

Messages from Parents

Shaming communication that results in messages leading to the repression of feelings and needs and distorted beliefs about feelings and needs

“Stop that whining or else I’ll give you something to cry about.”

Belief: I will be hurt if I express needs or negative feelings.

“You are such a brave little girl.”

Belief: I am acceptable if I don’t cry. I make my parents proud and am rewarded if I don’t cry or express fear.

“Don’t you dare talk to me like that.”

Belief: I must never express anger - it is bad and will be punished.

“That is not ladylike behavior.” (when expressing anger)

Belief: I must never show anger in order to be feminine and acceptable.

“If the clock strikes now your face will stay that way.”

Belief: I will be shamed if I show my feelings. No matter how sad I feel I must put on a happy face.

“Laugh and the world laughs with you, cry and you cry alone.”

“Nobody likes to a look at a face like that.”

Belief: Sadness results in abandonment.

“Don’t be such a sissy, crybaby, etc.

Belief: I am weak / worthless if I express negative feelings

“Be grateful you are not”

“It could be worse.”

“It’s not that bad, cheer up.”

“Oh what a horrible life you lead.” (sarcastically)

“Look on the bright side.”

Belief: I should be happy because other people are worse off than me. Therefore I should never feel sad because there is always someone worse off than me.

“Children should be seen and not heard.”

Belief: to be acceptable I must keep quiet and not bother anyone.

“Oh shame, poor baby.”

Belief: My feelings are not important and only worthy of ridicule and rejection.

“Shut up! You’re driving me crazy.”

Belief: My feelings are pretty powerful and result in punishment.

“Why are you being so naughty, bad etc.?”

Belief: Negative feelings are bad. I am bad for having them.

“Don’t be so selfish.”

My needs and feelings are not important and I should meet the needs and watch out for the feelings of others.

What messages did you get as a child through what others said and did in response to your feelings?

Were there confusing/double messages given? How?

Were there feelings that were more unacceptable than others?