

*The following list of “Negative Rules and Negative Messages” may help you understand how destructive, toxic shame has become a part of your life. Look over these phrases and identify those to which you relate. Remember, you may or may not remember specifically “hearing” these words, but if you operate or function, to some degree, with these beliefs in place, the message was communicated to you by some means.*

#### NEGATIVE RULES

Don’t express your feelings  
Don’t get angry  
Don’t get upset  
Don’t cry  
Do as I say, not as I do  
Be good, “nice,” perfect  
Avoid conflict (or avoid dealing with conflict)  
Don’t think or talk; just follow directions  
Do well in school (exclusively)  
Don’t ask questions  
Don’t betray the family  
Don’t discuss the family with outsiders; keep the family secret  
Be seen and not heard!  
No back talk  
Don’t contradict me  
Always look good  
I’m always right, you’re always wrong  
Always be in control  
Focus on the troubled person’s behavior  
The troubled person’s behavior is not the cause of our problems  
Always maintain the status quo  
Everyone in the family must be an enabler

#### NEGATIVE MESSAGES

Shame on you  
You’re not good enough  
I wish I’d never had you  
Your needs are not all right with me  
Hurry up and grow up  
Be dependent  
Be a man  
Big boys don’t cry  
Act like a nice girl (or lady)  
You don’t feel that way  
Don’t be like that  
You’re so stupid (or bad, etc.)  
You caused it  
You owe it to us  
Of course we love you!  
I’m sacrificing myself for you  
How can you do this to me?  
We won’t love you if you . . .  
You’re driving me crazy!  
You’ll never accomplish anything  
It didn’t really hurt  
You’re so selfish  
You’ll be the death of me yet  
That’s not true  
I promise (though breaks it)  
You may me sick  
We wanted a boy/girl  
You \_\_\_\_\_  
(fill in the blank)

*(Negative Rules and Negative Messages developed by Charles Whitfield, M.D.)*