Rock of Pain meets Rock of Shame

Rock of Pain

Our colleagues at the Addiction Recovery Center in San Jose, CA (www.addictionrecoverycenter.org) have developed a helpful concept called "The Rock of Pain." They propose that for the partner of a sexual addict, the pain can feel as big as a boulder. For all of your strength, you cannot push it away. What is needed for this mountain of rock to begin to dissolve into pebbles is the addict "leaning into" the rock with remorse, rigorous honesty, and having the strength to rebuild trust.

Unfortunately, there inevitably is something that gets in the way of the addict doing what needs to be done to erode this rock. The addict has his own boulder that needs eroding.

Rock of Shame

In his book *Healing the Shame that Binds You*; John Bradshaw differentiates healthy and toxic shame. "Healthy shame (or guilt) is the emotional core of our conscience. It is emotion which results from behaving in a manner contrary to our beliefs or values." Healthy shame helps one to identify when a behavior has been bad and they can turn from it. Toxic shame on the other hand, causes one to feel as if they ARE bad, not merely their behavior. Bradshaw further writes that toxic shame "is the root and fuel of all compulsive addictive behaviors."

In his book *Out of the Shadows*, Patrick Carnes further illustrates this as he suggests that there are two core beliefs that sex addicts have which relate to their fundamental view of themselves. These beliefs are "I am basically a bad, unworthy person" and "No one would love me as I am."

We would suggest beginning a dialogue between these two boulders. Just as a climber slowly makes his way over a rock, you too can climb your boulder, but not alone. With the aid of the recovery process, you will be able to communicate around these rocks until they are merely landscape. As the addict clears up his toxic shame and owns his healthy shame, he will be able to lean into the partner's pain, giving her the remorse, honesty, and trust that they both need.