

Dear Little One, Release Your Shame

✘ Dear Little One, Release Your Shame (A Letter from a Father to a Child)

Dear Little One, You have not been perfect. Far from it. Do you remember the time you crept downstairs while everyone was sleeping and snuck the Kool-Aid from the refrigerator? Do you remember how, when you got caught, you lied and said you didn't do it? You've punished yourself for that transgression for long enough. You are forgiven. Release your shame.

You are not the poor decisions you sometimes make.

Do you remember the time you accidentally brought home someone else's homework, feared getting into trouble for making a mistake, and stuffed the homework beneath our house, where you thought no one would find it? You've lived in fear long enough. Release your shame.

You are not the things you do when you are most afraid.

Do you remember the bullies on the playground? You were trying to figure out how to become a man, and with every bruise, you doubted more and more if you could become one. The bruises on your skin became bruises on your heart. Your skin has healed—it is time now for your heart to heal, too. Release your shame.

You are not defined by the bruises you've picked up along the way.

Do you remember when *you* became the bully? Do you remember how you teased that poor, sad, lonely kid on the playground? You've wounded people. This is true. But the shame you've felt about it is a wound that festers, infecting you and everyone

around you. Release your shame.

You are not the desperate things you've done in order to belong.

Do you remember all the subtle ways you've arrogantly looked down upon your peers? I get it. You think you're fighting for a spot in a very tiny winner's circle. You've fallen into the same trap as the rest of us. You are forgiven. Release your arrogance, which is really just another guise for your shame.

You are not the games you've played and won, or lost.

Little One, I pray you will release your shame, because the truth is, you *are* me. Though I've written many letters to my own children, this is a letter to you, the child I once was, the little one who still exists somewhere within me. In fact, I think all those letters to my kids have also been a letter to *you*—the scared, ashamed, confused, and desperate little kid I was and, in some ways, still am.

Little One, there can be no true healing for this adult version of me until there is, first of all, healing for you. So, please, listen closely. Please hear this grace I pass along to you. Please receive these truer words about you:

When you arrived in this world, pink and slippery and shrill, you were good enough.

Life and time and brokenness have caused you to doubt your worthiness—in other words, they've caused you shame. That's okay. It happens to all of us. But if we are to truly embrace this one sacred life, something else must happen to each of us as well—we must embrace this truth:

Nothing *has*, *will*, or *can* alter our original worthiness.

Little One, you have not been perfect. Far from it. But if you can trust your worthiness in this way, you will be free to embrace your people and your purpose with a blessed abandon.

So...

Do your best, make your mistakes, be honest about your messes, and move on.

Go ahead, live in fear—that's part of being human—but confess your fears and invite other people into them. Life is less lonely that way.

Take your risks and take your lumps, but know that your hidden heart is without bruise or blemish; it has always been whole and holy—love from it, live from it.

People will not always be kind. This will hurt. Cry when it hurts. Then, as often as you can, summon your own kindness in return. When you do, be surprised by the joy you find within you.

And most of all, refuse to play the games people tend to play—know that the battle for your worthiness is already won.

Because you *were*, *are*, and always *will* be, loveable.

Together, This Bigger Version of You



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