



Unconditional Lovability:

Achieving Greater Fulfillment in Life Through “Being Real”

In his practice, Dr. Brian T. Case (Ph. D, LMFT, CSAT) helps clients gain an understanding of how parts of one’s self can be “split off” in either shame or idealistic expectations, making it difficult to adequately meet fundamental needs for both connection (intimacy) and protection (safety). He helps them learn how the disconnection from one’s core self, and the subsequent imbalance between these two fundamental human needs, are associated with divorce/dissolution, addiction, compulsivity, loneliness, anxiety, depression, a general sense of “stuckness” in personal and/or professional relationships, etc.

He then helps them identify a detailed road map for living life more fully and consistently in what he refers to as the “Real Self”. Specifically, to learn how the processes of working through shame and image management, as well as learning to more fully love and/or accept “all” of one’s self, allows for a balanced fulfillment of both connection and protection needs. The result of this balance is a greater sense of emotional “thriving” in life instead of feeling empty or “just getting by” emotionally. It also helps one understand the difference between appropriate guilt and toxic shame, thereby allowing for a greater capacity to sincerely feel remorse and take responsibility for hurtful behaviors without self-condemnation.

A fundamental premise of his treatment approach is that we all start out life with worth/value. This worth is inherent, unconditional and unchangeable. Therefore, we are born “loveable”. By “loveable” he means deserving of time, attention, affection, support, having all needs (and some wants) met adequately and reasonably, and to be loved unconditionally. Furthermore, while every person has many things in common with all other humans, each also has various traits that make him/her different from everyone else. Thus, this inherent worth is based on a combination of traits common to all humans, and the “specialness” or uniqueness of each individual.

As most parents can attest, young children are usually unedited in their expressions of wants, needs, ideas, opinions, and/or feelings. We start out life 100% open, transparent and real. We live, unconsciously, as if the above fundamental premise is true. A primary goal for most parents is to help their children develop the ability to effectively manage feelings and impulses. Clearly, without self-discipline and course-correction, many children grow up to be irresponsible, impulsive and unaware of, or indifferent to, the impact of their behaviors on others.

To this end, we are often taught (through parents, other family members, school professionals, peers, religious leaders, and/or the media) messages that fail to make the distinction between guilt and shame, or that create unrealistic expectations for perfection. Specifically, we receive messages, both direct and indirect, that teach us that we are 1) not “OK” if, when and/or because, and 2) only “OK” if, when and/or because. For instance, a parent may shame a child by saying “look-you did it wrong again stupid!”, or reinforce a sense of conditional love by only giving physical affection when the child brings home straight ‘A’s’. The more important the person sending the messages, intense the delivery of those messages, or consistency with which they are sent, the more we come to accept them as true.

These messages influence thoughts, feelings and/or behaviors, which in turn reinforce the “lies” we have come to accept as truths. As a result, we learn to reject, deny or hide parts of our “Real Self” because of

shame, and place extreme emphasis on other parts of our “Real Self” in hopes of being found loveable and acceptable by others. The parts of our self abandoned in shame essentially combine together to form another part of our personality that I refer to as the “Shame-Based Self”. The parts which become extreme to win others approval form what I call the “Ideal Self”. Thus, overtime, we become less aware of the “unconditional lovability” of our “Real Self”, and more connected to a sense of shame, of conditional love/worth, or both.

As humans we have core needs that must be met in order to have a sense of well-being, fulfillment, personal growth, happiness, etc. He refers to this state as “thriving”. Two of our most fundamental needs beyond food, water, shelter and sleep are the needs for connection and for protection. Therefore, both of these needs must adequately be met in order to thrive. However, the underlying beliefs connected to shame or conditional love combine together and take us out of our “Real Self” making it difficult if not impossible to balance these two drives. The result is usually a state of overprotection in intimate relationships, which leads to numerous personal and/or relational problems.

Dr. Case helps clients learn how to work through shame, let go of image management, and ultimately find balance between connection and protection through living life more fully and consistently in the “Real Self”. Specifically, he empowers clients to:

- 1) Identify the people, events and experiences that “taught” the messages which led to the “splits” away from Real Self.
- 2) Identify the specific messages as “lies” and understand why they are cognitive distortions.
- 3) Identify the ways in which those cognitive distortions and related splits are being reinforced currently through personal attitudes, self-talk, and destructive behaviors as well as relational dynamics within intimate relationships.
- 4) Replace those “lies” with truths that validate the “Real Self”.
- 5) Intervene when slipping into cognitive distortions or destructive behaviors.
- 6) Balance connection and protection needs.

For more information on his treatment approach, please feel free to contact at PCS (480-947-5739).

