

Episode 23: Connecting Power of Vulnerability

Welcome to ConneXions Classroom Podcast. We are so excited to introduce to you the opportunity for you to join us in a classroom setting where you will be taught the principles of connection. For those of you who have already joined us on the podcasts, and for those for you who have not, you are now ready to step into an extensive, hands-on, all-star classroom experience to better understand why you are experiencing and interpreting life the way that you do.

You will be introduced to the foundational principles of personal integrity, which are: how to live impeccable honesty, rigorous personal responsibility, humility, vulnerability, openness, willingness, transparency, and boundaries.

This is a 12-week intensive course that consists of meeting one time a week for two hours. You will be given six workbooks. In each workbook, instruction will be given to you on core concepts of how to live your life from a position of emotional honesty, Reality, Truth, boundaries, validation, being able to recognize your distortions, and how choice plays a central role in all of your experiences and emotional outcomes.

Some of the concepts covered inside of the classroom include: what validation and vulnerability are and how to animate those principles your life; how to live in Truth rather than distortion; how to recognize your distraction and your controlling behavior in your relationships; and how to live a life of peace rather than pain. Powerful concepts that change lives, beginning with yours.

Hundreds of people have participated already, and have drastically transformed their lives by living and being in Truthful, emotionally honest relationships. They report experiences of personal empowerment and emotional and mental sophistication being introduced into their relationships.

So, now it's your turn to come and participate. This classroom experience will change the way you interact with yourself and others in powerful ways, giving you the tools and emotional sophistication to connect deeply inside yourself and invite other in your life to do the same.

Come and experience connection. Go to www.connexionsclassroom.com, and hit the "Go to Academy" button and sign up. I look forward to meeting you and connecting.

[00:02:48]

Good morning and welcome to ConneXions Classroom Podcast. Today is April 25th, 2015 and today marks the one year anniversary that we have been recording ConneXions Classroom Podcasts. We started last year, the last week in April 2014, and we have recorded 54 episodes of these ConneXion Podcasts. I'm hoping that you're enjoying these and I know that I look forward to recording them every week and being in some small way a part of your life and connecting with you through this experience of you listening to these podcasts.

Today, I want to talk about the power of connection. Connection is the one thing that all of us are searching for. All of us want to be connected—be connected to ourselves, be connected to other people, be connected to a Higher Power, to a God. And it's the one thing that we're all in search of, as far as every day we are looking to connect. Though we may not use that kind of language, we are constantly trying to attach to each other, and to ourselves, and to something that's greater than us.

And so, this power of connection allows us to feel empathy, allows us to feel vulnerable, and validated. It gives us the ability to be humble, and willing, and transparent, and open. It allows us to have compassion and be considerate. Connection is genuine and sincere. Figuratively, it reaches towards another human being and gives to that person and has feelings of kindness. We are all searching to connect.

I've spent about five or six years working in a treatment center, working with addicts and wondering how I could help them learn how to connect. And trying myself to figure out exactly what is connection, why are they “pseudo-connecting” to alcohol or drugs? Why are there so many addictions in the world? I mean, you can become addicted to anything, and it's the way that people are trying to connect. They feel this illusionary experience of connection to their “drug of choice.” So, whether they are addicted to sex, or food, exercise, work, social media, texting, money, gambling, you name it and we can become addicted to it. It's our way as a human being to attempt to connect to something that will feel fulfilling.

However, I think all of us are aware that addictions don't fill anything and they absolutely don't feel fulfilling. They give us a chemical altering for a few moments or maybe a few hours, and once the chemicals flush through the body, then the same problems, the same issues, the same conflicts that were previously there are still there. And not only are those there, but now I have a tremendous amount of shame that goes with my acting out, and my hiding, and my lying, and the secrets that I hold, and my isolation, and feelings of worthlessness.

So, as I spend a lot of energy acting out with some kind of substance or activity, I find myself disconnected at the end of that experience, and again searching for that connection.

I want to teach you about the power of connection and I want to hand you a couple of principles and invite you to study these and become curious about them, because they exist in all of your relationships. Not just your relationship with yourself do these principles exist, but they exist every relationship you have. So, not only with other people but relationships with things, with ideologies. So, your relationship with religion, or your relationship with spirituality, or your relationship with power, or authority, or money, or your car, or your relationship with your weight. These components exist, and the components are shame, control, and how you heal shame and control through validation and vulnerability. So, those four components: shame and control, and then how to heal shame and control through validation and vulnerability. I'm going to teach you about those four principles. And as you learn about those principles, you're going to understand that the ability to connect means that you must learn how to maneuver, and how to understand and appreciate and bring into your life, these skills of vulnerability and validation.

And as you do that, you will rid yourself from shame and control. Because shame and control are the things that are precluding you from connecting.

Shame is something that I talk a lot about and if you're unaware of what that is, I'll give you a quick definition of shame. There are some other podcasts that strictly discuss shame, so I'd encourage you to go listen to those. I believe it's podcast number 2, "*Shame is Not Guilt.*" I would listen to that so you understand what shame means.

Shame is this state of being that says there's something wrong, innately, with me. My being is flawed. I am inadequate, I am unlovable, I am bad, I am unworthy, I am not enough. Or shame goes to another extreme and says something that sounds really prideful, so shame can also sound like arrogance or self-infatuation. It says things like, "I deserve more than you, I'm better than you, I get everything right, don't you wish you were me?" It says, "I don't have to follow the rules, I the exception, I'm unique, I'm different."

And so, shame has these two extremes. One is self-infatuation and the other extreme is self-denigration. So, statements of I am: I am bad and unworthy, or prideful statements of, I am better than you and I am the exception.

So, both of these extremes have distortion in them because the Truth is, is that I am neither bad and unworthy, nor better than anyone else. Those statements have deception in them. And shame is all about disconnecting us. Disconnecting us from what?

Well, it disconnects us from the Reality. Our Reality is that we're not less than and we're not more than anyone else. The Reality is, is that we're all the same, and that we all have inalienable rights to be on this planet, and to think, and feel, and choose as we like. And so, shame says, "I'm going to take you out of Reality and I'm going to make you 'believe' that you are less than or more than another person." And when shame offers us that angle or that perception, it is our responsibility to use our free agency to choose correctly, to choose Reality. Because if I choose distortion, then my Reality will then be distorted and I will disconnect; because the only way to stay connected is to stay connected to Reality.

However, Reality can be very, very uncomfortable. Reality is where pain exists. Reality is where there's conflict. Reality is where there's emotion. Reality includes relationships and vulnerability. And so, a lot of us don't want to stay in Reality—let alone live there.

All of us because we're human, we experience shame, these voices of shame. There isn't a person on the planet that isn't invited into the distortion of shame. However, Reality says I have the opportunity to choose, and when I choose, then I can choose in a way that maybe creates a difficulty for me, and then shame comes in and says, *well, the reason why that's so difficult for you is because you're inadequate*. And that's just not the case. The case is, is that I chose something and it gave me an outcome that's difficult, and that's just the case. That's it, that's the Reality. But shame comes in and says *no, no, it's difficult because you're not capable*.

Now, shame says things like ***I am***—it's permanent, it's a permanent state of being. It's not permanent like it really is permanent, but it tells you that it's permanent. Like, ***I am incapable***. That sounds pretty darn permanent. But that's a lie.

Living in Reality is where we're trying to stay as often as possible. Now, in Reality, we all—because we're humans—we make mistakes. We could say we sin, we err in our judgment, we affect people negatively and so it's our responsibility to recognize when we make mistakes and to ask for help, be able to humble ourselves and say, "Woops, I made a mistake." However, shame doesn't allow you to make mistakes, shame says "*Oh you did that so it means that you're not enough, or you're bad, or you're unworthy*." Or if you make a mistake, it says "*That's not that big of a deal, don't worry about it, people have done far worse*," or "*That's okay, nobody cares what you've done*."

So, shame is constantly trying to distort my Reality by telling me I am either bad and unworthy or I am the exception to the rules. So, I either feel this self-adulation or this self-denigration when shame comes around. And so, my goal is to stay connected to Reality, but like I said, Reality is where there are vulnerabilities, because the Truth is that I live in a state of being vulnerable.

The only things that I can manage or I can control are my thoughts. I ***can*** control my thoughts. I can choose to think different things if I want, so I can control my thoughts.

I can also control my feelings. Now, I have emotions and so I may not be able to control my emotions right when they come, but I can think different thoughts and therefore have different emotional experiences with those thoughts.

So, I can manage my thoughts and my feelings and then what I choose, so my choices, my behaviors. And that's it. My thoughts, my feelings, and my behaviors. That's is, those are the only things that I am responsible for, I can manage, I can control in my life. Everything else I am vulnerable to.

So, I cannot control my heartbeat, I can't control whether I get a disease, I can't control you, I can't control whether you like me or not, or whether you love me or not. I can't control

whether I'm going to lose my job. All these things are outside of my realm of control and so what that means is, is that I live in a state of vulnerability. Well, shame wants you to believe that you don't have to be vulnerable. Shame wants you to believe that you can control all of those things, and if you just work hard enough, or if you become manipulative, or if you become co-dependent, then you can control all those things I just talked about. And the Truth is, you can't.

And so, if you live in a state of shame, you will live in a state of disconnect. And that is really unfortunately because 1) there's no Reality there, 2) you live in distortion when you're in shame, and 3) when you live in distortion, you cannot feel appropriate emotions because your storyline is off. You'll "love" with agenda, you'll want something from people. You'll always want something, you'll always have these expectations that people are supposed to fill and fulfill for you if you choose to live in shame.

My hope is that you won't do that. My hope is that you'll choose to live in Reality where you acknowledge and accept your vulnerability and surrender to it, because there you can be connected.

So, these four principles, these principles of shame and control, and vulnerability and validation. Those four principles are inseparably connected to the ability to lead, to the ability you trust and have safety inside your relationships with self and with others, to feel respect for self and others, to be responsible and honest with yourself and someone else. To live in humility, to have compassion. You have to understand that vulnerability and validation are the portals of being able to live in a very integrous life. And shame and control are the things that are separating you from that.

So, I want to teach you these principles through a story. The story is an experience that I've had in my own life. I want you to think about your own life as I'm telling you this story, and think about a time where these kinds of experiences and shame messages have come into your life. Maybe you heard them even today because they're very popular with us as humans. And so, I know you've heard them, I know you've had experience with them, I know that that happens to you quite often because you're just like me. And so, think about your own experience and try to juxtapose your experience as I'm going through this experience with you, and see if you can find some commonalities or some connections with me.

[00:19:42] Breakdown and Connection

About two years ago, I took my son and about five or six of his teenage friends—he was 16 years old—he invited I think about six boys to come with us to go water skiing down at Lake Powell. For those of you don't know what Lake Powell is, it is one of the largest lakes in the country and we go down there every year. We've made it kind of a tradition where in the summer we'll take a week off and we'll go down and we'll spend the whole week down there. And so, there's myself, I'm the only adult, and then I have anywhere from five to seven boys with me.

So, two years ago, I took the week off, and we got the boat all ready, and we got the truck ready, and the kids came over as they always do, and they helped clean the boat, and get it all packed, and had the igloos in the truck. Everything was packed up, we were ready to go, and we jumped in the truck and said goodbye to all the parents. We were driving down the road. It's about a six-hour drive down there, and I've got a three-quarter ton truck and a boat that's about 30 feet or 28 feet on the back of the truck. So, it was a good-sized load and I was driving down the road on the freeway and we were having a great time, we were singing to the 70's and really enjoying each other's company.

And all of a sudden, the truck just stopped, the engine was gone. There was no power to the truck and I was going probably about 80, 85 miles an hour. All of a sudden, I became afraid, and I was worried that the steering wheel was going to lock up because I had no engine. The kids were in the back and they were singing to the songs and everything, they had no idea what was happening. And as I pulled off the side of the road, it was about 8:30pm or 8:45pm. It was still light out because it was in the middle of July. It was the July 4th weekend, by the way. And as I pulled off the side of the road, my shame started talking to me, like *"Oh no, this is bad, I can't believe you did this."* That's what my shame said, *"I can't believe you did this."*

And I kind of chuckled because I didn't do anything, I was just driving along and all of a sudden, the truck stopped. But shame is not rational, shame is irrational, and it told me that this was my fault. And so, the kids were like, "Oh, my goodness, what happened?" And I said, "I don't know, the car just stopped." And so, as I was pulling off the side of the road, shame was saying things like, *"This is your fault, I can't believe you did this, the parents are never going to let these kids go with you again, you're so irresponsible, why didn't you get the engine checked?"* All these statements.

Now, let me explain to you. Shame is the destroyer of inner-peace and relationships. Shame makes you feel bad, it makes you feel unworthy and unlovable. Or it says thing like, *you're perfect and you get everything right* and it shows up as arrogant. But shame attacks your self-worth and self-value, so you can hear the shame that's coming in and speaking to me? Saying things like, *It's my fault, I should have checked the engine*, it even said *these things always happen to me*, and the Truth is that they don't happen to me at all.

I mean, my car has not broken down for years, but shame makes these kinds of outlandish statements and wants you to buy into them, in your state of vulnerability. I was very, very vulnerable in that moment, the truck was broken, I had this big boat on the back of the truck, and I couldn't go anywhere. And so, I was incredibly vulnerable, I had responsibility of six other people's children, and I was completely stuck. I was recognizing my state of vulnerability. And so, when you're vulnerable—which is always—but when you really notice that you're vulnerable, shame comes in and attacks you. It's an attack, it's not just a suggestion like, *Do you think you're unworthy?* It says *You are unworthy. You are irresponsible*, I heard my shame say.

And so, we get out of the car, and I really don't know what had happened to the car, but we get out of the car—all the kids get out. And it's still light but it's getting dark and we're right on the side of the freeway, and huge semis are coming by, and I could really feel my vulnerability. I was very aware of how vulnerable we were—the seven of us—standing on the side of the road with this huge rig and no help. We were 30 miles away from anything—probably more like 50 miles away from anything—in the middle of nowhere on the freeway. All that was around us was flat land as far as you could see.

So, as I'm becoming more and more aware of the situation that I'm finding myself in, my shame is going crazy, saying things like, *“This isn't fair, how could this happen?”* So, now it'd flipped into the pride side. It was talking in the self-denigration (the shame) side, but now it flipped into the pride side and it said things like, *“This isn't fair, I can't believe this is happening, I don't deserve this, I just took off a week of work, this isn't fair, now I'm going to lose all that money because now I can't go down to Lake Powell and I've already cancelled all my patients.”* I mean, it was unbelievable how shame and pride were flying around my head, just inviting me to use my free agency to buy into their lies and distortions.

And that's the key, people, is that as shame is talking to you, you have the opportunity to really challenge it. You get to use your agency of choice, and you either get to choose to agree with it or you get to choose to say, *“You know what? There's no Truth in that at all.”* I mean, yes, I am very vulnerable, and yes, my truck is broken down, but I don't have to agree with this statement that I don't deserve this, that doesn't even make any sense. It has nothing to do with deserving, I mean, obvious, this thing's happening to me, and so this is my experience.

And so, I tell the kids to go other by the fence which is about 30-40 feet away because I want them way off the freeway just in case someone hits us and things go flying around. And as they're walking over to the fence, they're starting to call their parents. They all have cell phones. And so, they're calling their parents and my shame goes off again like *“Oh no, they're calling their parents, what are their parents going to think, their parents aren't going to trust me again, they probably think I'm irresponsible.”* My shame is just having a heyday inside my head.

There's certain kids that I'm like, *“Oh my goodness, I don't want them calling their parent, let me call their parent,”* and so then I wanted to control things. And I wanted to say, *“Hey, why don't you let me call your mom?”* Because maybe I was afraid that one of the parents would have more judgment than another parent. And so, here I was, shame was speaking and I was trying to control the situation.

So, they're over there at the fence calling their parents, coming over and saying, *“My parents want to know what our plan is.”* And I'm thinking, *I don't know what our plan is.* And so, I'm on the phone with the police and I'm also on the phone with my insurance company to get a tow truck.

The police are on their way and I'm on the phone with my insurance company, and I get a hold of someone, and it's starting to get dark now. She asks me these questions, she says to me, "Is everybody safe?" And I said, "Yes." And as I was listening to her, I could feel myself getting agitated because of the level of disconnect of what was happening. And here's why I use the word disconnect. So, when I have my shame talking to me, it is an invitation for me to disconnect.

When I recognize my vulnerability, then I'm connecting back to myself and back to the Reality. So, when I was out of the car walking around and realizing that this ain't good, it's getting dark, I've got this 40- to 45-foot rig that I can't move, and I have no help, and I don't know anyone—150 miles away is the closest person I know, and this isn't good. And so, I was very much feeling the vulnerability of my state of the situation, and I was connected, but it was very unpleasant. And so, shame kept coming in and trying to control how I felt by disconnecting me—by lying to me.

So, I get on the phone with this woman at the insurance company and she feels very disconnecting. She's very cold, she's very matter of fact. It's like she's reading a sheet of paper to me. I've got cars and semis flying by, it's almost dark, I've got six kids sitting over there at the fence, and a car that won't move. And she said, "Is everybody safe?" And I said, "Yes." And she's like, "Okay. I need to know the size of your truck." And I'm kind of looking at the truck and I'm like, "Um, 15 feet?" And she's like, "I need an exact length of the truck." And I said, "Uh, 15 and a half feet? I don't know, ma'am." And she's like, "Okay, well I need to know the height of the truck." And I threw out some term, some measurement for her. And then she said, "Okay, now I need to know the weight of the truck." I'm getting really agitated and my shame is going off, trying to control this experience because this woman, who probably was in some high-rise in New York City, was asking me questions that I did not know the answers to and I felt very invalidated.

[00:30:57] Enter Validation

Here's where validation comes in. I was not being validated. I was out in the middle of nowhere with six children on the side of a freeway, and she was asking me the weight, and the length, and the height of my truck and my boat. And after she asked me the length of the boat, I just lost it and I very firmly—but I was very angry—and I said, "Ma'am, do you understand..." Here I am in my shame, I was shaming her, I was being very rude to her, very condescending. And that's what shame does, it condescends. I said, "Do you understand that I'm out in the middle of nowhere, have you ever been to the West Coast? I'm 50 miles away from anything and it's dark and I have children here and I'm on the side of the freeway." And she said, "Well, you know, I have to have these measurements in order to send the right tow truck." And I said, "I don't know the length of the boat, and so I just need a tow truck to come." And she's like, "Well, I have to have these." And I said, "Well, thank you very much, I'll get help someplace else." And I hung up the phone on her.

Oh, here's something she said to me, she said, "How many people do you have in your party?" And I said, "There's six children and me, so seven." And she goes, "Well, I only have a vehicle that can carry five." And so, then in my shame I was very condescending towards her and I said, "Oh, so two of us will just stay here tonight along the fence on the freeway." And she goes, "Well, you're going to have to because you cannot put seven into a five-passenger car. There's not enough seatbelts." And I said, "I don't understand." And I started getting very angry. I said, "You expect two of us to not get a ride with the tow truck when it comes?" And she said, "Well, there's not enough seatbelts, maybe you could call a cab."

I couldn't believe it. She goes, "Maybe you could call a cab." And then I realized that she was absolutely disconnected. She was in her shame, I don't know what shame messages she was hearing because I didn't ask her, but she was very much showing up as better than, follow the rules, there's no exception. She just was disconnected from the experience that we were having. There was just no way to describe it to her. And so, I felt very invalidated, which is also an indicator that the person who is invalidating you is in shame.

So, I hung up the phone and I was very upset, and I just felt so misunderstood. I mean, if I wouldn't have been laughing, I probably would have been crying. And so, the boys come over and they said, "You know, my parents are wondering what the plan is." And I said, "Well, we've got a tow truck coming and the police and so just hang in there." And so, the cops show up and he puts a couple of the kids in the car and lets them kind of mess around in his car and kind of gave them some things to do so they could keep their mind off of what was going on.

And then, this tow truck shows up and Rick pops out. Rick is about 5'6"—nothing. That's about as tall as he is on a good day. And he slips out of his truck—he's in a big rig and he has to jump out of the truck. He comes over and he is the validation king. Now, little did I know that Rick was going to be so healthy and so validating. And he came over and he's like, "What you got here?" And I said, "Well, I don't know. I was driving along, and the car just stopped." And so, he opens up the hood and he goes, "Oh, this doesn't look good." And I said, "What?" And he goes, "You don't have any oil in your truck." And I was like, "Oh, goodness. Oh, goodness. That's not good."

My shame started talking to me again, like "*I can't believe you didn't check the oil, I can't believe that you'd be so irresponsible.*" And he said, "Well, I hope you haven't ruined your engine, but you might have. We've got to get this thing back to the shop."

He was very validating and just being very real, just calling it what it was, telling me here's the problem, and he said several times, he's like, "It's okay, these things happen. We'll get you back to the shop and we'll get it fixed up."

And so, he hooks up the truck and pulls it up on top of his flatbed—he didn't pull it onto the flatbed but just up in the air high enough to get the front tires off the ground. And then he had a van on his flatbed. And he goes over to the cab of his truck and about six people

get out of his cab and they walk around and climb onto the flatbed and get into the van that's chained down on the flatbed. I start thinking about the woman in New York City—my insurance company woman—and she would probably turn over in her grave if she knew that Rick had just put six people into their chained-down van on the back of his flatbed.

And so, four of us crawl into his cab and the others go with the police officer, and I told him the story about the woman in New York and he said to me, “Well, you know, we can't leave you here. It's dark outside. We've got to do what we've got to do.” He was so validating because he understood our vulnerability. He was so connected. It just made me chuckle that he was willing to do whatever was necessary to make sure that everybody got their needs met. The people that were there prior with their van on the back, they were getting their needs met, we were getting our needs met, he was validating our experience, because all of us were vulnerable, all of us had cars that were broken down and we were in a state of vulnerability, and here Rick was being so kind and connected—I want to say that. There was no shame that came out of him. He was just very centered in Reality.

[00:37:34] What is Vulnerability?

Let me draw your attention to what vulnerability means. Vulnerability means you recognize that you have limitations. You accept and live in the Truth. The Truth was that our car was broken down. The Truth was that their van was broken down. And we needed help. And that's another characteristic of vulnerability, is to ask for help. When I called for a tow truck, Rick came. And so, we were asking for help. And the other characteristic of vulnerability is being emotionally honest.

And so, when we're able to do that, we stay connected.

[00:38:13] What Blocks Connection?

Here are the things that block connection.

- When we go into shame.
- When we live in fear.
- When we live in drama or control.
- Or we lack vulnerability or validation.

That's when we disconnect. It blocks us our ability to connect to ourselves and to another person. And so, as I spent time with Rick on the 45-minute drive to the little town that he lives in, he told me all sorts of stories of him being a tow truck driver and all the people he's met. And they were such validating stories, that this man would help people who were in states of vulnerability. Very, very loving, very, very connecting, and so, my shame was calmed.

So, it's about 10:30 or 11 o'clock at night, we roll into town and we rent a hotel room. I started calling the parents and telling them what had happened, and that we probably were in need of a truck. And so, one of the parents started looking for the ability to use another truck. We were probably two and a half hours away from our home town so maybe one of

the parents could have driven a truck out so we could have used it for the week. But that was the plan.

And so, before I went to the hotel room, Rick said, "I've got to take off and go pick somebody else up tonight." I said, "Rick, it's 11 o'clock at night." And he's like, "Well, this person is in need, I've got to go get them. I'll look at your truck first thing in the morning."

And so, Rick took off to go help somebody else, again validating their vulnerability, connecting to this person. He didn't complain, he didn't go into pride, he didn't go into shame that said "*Oh, this is so unfortunate, nobody cares about me.*" He said just, "Somebody needs me, I've got to go help them."

So, we went to bed. The next morning about 5 o'clock, I got up and I walked outside and there was Rick with my hood up looking at my engine. He said, "Jodi, your engine is shot. It's seized and it needs to be replaced." I said, "Well, what does that mean?" And he said, "That means I'm going to need it for about two weeks. This truck is not going anywhere. It's definitely not going to pull that boat. I thought "*Oh, no, what are we going to do?*"

So, then my shame started talking to me again. Like, "This is bad, this is horrible, these things keep happening to me, my vacation is ruined." So, all these kind of shame messages that are inviting me to disconnect from the Reality, which was, I needed to make a plan and I needed to find another truck.

And so, I said before that it was the 4th of July weekend. So, I called all the parents again and reached out to them and they called family members, they called friends, and within like an hour or two, I'd received all the phone calls back and there was nobody who had a three-quarter ton truck that could pull this boat.

And so, then I started calling U-Haul places, places I could rent a truck, and they would not allow me to pull a boat with a rented truck. So, then I thought, I'll go buy a truck. It was a Sunday and I was in a little tiny town, and so none of the dealerships were open on a Sunday. I had thought about getting a bigger truck, and so I was thinking, I'll just get a used one. I was just desperate. I needed to find an automobile that could pull this boat, and the whole time my shame is telling me *I deserve to have a new truck, I don't deserve to have this happen to me*, and all those kinds of statements kept disconnecting me from the Reality which was, I didn't deserve to have a truck, I didn't deserve to not have this thing happen to me. It's just what was happening, and I needed to learn to accept it and realize that I was vulnerable.

So, shame's distortions grow roots within you and alter your beliefs about yourself and others. My shame was altering my belief about myself and about other people. It was telling me that people should come to my rescue, that someone should find a truck for me, that I'm doing these kind things for these children and so one of their parents *should* be able to help us out. That's a distorted belief about someone else.

The Truth is, is that no one owed me anything. And the Truth is, is that no one had any obligation to find me a truck. But shame wants to control my perceptions so I will never be able to be vulnerable, or I'll never be willing to be vulnerable. And that's what it was doing this whole entire time—it was trying to control my perceptions.

Rick said, “You're not going anywhere until you find a truck so why don't you just go to church with us? I'll have my wife come pick you guys up.” And so, his wife comes and picks us up and we are all dressed in our shorts, and our t shirts, and our flip-flops because we were planning on going down to the lake. The six boys and myself, we all go walking into church and his wife goes and sits right on the front row. I was mortified. I had never been to church, one, dressed in shorts and flip flops, and two, I've never sat on the front row in church. And so, my shame started talking to me again like, *Oh my goodness, what are people going to think? We look like transients. What are they going to believe about the way that we're dressed? I wonder if they're going to judge us, I wonder if they're going to like us.* My shame just started talking to me.

And as I sat there and experienced church with these people, I noticed their vulnerability. I noticed their connection as one of the men prayed, he prayed that there would be rain for their crops. It was an incredibly vulnerable prayer. And then, I watched some teenage boys help another teenage boy that was physically challenged walk up on the stand because he couldn't walk very well, and I noticed all of their vulnerability and their ability to connect. It was so touching that it quelled my shame. It silenced my shame. And I decided to connect to the Reality of what I was experiencing instead of the lies and the distortion that were going on in my head, and the fear that was going on in my head, trying to control the way that these people saw me.

So, after church, I got a phone call from the last possible mother to find a truck, and she said to me, “Jodi, I couldn't find one. I'm sorry.” I walked out of the chapel and I sat on the steps outside the building and I just put my head in my hands and just couldn't believe it. My shame started talking again like, *are you kidding me, this is really going to be what the week is going to entail? I'm stuck in this little town. What's the purpose of this? Why are these things happening to me? This isn't fair. How could you do this to me? Why won't you help? Don't punish me.* You know, just kind of talking out loud to some entity, some Higher Power, like I'm being punished—that's shame.

I wasn't being punished, I was inside of an experience where I was vulnerable and I was really struggling to connect because I wanted to control my vulnerability, I wanted to control the situation and find a truck so that I could have what I wanted. But the experience wasn't turning out that way, and so I was needing to accept and surrender what was happening instead of trying to control. Because every time I'd try to control it, I was disconnecting myself from Reality and therefore not learning these beautiful principles of vulnerability.

So, as I sat there, Rick saw me from inside and walked out and sat down next to me outside. And then, another gentleman came out and sat on the other side of me. Rick said, "So, what are you going to do?" I said, "Well, I have no more options. I have exhausted everything that I know how. I have called everyone that I know and there's no trucks because it's the fourth of July weekend." And he said, "Well, Jodi, you know, those boys deserve to go to Lake Powell. And you're a good woman and I really appreciate how hard you've worked this morning trying to find a truck. I'd like you to take my Suburban."

And I turned to Rick and my shame started talking again. Here Rick was, acknowledging my vulnerability and inviting me to connect with him, and instead of me validating him, I went into shame and I disconnected and said, "I can't do that. It's against the way that I've been taught." And Rick said, "Well, I don't know why you can't do it, I'm offering you my truck. I'd like you to use it. You guys need to go down and have a nice week, and I have a truck that can pull that boat."

So, here was Rick recognizing my vulnerability and validating me and connecting, or inviting me to connect. And I was in my pride. Because I was raised that you don't borrow things, especially an object like a car, because as I said to Rick, "What if I wreck it? What if I ruin it? What if I crash it? What's going to happen?" And he's like, "Well, it's an old suburban and so if you do those things, it's not that big of a deal because I don't use it anyways." And I said, "I can't. I can't do that." And the other guy on the other side of me said, "Why not? I've known Rick for 30 years. Rick would not offer you his car if he wasn't serious. He really would like you to use it." I said, "I can't. I can't do that."

Again, my shame distorted the Reality and I thought, "*What would my parents think?*" I mean, I'm a 40-year-old woman and I'm worrying, my shame is telling me, *your parents are not going to be okay with this*. Can you hear the shame? Can you hear the pride coming out of my mouth?

And so, Rick stood up and said, "I've got to go pick somebody else up that's stranded on the side of the freeway, I'll be back in an hour. You think about it, Jodi."

So, this other gentleman said, "I don't understand why you won't use his car." I said, "I can't. I've never done that, I've never borrowed such a large item from somebody. It's just wrong, I can't do it. I would be a bad person if I did." And he just shook his head and he's like, "I don't get it. I don't get it. I don't know why you won't accept his gift."

Well, the Truth was that I was being prideful. I was caught in my shame. I was disconnected from this beautiful gift of validation that he was offering me.

And so, I was able to finally connect with the Reality and I accepted the gift after about 40 minutes of this man talking to me. Rick's wife came out of church and said, "Hey, we'd like to take you to our home where you can wait for my husband there." So, after church, we all went to their house and about 10 minutes after we arrived there, the door bell rang. And she opened the door and there were about six women with their arms full of food.

They brought it in and placed it out on the table and said, “This food is for you. We know that you're hungry, we know you haven't eaten all day, and we'd like to serve you. We've made some homemade bread. I made some cookies last night.” And they brought over all this food for us to eat for these boys and myself.

Again, such connecting behavior. We were vulnerable, we had not eaten, and these people, recognizing the state that we were in and our vulnerability, validated us and connected with us.

So, I'm hoping that you can hear that when shame is present, shame says *I can't, it's impossible, it's bad, it's unworthy, I'm not enough, this can't happen*. Or it says things like, *I'm better than you, I don't have to follow the rules*. It could say something about the food like, *I can't eat this food because I don't know who cooked it*. It's just this very arrogant position. Whereas vulnerability and validation connect, shame and control and fear disconnect.

So, we ate this beautiful meal and Rick came home and hooked up our boat to the back of his suburban, and I as I got ready to close the door, I said, “You know, Rick, I don't even know your last name.” And he laughed and he told me his last name and gave me his cell number. I said, “Rick, what if I break down?” He goes, “Well, you're in luck because I'm the tow truck guy and I'll come pick you up.” So, very vulnerable again, very validating, very connecting.

Long story short, we went to Lake Powell, we had a beautiful time. We spent the whole week there, not one problem with his truck. Two days into our trip, he called me up and said, “Your truck is needing an engine and this is how much it's going to cost.” I said, “Okay, go ahead, fix it.”

And as we drove to the lake that morning, it was a beautiful opportunity to talk to all these boys about shame, about control, about fear, and how to heal shame, how to be vulnerable, and how to validate. And all of these boys talked about the shame they were hearing, and the fear they were feeling, and how Rick and those people from that little tiny town were so validating and so connecting to our vulnerability.

So, the way you heal shame is that you learn how to be vulnerable and validate. You are willing to be emotionally honest and responsible about the experiences that you're having. If you're not willing to do that, then you will not be able to challenge shame. I mean, I know this stuff really, really well and my shame was on a rampage for that day and a half because I was in a state of vulnerability, and shame comes in when we're vulnerable, and attacks, trying to get you to believe that you're not of worth, you don't matter, you're inadequate, and that life shouldn't be happening the way that it is to you.

However, the Reality, the Truth, is that life happens, experience happens. And it's our responsibility to recognize our experiences and to be honest about our experiences, to be emotionally honest which is, I was scared when that truck stopped, and I was scared that we

were in danger as we stood by the freeway, and I was scared because I didn't have anybody that I knew to help us. And so, it would have been much more appropriate and connecting if I could have just been emotionally honest with myself and then taken accountability for what it was that I needed to do. And my shame was so loud that I had to keep quelling it, I had to keep challenging it. I had to keep going back to the Truth of the situation, which was the experience, and not allowing shame to tell me what was true.

What the Truth was, was I broke down, I was on the side of the road, and my truck wouldn't move. And what shame was telling me was that I was irresponsible, I was incapable, I was negligent, and that just wasn't the Truth. Those were things that shame said were *true* but the Truth was none of those things were true.

So, I'm hoping that through this story that I just shared with you, that you can see your own life, that you can hear your own shame, that you can see how you try to control things, and how when fear happens to you, that you try to control. Because those things will disconnect you faster than anything.

Our free agency gives us an opportunity to either connect or disconnect. It's a very powerful gift—choice. And many of us are very unaware of how many choices we make during the course of the day. But I would encourage you to pay attention to the choices that you're making and see if the choices you make are either connecting or disconnecting you—according to whether there's shame or not.

So, we will talk again next week. Enjoy your week, pay attention to your shame, listen for when it talks to you, and challenge it. Get back into the Truth so that you can be connected with yourself, and others, and your Higher Power or God. Take care, stay connected, and we will talk next week. Bye bye.

-

Thank you so much for listening to ConneXions Classroom Podcast. If this episode has been insightful or meaningful to you, don't forget to leave a comment on this episode's podcast page or like, share and tweet about it on social media.

Emotional honesty and personal responsibility are the only ways to create true connection inside your relationships and we need your help to share this vital message. Please sign up to be a part of our social media team. Go to www.connexionsclassroom.com/smteam and find out there how you can be a part of connecting.