

Cope With Shame By Creating An Internal Ally

Whenever you start to feel shame creep up, take a break to imagine an ideal ally by following the steps below.

1 Imagine your internal personal ally.

"When you choose an ally, you can think about characters from movies and books, a spiritual presence, admirable historical figures, or even animals you associate with strength."* Some people use someone who is an ally in real life.

Whatever form your internal ally takes, you should be able to imagine character traits you associate with care and strength. Here are some examples:

- A soothing voice
- Fearlessness
- Willingness to intervene on behalf of those suffering
- A belief that everyone is worthy
- No-nonsense attitude

You should be able to say about this internal ally: "They would never be ok with how I attack myself. They would not say I deserve the shame I feel." It should be hard to imagine this person denying you care when you're in need.

This helps deconstruct the inner critic's argument: "You're not worthy of care, love, help, or protection." It doesn't matter if you're worthy or not – it wouldn't cross your inner ally's mind to ask that in the first place. They see you as worthy the way you are.

2 Ask yourself: "What am I ashamed of?"

3 Ask yourself: "How would my internal personal ally respond to my feelings of shame?"

4 Ask yourself: "How would this ally confront the inner voice that is shaming me?"

5 Ask yourself: "In what ways would my inner ally feel proud of me?"

Some people experience discomfort when imagining an inner ally. It can underline the feeling that you haven't had external allies. That discomfort is worthy of your attention, too. Your inner ally would certainly mourn the times when nobody came to your assistance.

*This worksheet is inspired by concepts in *The Complex PTSD Workbook* by Arielle Schwartz, PhD.