

100 Shame Attacking Exercises

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Inspired, edited slightly, and formatted by Dr. David Burns

Comment: Some of these suggestions may be helpful and many may seem lame, so use your best judgment when choosing. I have edited this very slightly, but it is far from polished. There are several principles to keep in mind when doing Shame-Attacking Exercises.

- The point should always be to poke fun at yourself, and not some other person. If you can make people laugh, that's a good thing.
- They should not be hostile or aggressive, or frightening to others.
- They should also not be mean-spirited. I removed quite a few that didn't fit the bill, to my way of thinking.
- You should not "use" or inconvenience people who are working, like waiters in a restaurant.
- Think about the environment. I would never to them in a hospital, for example, but acting goofy at an athletic event or a busy street corner would be totally fine.

For example, let's say you decide to walk down the street with a banana on a dog's leash. This is pretty funny and would not frighten or intimidate anyone. Or you, could go up to a stranger and ask if you could sing a brief song and want their opinion since you are thinking of auditioning for a television talent show. Then belt it out. This is very good if you have a terrible voice! We do this often on my Sunday hikes with my students, and strangers seem to really like it and find it funny.

Do not be limited by this list. You can probably think of some of your own!

You may notice that some of these are assertiveness exercises rather than Shame-Attacking Exercises.

1. Ask someone in a restaurant if you can try what they are eating.
2. Lie down on the ground for 30 seconds in a busy place...then get up with a smile and pretend nothing's happened. Or, invite others to lie down on the ground with you.
3. Sit on the floor near the door of a train carriage, even when there are seats available.
4. Go into a drug store and ask out loud for condoms.
5. Ask for a tour of the kitchen in a restaurant (but not if things are crowded and the staff is busy.)
6. Throw water on your pants (or dress), then yell out in public "Oh look, I've peed in my pants."
7. Go up to a Police Officer, say you think they are cute, and ask if you can kiss them.
8. For a man, go into a lingerie shop and ask for a bra in your size.
9. Tow a banana on a string down a busy public street.
10. Sing loudly and sincerely on a busy street corner.
11. Walk down a street, or sit in a Tram, Bus, or Train with a bag over your head.
12. Politely express your disagreeing point of view with someone who seems to be an authority on a particular subject.
13. Say no thank you when yes is the polite thing to say (if you really want to say no)
14. Elect not to applaud when you are not impressed by a performance.
15. Not nodding agreement when the other person is encouraging you to do so by saying "Right, right..."
16. Firmly telling a sales person "No thank you" and hanging up the phone without waiting for a reply.
17. Bargaining for a better price: you can always ask "May I have this at a better price?"

18. Let someone know how you would prefer to be addressed.
19. Graciously sell yourself if that is something you are disinclined to do but need to do to accomplish a particular goal.
20. Risking being rejected when you make a request from another person.
21. Do something imperfectly when it does not matter enough to you to be more exacting.
22. Telling someone the truth if that is what is called for.
23. Wear clothing you really like, even if it is normally not what someone your age or gender would typically wear.
24. Judiciously use four letter words if it enhances your point, and if it is out of character for you.
25. Call someone by their first name when you do not know them well.
26. Ask what might be considered a stupid question, but one that you honestly do not know the answer to, and do not apologize for your ignorance.
27. Do not donate to a charity when disinclined to do so, even when others are donating.
28. Do not participate in the office "shake downs" for money when you feel disinclined to participate.
29. Tell a lame joke or act silly.
30. Sing a song while walking down the street.
31. Say or do what you really want, even if it is unpopular, if it does not hurt anyone and is not against your long-term interests.
32. Politely point out when someone cuts the line you are standing in, that there is a line and pointing to where the last position is.
33. Do not go to church or religious services, if these no longer have meaning to you.
34. Give your psychotherapist feedback on whether he or she is helping you.
35. Tell someone you love something positive that you really like about them, if this is out of character for you.
36. Wear a style of bathing suit you really like, even if that is not what you typically wear.
37. Politely asking someone a personal question if you are curious.
38. Reveal your age.
39. Politely ask someone their age.
40. Introduce yourself to someone you do not know (especially good in elevators or standing in lines).
41. Admit you do not know the answer to a question.
42. Admitting you have misbehaved or committed an error without trying to cover it up.
43. Say "no" to a friend's request for a favor, when you really do not want to do this particular thing.
44. Stop random people in the street and try to start a conversation with them. Some things to say are: "Hi, I can't remember the capital of Belarus? Do you happen to know?"
45. Going into a normal bookstore and ask for advice on which is better "The Joy of Sex" or "The Kama Sutra"?
46. For a woman who is embarrassed by it, go to the beach without shaved legs, and for a man who is embarrassed by it, going out in public unshaven with 2- or 3-days growth.
47. Wear really silly clothes. Start with something small but noticeable and end up in full ridiculous fancy dress.
48. Use a Pogo stick around town. This is not too weird, but it should draw attention to you.

49. See "Ed Bassmaster" YouTube channel for more ideas.
50. Make yourself a large poster. Write on it something you are embarrassed about, it could simply be "I'M REALLY SHY!" or "HONK IF YOU LIKE SHY PEOPLE!". Walk to a super busy corner and move the sign around and wave to people. You can wear a wig or silly glasses if you want. When you are feeling shy, you can hide behind the sign if it's large enough and come out when feeling braver.
51. Deliberately try to smile at cashiers / clerks who you have to deal with.
52. Post on a forum that you're interested in.
53. Sit in a crowded space like a bar.
54. Ask a random person for the time.
55. Ask for directions to somewhere plausible.
56. Go into a store and ask where something is.
57. Yawn loudly while walking past people.
58. Ask for things on the menu that you know aren't on the menu.
59. Go up to a stranger and ask their opinion of something (e.g. piece of clothing).
60. Ask the store clerk their opinion on a best seller, did they like it and how many copies they have sold.
61. Order a sandwich and when it's ready tell cashier that you've forgotten your wallet. Then after a while find it in your other pocket.
62. Swear a tirade on your mobile phone while walking past someone (you don't have to have called anyone, just pretend you did).
63. Ask strangers where a shop is while standing right outside it.
64. Go to a garage sale in your pajamas.
65. Ask another customer somewhere if they know the actors in "Harry met Sally" or another classic film.
66. Take a shoe box for a walk with the word "DOG" written on it.
67. Sing while walking past someone.
68. Go up a down escalator.
69. Go to bookstore and ask if they have any books on the social impact of farting.
70. Block someone's way while pretending to be on the phone and move only when they ask you to.
71. Go to every man in a crowded table and ask. "Are you Carl Smith?"
72. Ask people for \$2.
73. Announce the stops while travelling on a Train, Tram or Bus.
74. Take a banana on a string out for a walk.
75. Do karaoke.
76. Look at somebody at the supermarket checkout as you say "Hi" and "Bye".
77. Tell a friend about your problems with Social Anxiety.
78. Smile and say hello to five strangers every day for a week.
79. Compliment a stranger on their clothing.

80. Wear shorts when it's cold outside.
81. Dye your hair a different color than the norm.
82. Sing a Christmas Carol to strangers on the street.
83. Say "Hello" to somebody in a different language.
84. Ask if a small discount is possible when buying something.
85. Ride a crowded elevator standing backward facing the rear looking at the others in the elevator, and then give them a speech something like "I've called you all here today because".
86. Find a restaurant that offers "two eggs any style" and ask your waiter for "One fried and one scrambled".
87. Cry in Public
88. Go into a police station and say to the officer on the desk that you appreciate the work that they do in keeping the community and you safe and then leave.
89. Get up and leave a meeting if the presenter is boring or if the topic turns out not to interest you.
90. Ask a stranger if you can take a selfie with them
91. Slow dance on a rooftop with a friend or lover.
92. Drive around, crank out your favorite songs and have a dance off at stoplights to make strangers laugh
93. Send someone flowers for no reason
94. Go to a restaurant and ask if the chef can create something completely new for you.
95. Ask someone on a date who you think is way out of your league.
96. Make a fool of yourself in public on a dance floor by dancing in a really goofy way. You can't consume alcohol beforehand either.
97. Go to a karaoke bar and sing like you're the best singer there is.
98. Make a free hugs sign, stand in a high traffic place and dish out some loving
99. Be vulnerable. Tell someone your biggest fear, regret or desire.
100. While shopping in a supermarket carrying a shopping basket, put a 2nd one on your head.