



Discomfortable: What Is Shame and How Can We Break Its Hold?

A. J. Bond

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A. J. Bond's challenging self-help book *Discomfortable* suggests becoming comfortable with one's shame.

First examining what shame is, and how it impacts people's lives, Bond mixes his own struggles into his work, including the twin challenges of being gay and trying to become a television star. He writes not as an expert, but as someone who spent years in therapy, and who brings their own experience to this difficult topic.

The work builds on the efforts of people like shame researcher Brené Brown, turning their scholarship into inspiration for people to find peace within themselves. It also argues that shame wants people to avoid feeling it, in the same way that people want to avoid feeling pain; but Bond claims that becoming uncomfortable is required for moving beyond shame to control one's own life. At the same time, becoming comfortable with, or acknowledging, painful emotions is essential—if one can learn to rely on logic, and not act based on such pain. Indeed, Bond proposes a delicate dance.

The book's recommendations are made approachable by Bond's humor, strong metaphors, and willingness to explore his difficult experiences. He asks people to imagine that their "most cherished" beliefs came from a brainwashing cult that goes by the tongue-in-cheek name "family," and imagines shame as an inherited, dangerous bomb—something that one would not want around, and that is not the individual's fault, but that does become their responsibility. Here, dealing with shame means finding a way to be aware and adaptive. Conveyed through personalized psychological insights, the book pairs its topical explorations of shame with tender, funny revelations, resulting in an approachable, earnest guidebook to living a more authentic life.

Discomfortable is an affirming self-help book that shows that it is possible to keep shame in its proper place and find freedom beyond it.

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