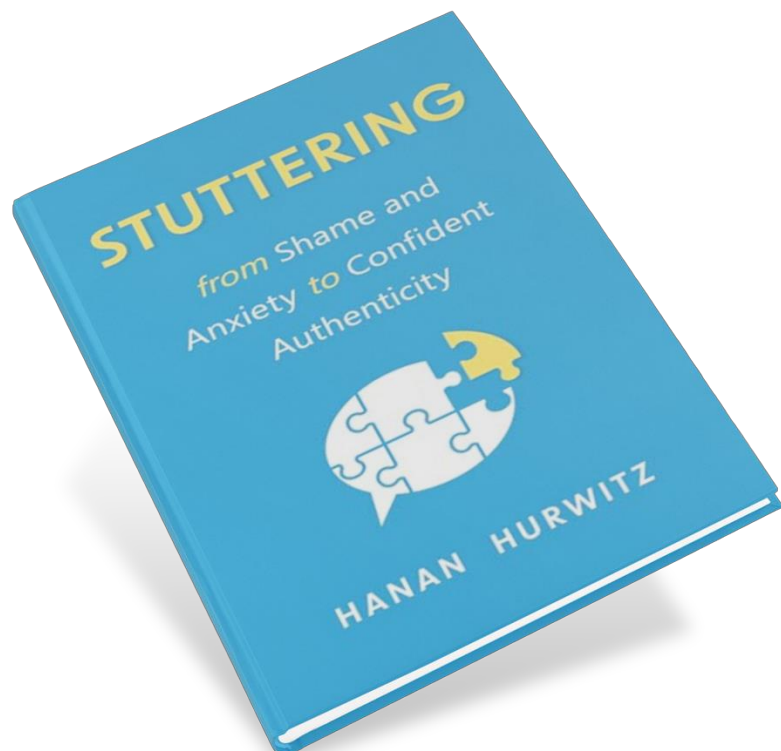


BOOK EXCERPT

STUTTERING: From Shame and Anxiety to Confident Authenticity

“The possibility of my stuttering journey being a survival guide for someone else is a very powerful motivation for me to share the attitudes and philosophies that helped and continue to help me accept and embrace my stutter. Even if only one person benefits from reading my book, then that is enough.”

– HANAN HURWITZ



BOOK PRAISE

“This is THE BEST stuttering self-help book on the market. It covers accepting yourself, shame, self-esteem, mindfulness, fear of speaking, and the importance of overall good mental/emotional health.”

MORRIS WILBURN

Person Who Stutters, Stuttering Advocate

“Hanan’s book offers a profound exploration of stuttering, not as a speech impediment to be fixed, but as an aspect of life that calls for a shift in perspective. Hurwitz’s journey from a life constrained by shame and anxiety to one of confidence and authenticity is a testament to the power of reframing one’s self-beliefs.”

OMER LEVY KARDASH

Speech-Language Pathologist

“This book captures the essence of developments made in recent decades about the approach to stuttering and stuttering therapy. A must read for people who stutter, parents of people who stutter, and speech language therapists.”

SHIRAN ISRAEL

Person who Stutters, Board Member of the Israeli Stuttering Association



HANAN HURWITZ

Hanan Hurwitz is a proud person who stutters, and the former chairman and executive director of AMBI, the Israeli Stuttering Association. He is passionately determined to help people who stutter overcome pervasive stigmas to live a fulfilled life. He has helped arrange conferences on stuttering and served on the team that curates the annual International Stuttering Awareness Day online conference.

OnStuttering.com

Contents

Prologue	9
<i>chapter 1:</i> On Gratitude	15
<i>chapter 2:</i> A Stuttering Monologue	17
<i>chapter 3:</i> On Stuttering and Struggle	21
<i>chapter 4:</i> On Stigma.....	29
<i>chapter 5:</i> On Shame and the "Not Good Enough" Story.....	37
<i>chapter 6:</i> On Recovery	49
<i>chapter 7:</i> On the Iceberg Analogy of Stuttering	53
<i>chapter 8:</i> On The Sphere of Control.....	57
<i>chapter 9:</i> On Acceptance	63
<i>chapter 10:</i> On Mindfulness and Meditation	75
<i>chapter 11:</i> On Internal Validation and Ego: Letting Go of the Need for Approval and for Understanding	95
<i>chapter 12:</i> On Avoiding Avoidance	101
<i>chapter 13:</i> On Stuttering, Suffering, and The Four Noble Truths	105
<i>chapter 14:</i> On the Power of Words.....	119
<i>chapter 15:</i> On Values and Choice	125
<i>chapter 16:</i> On Frustration and Rage	141
<i>chapter 17:</i> On Community.....	145
<i>chapter 18:</i> On Trauma	151
<i>chapter 19:</i> On Resilience	157
<i>chapter 20:</i> On Awareness of Stuttering	165
<i>chapter 21:</i> On Happiness	169
<i>chapter 22:</i> On the Stuttering Block	177
<i>chapter 23:</i> On Fluency and Other Traps	189
<i>chapter 24:</i> You've Got This	195
References.....	201

Chapter 5

ON SHAME AND THE "NOT GOOD ENOUGH" STORY

"Wholehearted living is about engaging with our lives from a place of worthiness. It means cultivating the courage, compassion and connection to wake up in the morning and think, 'No matter what gets done and how much is left undone, I am enough.' It's going to bed at night thinking, 'Yes, I am imperfect and vulnerable and sometimes afraid, but that doesn't change the truth that I am also brave and worthy of love and belonging.'"

*Brené Brown, The Gifts of
Imperfection and Daring Greatly*

In this chapter I am attempting to give a brief insight into what shame is and how it relates to the experience of stuttering, simply because the experience of shame can often be an integral part of the experience of stuttering. Please read this chapter especially with an open mind, questioning whether what is written relates to you or not. I suggest reading Brené Brown's books *The Gifts of Imperfection* and *Daring Greatly* in order to get a deeper explanation and understanding of shame.

There are other books, I am sure, but those are among the books that I read, and which I found to be of great value.

What is Shame?

While there are many layers to shame, shame can be thought of as an intense belief of being defective in some way that we believe is unacceptable to society and perhaps to ourselves as well. The perceived defect is something that is either irreparable by its nature or irreparable due to the obstacles to repairing it that we believe we cannot overcome. I use the word "belief" as opposed to "feeling" because, although shame can be thought of as an emotion, the emotion comes from a belief about ourselves.

What is the Difference between Guilt and Shame?

Guilt involves the awareness of having done something wrong; it arises from one's actions. "I have done something wrong/bad."

Shame is the painful feeling about how one appears to others (and to oneself) without necessarily having done anything. "I am wrong/bad."

In the experience of stuttering, we encounter both guilt and shame. PWS often feel guilty for failing at fluency-focused therapy, at being unable to use the tools given to us by the therapist. That guilt is reinforced when the therapist expresses surprise or frustration that we did not use our tools. The fluency tools are not

trivial to use, and their use often comes at the expense of spontaneity and authenticity, and often require effortful speaking that makes it difficult to remember what it was that we wanted to say. The guilt is sometimes reinforced by parents of children who stutter, who, similar to the therapist, express frustration that the child is not "using their tools." If only the tools were that easy to use, but there is almost no understanding by the therapist or the parent of the difficulties and obstacles to using those fluency tools.

How does Shame Develop?

Shame develops when we have done something that we believe makes us irredeemable or we believe that we have an irreparable flaw that makes us unacceptable to society.

Considering the first case: This seems to be similar to guilt, since the shame results from something that we have done. In contrast to guilt, however, shame arises when we believe that what we have done cannot be forgiven, let alone understood. One can think of the statement "I am ashamed for what I have done" to understand this type of shame. Alternatively, perhaps we made a mistake, we feel guilty about it but not flawed at our core, until someone, usually an authority figure or someone whose approval we crave, says to us: "You should be ashamed of yourself!" At that point we might start to believe that we are, in fact, flawed and irredeemable. Perhaps we simply don't know how to improve ourselves, or perhaps we feel so isolated or

rejected that we believe there is no point in trying to improve ourselves since we are anyway irredeemable.

Considering now the situation where shame has developed due to our belief that we have an irreparable flaw that makes us unacceptable to society. Stigma and stereotypical attitudes cause shame. Here again is the quote from the previous chapter on stigma: "Public stigma involves a process of negative reactions from the public to an individual or individuals who are believed to possess a trait or characteristic that is devalued by society." Public stigma informs us that this trait we have makes us unworthy or unacceptable. Self-stigma can follow the public stigma, and we become ashamed of who we are simply because of what society is telling us about ourselves. It's insane, and yet it's pervasive, whether it's about our race, ethnicity, culture, sexuality, body shape, fashion sense, or socioeconomic status, and the list goes on.

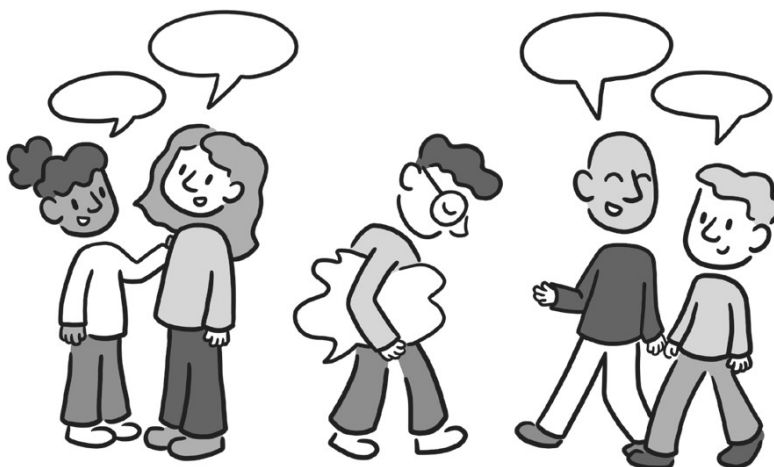
What does Shame Cause?

Ultimately, shame causes self-limiting or even self-destructive behaviors, and causes us to avoid living the life that we want for ourselves. We hide our true, authentic selves.

It seems that shame causes us to believe that we are inherently unworthy. That in turn can drive self-limiting thoughts and beliefs that, in turn, drive the behaviors that make us limit ourselves. Limiting ourselves means hiding some part of us from others. We feel relief when we get back to our safe space and we can let down

our guard. I suggest that limiting ourselves leads to more shame since we intensify our belief that we are not good enough.

When we are afraid to show our complete and authentic selves to other people, we experience disconnection from them. This is in itself harmful since connection with others and feeling safe with that connection is a basic human need.



Shame can cause a spectrum of social behaviors, from withdrawing from society, being in society but hiding our perceived flaw, all the way to behaving in a violent way towards others as part of us rejecting society that we feel originally rejected us. All these behaviors are taking energy away from us as well as preventing us from living the life that we want for ourselves. In my case, I avoided social interactions since the extent of shame and unworthiness that I felt, due to my stuttering, was simply unbearable. It was far easier for me to tolerate the lack of a social life than being at social gatherings. Until

the age of 47 I could not even look at the word "stuttering" and could not, as a result, search the internet for information and help with my stuttering. This was due to my deep shame about stuttering.

Some of us have what are termed skin "blemishes" that we hide with makeup, and we feel relief when, at the end of the day, we can take our makeup off. I write "blemish" with quotes since we need, I feel, to question whether a mark of some sort on our skin is actually a blemish. The stigma of imperfect skin causes us to feel shame about our skin, and we then refer to a naturally occurring difference as a defect.

Covert Stuttering refers to the hiding of individual moments of stuttering.¹³ There is a spectrum of behaviors of hiding stuttering, such as choosing when to speak, with whom to speak, how much to speak, and using word substitution to avoid stuttering. The point is that a person who stutters who is covert is hiding their stuttering. From personal experience I can attest to the suffering inherent in this behavior. We feel ashamed of our stuttering and so we hide it. On the one hand we feel relief that we have avoided stuttering, but on the other hand we suffer from a loss of connection, and we feel frustrated that we cannot (in our belief) say what we want to say. There is deep sadness here, and even grief at what we lose when we choose not to speak. We might not realize it at the time, but each time we choose to

13. Covert and overt stuttering: Concepts and comparative findings; Sønsterud, Howells and Ward; *Journal of Communication Disorders*, Volume 99

avoid stuttering, the shame and fear associated with the experience of being a person who stutters increase.

Early on in my journey to learn about stuttering I was referred to a group on Yahoo¹⁴ called STUTT-L. Someone there posted a question about how to learn to do small-talk in social situations. I thought that I was the only person who stutters who experienced social anxiety and did not ever learn how to make small talk as a means of getting to know people. The fact of the post, and the discussion that followed, were enlightening to me as I learned that many people who stutter fear social situations, since we fear rejection or ridicule. The curious thing is that sometimes the rejection and ridicule are exhibited by others as we speak, but oftentimes the rejection and ridicule are internal.

Another example of self-limiting behavior that we often encounter in the world of stuttering is where a person who stutters is purposefully looking for a career path based on how much speaking will be required and not on what they want to do in life. Some people might say that this choice is driven by fear and not shame, and it's an interesting topic to debate. The fear is there, for sure, but below the fear is shame. There is the fear of being found out as a person who stutters, the fear of not being able to speak without stuttering and therefore the fear of ridicule, rejection or even abuse. That fear is real, but it is fueled by shame. Most people starting out in a new job feel fear of ridicule or rejection. However, this is not driven by a sense of shame that accompanies a belief

14. Yahoo! Groups; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yahoo!_Groups

of being inherently flawed and therefore unacceptable to society.

Shame causes us to believe that we are not good enough in aspects that we cannot change. The Not Good Enough (NGE) story feeds on the shame and the shame feeds on the story. We have a snowball effect going on almost continually until we find the awareness and the way to stop it.

How is Shame Perpetuated?

Brené Brown writes that "shame thrives on secrecy, silence, and judgment." A major challenge with shame is that we are ashamed to speak about our shame. Our shame then exists in secrecy and silence as we hide it and avoid speaking about the thing that is causing us shame. Our shame is intensified as our inner judgment continues and there is no counter argument, objective reasoning or outside perspective to that judgement. Therefore, I would add that in addition to shame thriving on secrecy, silence and judgment, it thrives as long as our beliefs that are driving our shame remain unquestioned.

What is the Antidote to Shame?

Since shame thrives on secrecy and silence, it cannot thrive when we speak about how we feel. One of the ingredients of the antidote to shame is therefore Disclosure, being open about who we are. Some refer to this as "shining a light" on shame. The term "coming out of the closet" comes to mind when we speak about disclosure.

We choose to stop hiding. Yes, it is likely that a lot of fear remains when we choose to be open about who we are. That fear, however, does not mean that we choose to continue hiding. We "feel the fear and do it anyway,"¹⁵ and the other ingredients of the antidote will support us on this path.

Of course, we have to be very careful to choose the context in which we disclose our shame, as we risk more rejection if we speak about our shame in a non-empathetic environment. Another main ingredient of the antidote is therefore Empathy.

The antidote to shame includes self-acceptance of who we are, and acceptance of our innate, unconditional worthiness. This involves disassociating our sense of worthiness from the opinions of others, and especially from the stigma that we experience. It is especially important to think of Unconditional Self-Acceptance: any time our acceptance of ourselves is conditional on the opinions of others, we will suffer. Unconditional self-acceptance does not mean that we are perfect or that we still do not have room to grow. On the contrary, our unconditional self-acceptance will form part of our resilience to our own mistakes, meaning that making a mistake – and only those who never try anything do not make mistakes – will not return us to a belief that we are unworthy.

Compassion comprises another critical element of the antidote to shame. While compassion can and should go both ways, it is most important that we learn

15. <https://susanjeffers.com/>

self-compassion. Self-compassion allows us to exist with imperfection.

Community is another important ingredient of the antidote to shame. Learning self-acceptance, self-compassion, worthiness – we can do this ourselves, but if we can find a community of others like us then the task of learning is that much easier. With community we also much more easily convert the Shame to Pride, and that is life-changing, indeed. Even more, it's life-saving.

Vulnerability encompasses self-acceptance, disclosure, self-compassion and empathy. When we choose to be vulnerable, to show our authentic selves, shame loses its hold on us. When we chose to be proactive about our vulnerability then it is even more helpful to countering the shame. Vulnerability is not weakness, it is power. This is not about power over others but power over our own self-limiting thoughts and beliefs. Please watch Brené Brown's TED talk on "The Power of Vulnerability."¹⁶

Glennon Doyle Melton writes that "your body is not your masterpiece – your life is."¹⁷ This simple sentence is so insightful and has the potential to completely turn our lives around. Imagine letting go of the need to please others or to get approval from others about our bodies, and putting our energy instead into creating the life that we want for ourselves.

Self-disclosure of stuttering is liberating. Being proud and unapologetic of our vulnerabilities is empowering.

16. https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_the_power_of_vulnerability?language=en

17. <https://momastery.com/blog/2014/07/06/body-masterpiece/>

When I speak to potential customers and when I give lectures, I always include the fact that I stutter when I introduce myself, and I always do so in a factual and non-apologetic manner. I am not waiting for someone to notice or comment on my stutter, and I am being open with it from the very start. This has a few benefits:

- I reduce my anxiety about others finding out that I stutter since I have already told them.
- I help the audience by telling them what is going on with my speech. If I did not do this, it is likely that some people will be wondering what is going on with me, and perhaps forming judgements about me.
- Knowing at the outset that I stutter increases the engagement of my audience with me, and my engagement with them. There is no "elephant in the room," no invisible barrier that is making us uncomfortable.

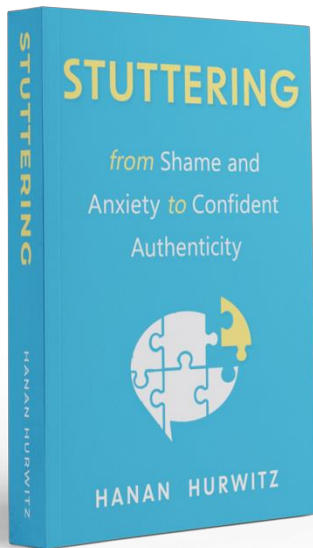
I am continuing to work on not caring whether anyone in the audience has something to say about my stuttering. Yes, at the time of this writing I still feel anxious at times about others finding out that I stutter. I am at peace with myself about not being perfect in my ability to overcome the shame that I felt for most of my life. I look forward to continuing my journey to understanding that shame and how it affected and affects me. I am no longer ashamed to speak about the shame I felt, and this is liberating.

Perhaps try this: close your eyes and imagine yourself standing on a stage in front of a crowd. Perhaps you are going to give a speech. Now imagine yourself standing straight, head held high, without arrogance and with

quiet self-confidence. You know your vulnerabilities, and you absolutely don't care what anyone else thinks about them. If you want, imagine an invisible shield around you, against which any judgement from others simply bounces off.

If we want authentic connection with other people, we need to let our authentic selves be seen. We can choose to accept ourselves, to stop hiding, to reject the stigma, and to be proud of who we are.

BUY THE BOOK



"This is a much needed and helpful book that anyone wanting to live more easily with their stammer would benefit from."

– **STAMMA**

British Stammering Association

Available in Paperback and Kindle

amazon



US



DE



UK



AU



CA



NL

OnStuttering.com