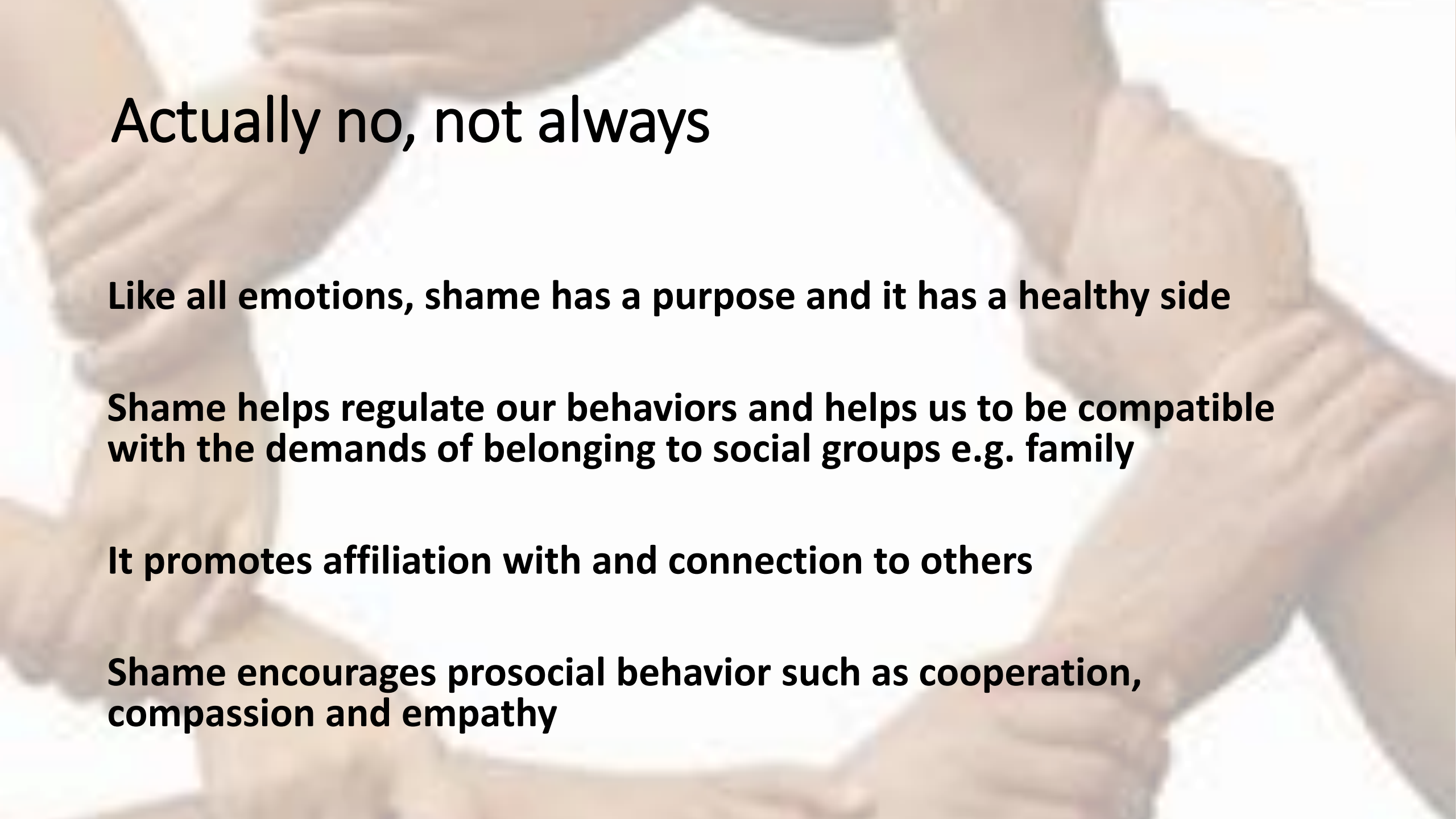
The impact on parenting

# What is shame?

“A painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by consciousness of wrong or foolish behavior, a loss of respect, esteem or honour.”

Oxford English Dictionary

**Is shame a ‘bad’ emotion?’**



# Actually no, not always

**Like all emotions, shame has a purpose and it has a healthy side**

**Shame helps regulate our behaviors and helps us to be compatible with the demands of belonging to social groups e.g. family**

**It promotes affiliation with and connection to others**

**Shame encourages prosocial behavior such as cooperation, compassion and empathy**

# Healthy shame can serve as a moral compass

It helps us recognize when we have over-stepped a social or moral boundary, learn from it, and modify our behavior – shame can right-size us

There are probably times when each of us have felt guilty or embarrassed about something we have done

We understand we have done something unacceptable, it feels uncomfortable, and we may feel the need to apologize for what we did

**This healthy side of shame helps fuel our internal morals and ethics**

# So when does shame become unhealthy?

- We know what other emotions – anger, sadness, fear, happiness – look and feel like, and we even have emojis for them these days
- Shame, however, is difficult to recognize and name precisely because it tends to be hidden, not least from ourselves
- The defense against shame is to hide it, to mask it, to cover it up, and we do it so well, we hide it from ourselves
- Shame might be a faceless, emoji-less emotion but it is also the most corrosive and the driving force behind a host of other emotions

**To answer the question, shame becomes unhealthy when it is hidden**

# The ramifications of unhealthy shame



## Becomes central to core identity

- I am ashamed of *who* I am
- I am bad
- I am a failure
- I need to apologize for *who* I am, entirely

## Can become destructive and corrosive

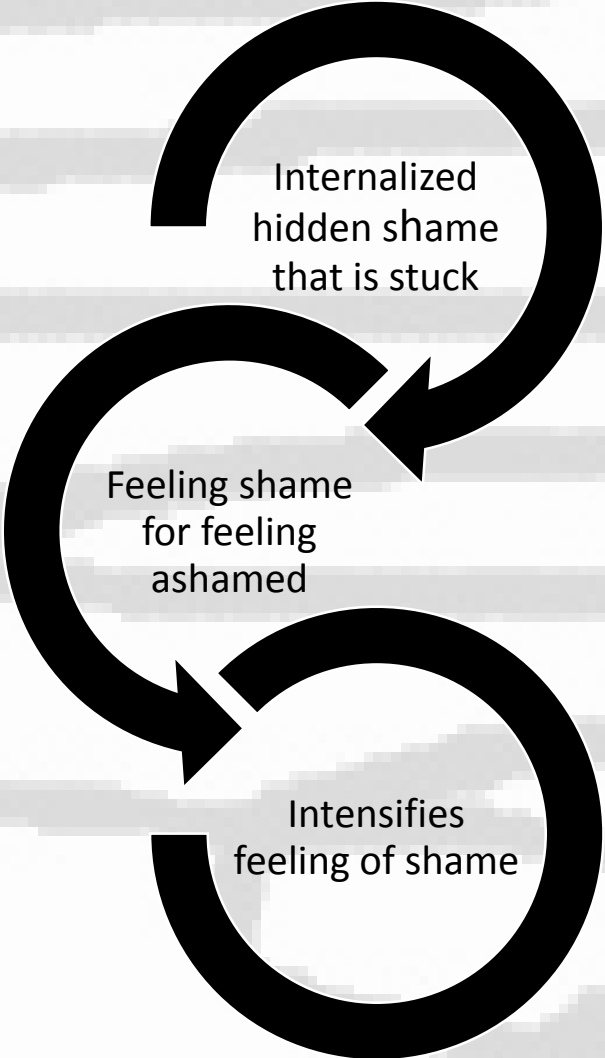
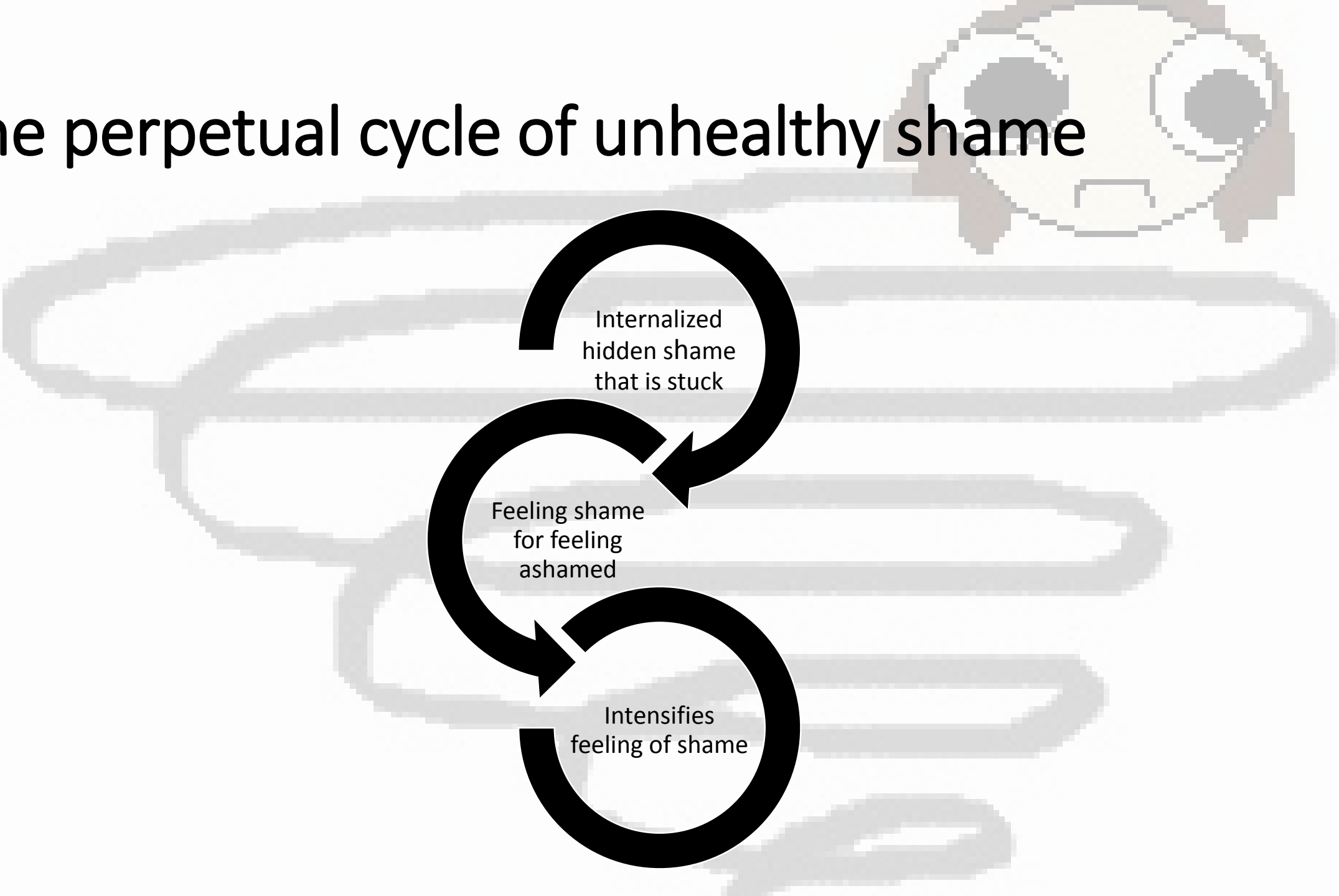
- Results in negative self-belief
- Renders individual psychologically and emotionally fragile – withdrawn, isolate, shut down
- Hurt people, hurt people
- Severs connection to self and others
- Inflict psychological and emotional damage to self and others
- Corrodes social bonding
- Project anger and aggression on to others

**Shame paralyzes the individual**

**Shame becomes internalized**



# The perpetual cycle of unhealthy shame



# Guilt Vs. Shame

## Guilt

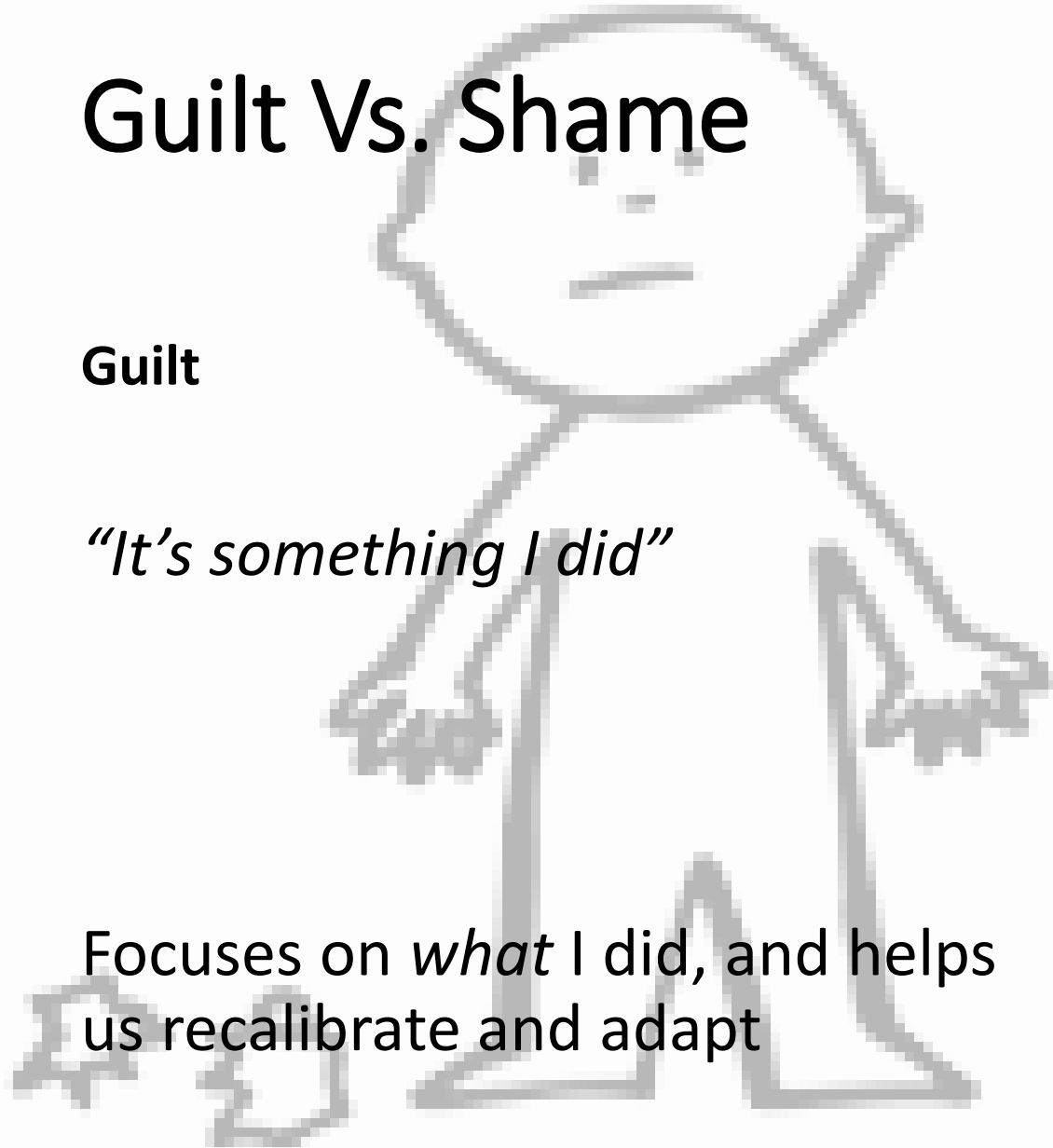
*"It's something I did"*

Focuses on *what* I did, and helps us recalibrate and adapt

## Shame

*"I'm ashamed of who I am"*

Focuses on *who* I am and cements negative core self belief



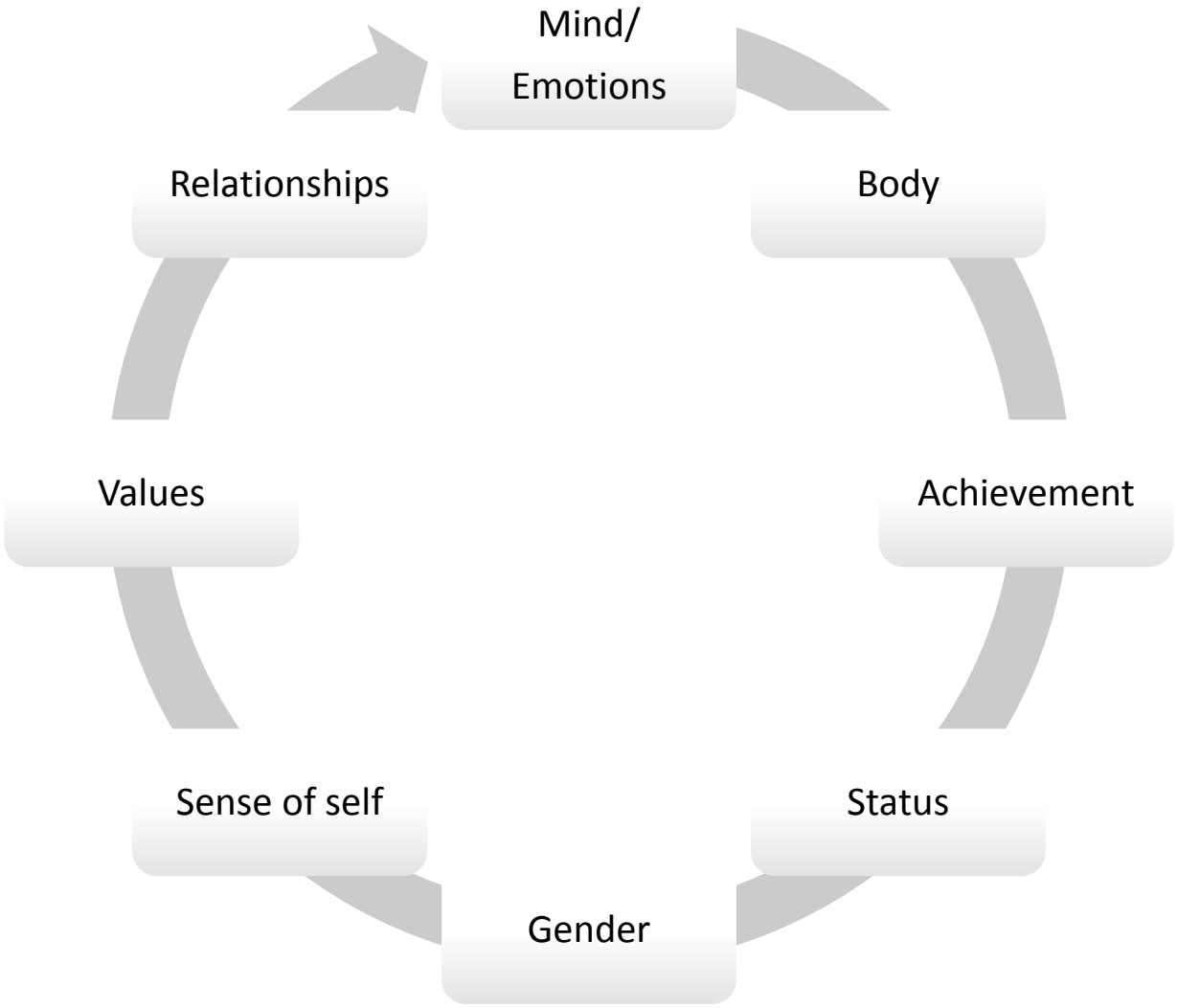


# So what has this got to do with parenting?

- It is critical we acknowledge the unhealthy shame we carry and bring it into our awareness, otherwise it will likely infect our parenting
- Not only will this aspect of shame have an impact on us personally, and on our relationships with significant others, it will likely permeate down to our children and grandchildren
- For example, many people tend to equate vulnerability with shame and it is not hard to see how this could play out in parenting

**What might be some sources of our unhealthy shame?**

# Some of the sources of unhealthy shame



# Health and wellbeing of the mind and emotions

**Mental health**

**Mental  
capacity**

**Mental ability**

**Learning  
difficulties**

**Dyslexia**

**Dyspraxia**

**Loss of emotional  
control**

**Emotionally unavailable**

**Depression**

**Anxiety**

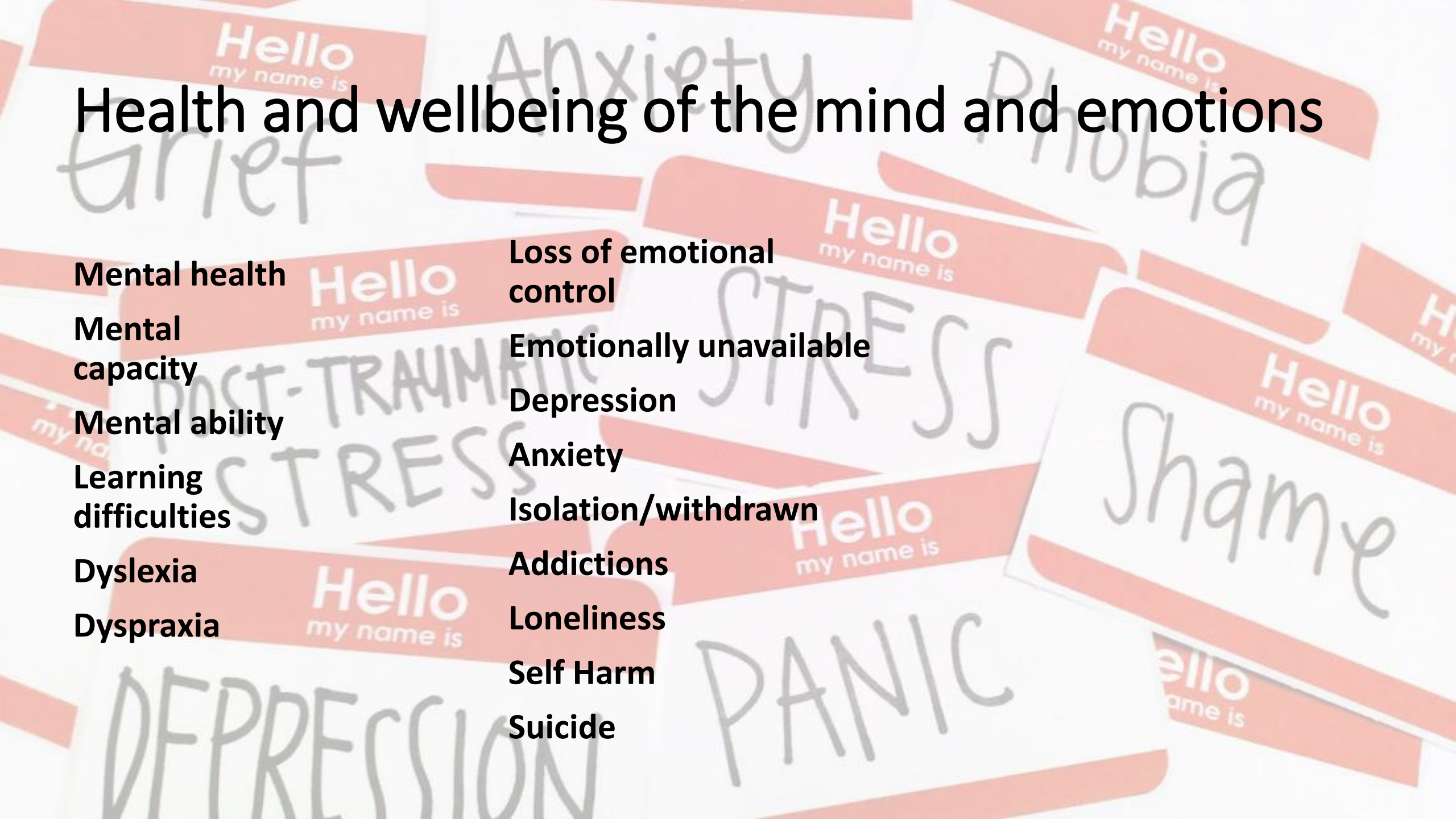
**Isolation/withdrawn**

**Addictions**

**Loneliness**

**Self Harm**

**Suicide**





# Sense of Self

Self esteem

Perfectionism

Voicelessness

Conditions of  
worth

Autonomy

Secrets

Invalidation

Vulnerability

# Values

Beliefs

Religion

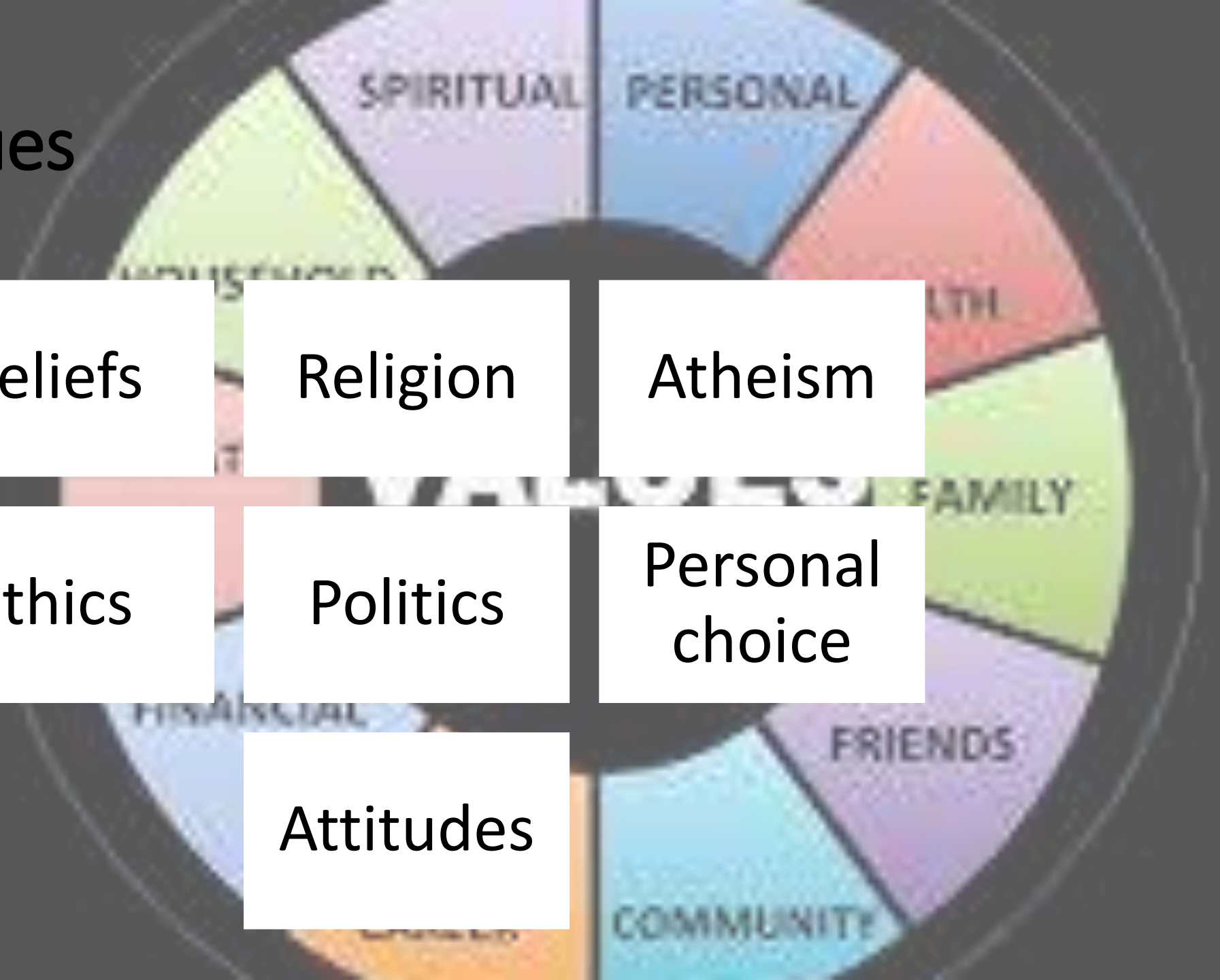
Atheism

Ethics

Politics

Personal  
choice

Attitudes



# Achievement



Literacy

Grammar

Educational  
success

Communication  
skills

Employability

Mastery of skills



# Status

Career

Material  
wealth

Poverty

Social  
etiquette

Competition

Social  
popularity

Vocabulary

Accent

Intelligence

# Gender



Femininity

Masculinity

Gender  
Identity

# Relationships

Family  
history

Relational  
worth

Single  
parenthood

Divorce

Dependency

Infertility

Infidelity

Intimacy

Isolation

Parenthood



“Shame is a  
soul eating  
emotion”

Carl Jung

“Until you know my  
hidden shame, you  
really don’t know  
me”

Johnny Cash

