

7 OF EVIL L10 THE BELINDA BEAT L2

Life

HALLOWEEN

HOW'S TRICKS?

Pets join the party and teens just want to have fun.

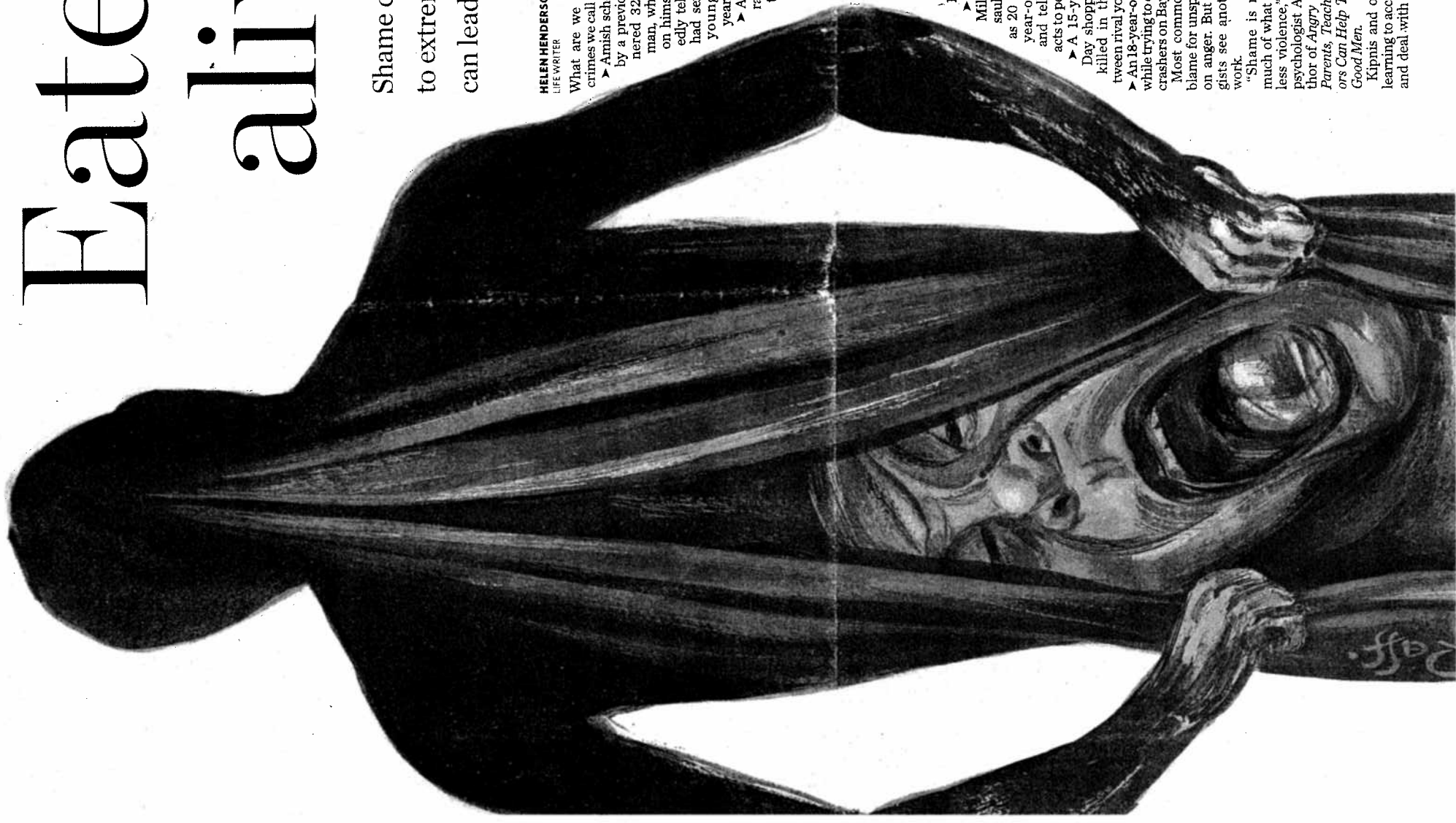
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Eaten alive

Shame can be healthy, but taken to extremes it poisons the soul and can lead to senseless violence



HELEN HENDERSON
LIFE WRITER

What are we to make of the crimes we call "senseless"?

► Amish schoolchildren shot by a previously mild-mannered 32-year-old milkman, who turns the gun on himself after reportedly telling his wife he had sexually molested young relatives 20 years ago.

► A fatal shooting rampage at Montreal's Dawson College by a suicidal loner whose act brings back nightmares of 14 women murdered in similar fashion by another resentful gunman in the same city 17 years ago.

► An 11-year-old Milwaukee girl assaulted by as many as 20 boys while a 16-year-old girl watches and tells her what sex acts to perform.

► A 15-year-old Boxing Day shopper on Yonge St. killed in the crossfire between rival youths.

► An 18-year-old fatally stabbed while trying to evict rowdy party crashers on Bayview Ave.

Most commonly, we lay the blame for unspeakable violence on anger. But many psychologists see another emotion at work.

"Shame is masked behind much of what we see as senseless violence," says California psychologist Aaron Kipnis, author of *Angry Young Men: How Parents, Teachers, and Counselors Can Help Bad Boys Become Good Men*.

Kipnis and others argue that learning to accept, acknowledge and deal with shame could cut

the risk of much destructive and seemingly senseless behavior — and that goes for everyone from superstar Mel Gibson with his explosions of drunken anger, to North Korean leader Kim Jong-il and his detonation of nuclear test bombs.

They take heart from the fact that some celebrities are speaking out about their personal battles. (Think Brooke Shields talking publicly about her post-partum depression.)

At its best, shame is given credit for preventing us from committing crimes against friends and family and society at large. But for those who never learn to value themselves and cope with negativity, the dark side of shame can lead to everything from suicide to mass murder and world wars.

"Some things we should be ashamed of," says David Goldberg, senior medical adviser at the Toronto-based Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. "The people who should give a pause are the ones who have a

But for those unable to deal constructively with shame, it's a different story.

"Most of us are able to put things in compartments; that's an innate aspect of survival," Goldblum says. "There are many complex reasons why things fall apart. When we're pressed, for example, our ability to compartmentalize is eroded. Things get blown out of proportion; they leech out."

Shame is powerful because it makes us feel irredeemably "defective" to our very core, writes New Jersey psychologist Michael Lewis in *Shame: The Evils We Hide*. "It tells us we are rotten and no good."

Even in an age when we teach children that diversity is healthy, that being different is "nothing to be ashamed of," fe-

► Please see **Shame**, L3

Internalized shame 'grows like cancer'

► **Shame** From L1

ings of shame and inadequacy can still fester deep down.

"It's the same thing from the dinner table to the disarmament table," says Katy Hutchison, author of *Walking After Midnight: One Woman's Journey Through Murder, Justice and Forgiveness*.

In 1997, Hutchison's husband Bob McIntosh was literally kicked to death while trying to break up a rowdy teen party in Squamish, B.C. Four years later, a young man, Ryan Aldridge, pleaded guilty to manslaughter.

Aldridge told police he was drunk and angry the night of the party. He then asked to meet McIntosh's widow.

"Ryan had been bullied as a child," says Hutchison, who has since remarried. "He was ashamed, a target, and not able to articulate it." Like so many others, "he was bullied and then he became a bully," she says.

"Women usually react to shame by attacking themselves," Kipnis says. "They develop eating disorders; they cut themselves. Boys act out."

"So many mass murderers are outsiders, who have been picked on and are ashamed. It's an nihilistic response to the world that has made them feel that way."

Because shame can be so devastating to our sense of self, "when it's repetitive or excessive, it becomes beyond our ability to deal with it," says psychologist Gershen Kaufman, professor emeritus at Michigan State University and author of *The Psychology of Shame*.

"Early humiliation is a common denominator in violent outbursts, abusive behaviour. I don't know the gunman in the Amish shootings. I don't know if he himself was molested. But you can bet your bottom dollar he was somehow brutally shamed as a child."



Women keep vigil near the West Nickel Mines Amish School this month after a gunman killed five little girls from their community. The killer told his wife he was driven by shame over sexual assaults he committed years before.

FRED COMEGYS / TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO

"Shame internalized grows like cancer. I suspect there's a critical density."

Is shame over its poverty behind North Korea's display of nuclear strength? Kipnis believes it may be. "The fact that people are hungry could be taken as evidence for all the world to see that their ideology has failed," he says. "Germany after World War I was demoralized. Hitler set out to change that."

Why is shame so overlooked as a key emotion?

One reason may be because it's frequently confused with guilt, when in fact they couldn't be more different.

Essentially, we may feel guilty about things we have done but we also can choose to address our mistakes by acting differently or making amends. (Think of the well-meaning, albeit unpredictable, efforts of the title

character from the television comedy *My Name Is Earl*.)

Shame is a much more visceral stab at feelings about our very being.

"Guilt is a thought, a finding of fact, an acceptance of responsibility," Goldbloom says. "Shame is an emotion, a negative expression of guilt."

It also undermines our ability to make good decisions.

"Shame impairs people's abil-

ity to generate effective solutions to interpersonal problems and/or diminishes confidence in one's ability to implement those solutions," writes psychologist June Tangney, co-author of *Shame And Guilt*.

Tangney, a professor at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., studied the progress of 550 children from elementary school to age 18. She found those most prone to shame were more

likely to have unsafe sex and drink at a younger age. They were also less likely to apply to college.

By contrast, those more prone to feeling guilt were less likely to try drugs and alcohol. They were also less likely to become criminals, less likely to commit suicide and more likely to practice safe sex.

Tangney's researchers also looked at 500 inmates in a detention centre near Washington.

They found inmates who were vulnerable to shame tended to deny responsibility for their crimes and often acted aggressively. Guilt-prone inmates tended to accept responsibility for their crimes and show much less aggression.

Among the researchers' conclusions: People in the grip of shame often blame others for their problems and lash out impulsively.

"Shame is a fuel," says B.C.'s Hutchison, who speaks far and wide on the subject. As she has discovered through her friendship with the young man who fatally attacked her first husband, the only way to quell the flame is to treat it with kindness, Hutchison says.

"You need to reach out, build relationships, establish a dialogue. If you push away, it only leads to more alienation and anger. It just builds up to the point where it becomes overwhelming."

That's one of the reasons she and others believe that publicly shaming violent offenders merely leads to more violence.

"Shame inducement is one of the least productive ways to modify behaviour," Kipnis says.

Any environment that encourages openness is good, says Goldbloom of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. "Shame is hard to share. So stick with a friend, keep encouraging them to talk."

Article: "Eaten Alive"
Toronto Star, Sat. Oct. 28, 2006.
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Please read the article "Eaten Alive" and answer the following questions:

1. What emotion does Dr. Kipnis see as primarily behind violence ?
2. What does he say could decrease much destructive and "seemingly senseless" behaviour in society ?
3. What are the "light" and "dark" sides of shame ?
4. Shame can become the feeling of _____.
5. Like so many others, the teen who kicked Bob McIntosh to death had been what ?
How did this result in shame ?
6. What is the difference between how men and women tend to deal with shame ?
7. What is the common denominator of violent outbursts ?
8. What emotion is shame frequently confused with ? How are these two emotions different ?
9. What did the Tangney Study say about those teens who were more prone to shame, compared to those who were more prone to guilt ?

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10. What did the Tangney Study say about those prisoners who were more prone to shame, compared to those who were more prone to guilt ?

11. According to researchers, what do people in the grip of shame do ?

12. If this is true, what will publicly shaming criminals, as some jurisdictions do, probably result in ?