

RECLAIM YOUR SHAME

EMPOWERING YOUTH WITH MOTOR DISABILITIES



A supportive narrative by:

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ABSTRACT SUMMARY

In this supportive narrative, the author analyzes the concept of shame, how this hurts youth (aged 18-30) with motoric disabilities, and how specifically this target audience can use games and queer theory to reclaim our shame to be more secure and live less stressful, more fulfilling lives. The author has a visible motoric disability and a background in AAA Game Design and Production from Breda University Of Applied Sciences, which is why this specific connection was made. To fully understand this subject matter, the author first elaborates on the following subject matter:

- What shame is from an emotional response standpoint, where shame can come from both intrinsically and extrinsically, as mostly based on the studies of Jean-Paul Satre, and the concept of ontological shame?
- Why do we think of everything as a roleplaying game according to Homo Ludens, and how this can help us not internalise ontological shame.
- What 'to reclaim' something means according to queer theory, how minorities in history have turned negative experiences into positives, and how our language manifests into reality according to Metaphors We Live By.
- How disabled youth have dealt with shame and discrimination in the past and present, their problems and how the connection with Homo Ludens and J.P. Sarte is an interesting new direction to take this in.

To crystalize the results of their findings, the author also developed a few creative endeavours to test their theories out. The author reflects on their first creative expressions about disabled youth and why they didn't reach the impact that was required, because they missed a specific goal and were too shocking and controversial in nature, and now developed well in tandem with stakeholders. Particularly the usage of fear and horror was distracting from a kind of societal change the author was hoping for. Though an interesting link from horror media to this subject matter is still that many horror monsters and villains are disabled; or at the very least disability-coded, which has bad repercussions on how people view the disabled in media.

Another interesting problem the author encountered was that due to the usage of Homo Ludens and AAA gameplay background, the author encountered the problem that gamification is sometimes a challenge in making the game not too enjoyable for the audience since too much fun can distract audiences from a message that the author is trying to get across. If we intend to use gamification for the benefit of better-understanding minorities, this is a consideration we'll have to take in future projects.

The project the author has developed with the help of shame theory, and queer theory and in better tandem with stakeholders and the target audience has a better impact on the audience. While a lot more testing is necessary, if scaled up and tested more, it could be a huge benefit to not just the target audience but other minorities and groups of people who suffer from ontological shame as well.

Having a constant reminder that in some cases, shame is an internalisation of a societal expectation that the shamee experiences and a way to share those experiences with other people that share the same kind of problems can lead to providing relief and being able to reclaim their emotions to lead more fulfilling lives.

FOREWORD

This supportive narrative endeavours to delve into the realm of empowering young individuals with motor disabilities, shedding light on the profound issue of ontological shame and its massive impact on their lives. By comprehending the essence of shame and exploring how games and other interactive interventions can foster a sense of shamelessness, we can contemplate the creation of playful interventions that empower and uplift these remarkable individuals.

About The Author

The personal significance behind the selection of this subject matter stems from the author's own life experiences. Born with Erb's Palsy, a condition that has influenced every facet of their existence, the author deeply understands the challenges faced by individuals with motor disabilities. Notably, DJ Paul of Three 6 Mafia fame stands as a prominent figure with this affliction, whose immense commercial success and background in gangster rap have not shielded him from concealing his arm within a casket—a testament to the enduring impact of ontological shame, no matter the amount of material success people receive.

Equipped with a degree in Game Design and Production from Breda University of Applied Sciences, the author possesses a profound appreciation for the power of video games as the most captivating and immersive form of escapism available to us. It is only natural that individuals with disabilities are drawn to these well-designed realms of solace, seeking respite from the hardships of everyday life. However, it is important to recognize that the yearning for escapism arises from the pressing need to liberate oneself from the challenges one faces in daily life complicated by motor disabilities.

From this combination of lived experience and professional background, came the feeling that the way video games hook and engage us emotionally, they could ascend their escapism status and be used as a tool for improving the lives of those who seek escapism, and give them a sense of pride and joy.

The research question that the author started the year with was, how could those with disabilities benefit from creative expressions like games and movies, leading to various projects made, with often the design questions revolving around using shock value as a way to make those without disabilities aware of the trouble those with motoric disabilities face. As the year went on, and the author discussed a lot more with stakeholders and did more scientific research, the research question went to 'How could those born with motoric disabilities

deinternalise their ontological shame?’ and similarly, the design question went to ‘what playful design could make the target audience aware of their own shame and be able to reclaim it?’

When the author came into contact with stakeholders, several problems of youth with disabilities came up. Ableism and accessibility came up often, but also shame. As the author tested several creative expressions to help create more awareness of the subject matter, several interesting results came from these interventions that could help the target audience. The author finally makes some calculated estimations on how future playful interventions they or any readers might make in the future and how they could be used on other audiences.

About This Supportive Narrative

The point of this supportive narrative is to correctly inform the reader of what shame means within this context, and how this specifically affects the motoric disabled youth. It furthermore goes into what creative intermissions the author has designed while taking part in the year-long master crossover creativity and reflects on what the research found while taking this course could be used for. This document is also a graduation requirement for the year-long full-time HKU Master Crossover Creativity.

THE PROBLEM OF SHAME

Shame As An Emotional Response

Shame, from a purely emotional response viewpoint, is a very complex and multifaceted experience, but it's easily understood by any human being when felt, regardless of culture. To put it into text, it's best described as a profound sense of personal inadequacy, unworthiness, or disgrace, often triggered by a perceived failure, violation of societal norms, or exposure of one's vulnerabilities. (Tracy & Robins, 2007). The process of feeling shame involves the evaluation of the self as being flawed or defective on a fundamental level. The feelings after the event that has caused shame are often to withdraw and hide from others which can incur this feeling of shame, and lead to a negative spiral. Of course like every emotion, shame can be felt in various levels of strength.

These feelings are the same whenever they are risen by the internal (self-judgement, negative self-perception) or the external. (Societal or parental judgement, stigmatisation or even harsh critical feedback.) The emotion of ‘shame’ is a core part of our humanity and the emotional response is not really the problem to solve itself, and can even be used as a tool of growth. Rather, it's more clear to state that shame is an effect of a cause, whether it be an inner reaction or an outer event. What this supportive narrative concerns are the causes of this emotional effect.

Understanding Ontological Shame

The word 'shame' is a very complex term, and has many uses and meanings dependent on cultural context, and even in a single culture, there are many ways to use the word shame. This supportive narrative is using Jean-Paul Sartre's viewpoints on shame, which is best described as ontological shame (Sartre, J.-P. 1956). This sense of shame is not at all like for example; embarrassment, which is more related to feeling awkward at a single event. Sartre's description of shame is more like a sense of awareness that your existence is not exclusive to yourself, and that you exist to what Sartre refers to as the "Other", in the way an object does.

For example, you might not care that you are overweight, have acne or have any other differing physical attributes than the established norm. However, often from early childhood and especially in puberty, a desire to fit in creeps in. It's also rather common for people to be, for example; told to lose weight, told to get braces to have teeth fixed et cetera. Bullying can be seen as a more extreme form of this kind of behaviour. However, even without family members, peers or friends being brash or straight-up rude, it's important to notice that according to Sartre's viewpoint on shame, the act of "shaming" is not attributed to any specific individuals or groups. Instead, Sartre emphasizes that the most shame emerges from the individual's own awareness of being perceived and evaluated by others. The "Other," as conceptualized by Sartre, represents the collective gaze and judgment of society. It is through this gaze that individuals come to recognize themselves as objects in the eyes of others that meet or don't meet certain standards. Therefore, according to Sartre, the act of shaming is not limited to specific individuals who intentionally inflict shame upon others. Instead, it is an inherent aspect of social existence in capitalism, where individuals internalize the gaze of the "Other" and experience shame as a result of perceiving themselves as objects of judgment in the eyes of society.

Aside from physical attributes, people will also shame other people for themselves internally for achievements, ability and life progress. A really common trait of this kind of ontological shame is for it to be related to age: not ever having had a partner at age 30, being jobless, Having had 7 ex-partners at age 21, Still living together with your parents in adulthood are all considered "problems" to be ashamed of. Look at it from the outside. Our society does not only have a mould to fit in, but this mould effectively changes over time, and a large majority of people in society unconsciously uphold this mould by shaming the "Other".

Shame is most often an emotional response to a single event, for example being awkward in front of a large group of people. A common response for the brain is to then believe: *I shouldn't have done that in this situation*. The mental strain of ontological shame comes from the fact that, instead of this emotional response being linked to this one event that happened in your life experience, it's linked to your existence as it is. You should feel the emotional response not about one single moment, but about how you exist and are perceived as an object to others. *"I shouldn't exist the way I do now."*

This ontological shame poses a huge problem to minorities. Consider for example, that even in a country where homosexuality is legalized, a person who is gay will still not come out of the closet because they get the sense that they should be *ashamed* for not fitting the others' mould, having horrible effects on their mental health.

Shame And The Motor Disabled

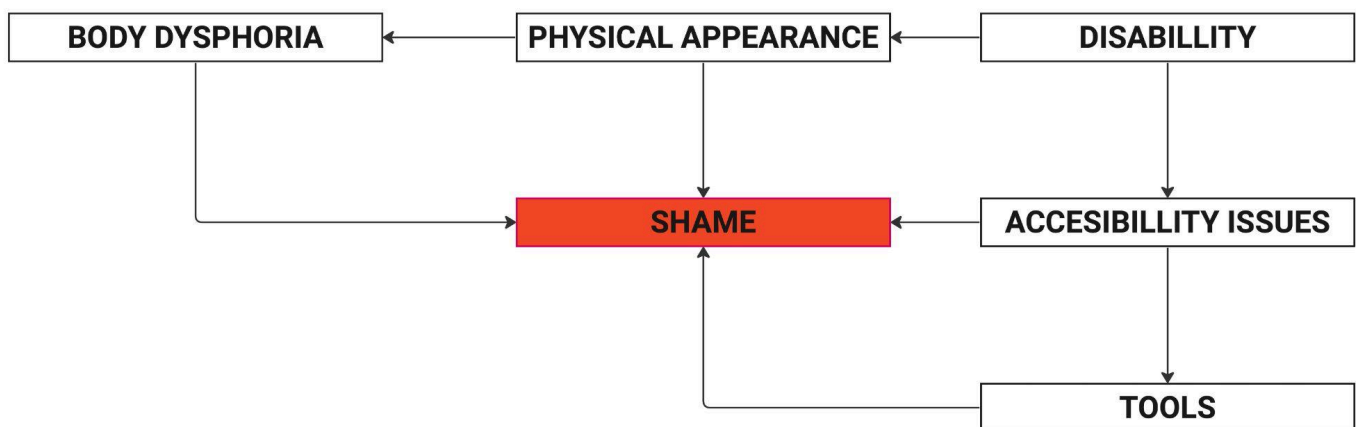
Those with motor disabilities are very vulnerable to this kind of ontological shame. Not being able to participate in certain sports, or not being able to take the stairs often leads to huge mental strain and feelings of shame.

As we age, the mould that we get shamed into changes. Because the elderly are more likely to have motor disabilities, the older we get, the less likely we are to be shamed for physical "ineptness". Elderly people often don't even identify with the label of disabled or acknowledge their minority status, as is expected with the elderly. It's for this reason that the subject matter specifically focuses on youth with motoric disabilities.

Often tools can enhance the sense of shame. Needing assistance from tools such as a wheelchair, crutches are very visible to the other. Interestingly; the need for glasses is so common in our society that it transcended the status of a tool and has evolved into a fashion accessory. And similarly, the older we get the more normalised any accessibility tool becomes.

People with motor disabilities may experience shame that's quickly internalised when they require assistance from others to access events or activities. Relying on help from others can create a sense of dependence and vulnerability, potentially leading to feelings of being a burden or disappointment to friends or family members. There is also a risk of social exclusion, where individuals with motor disabilities may not be invited to events or activities due to assumptions or concerns about their accessibility needs. The fear of not being included or being left out can be highly stressful for individuals with disabilities and may further contribute to feelings of shame.

The idealized body image portrayed in media can exacerbate feelings of shame for individuals with motor disabilities. The unrealistic portrayal of "perfect" bodies often neglects the diverse experiences and appearances of people with disabilities. This can lead to body dysphoria, a sense of dissatisfaction or shame about one's own body, as individuals with motor disabilities may compare themselves to these unattainable standards. Furthermore, throughout history, disabled individuals or those coded as disabled in pop culture have often been portrayed as monsters, killers, or objects of extreme pity. These negative and limited representations in media have perpetuated stigmatizing stereotypes and reinforced feelings of shame associated with disability. To summarise this chapter: the following thought model could be helpful:



-> = leads to and/or causes

It's clear that the disability itself takes some extra issues in society before it fully manifests into shame.

Shame Could Help Us Grow. Productive Shame

To reclaim and redefine shame, it is crucial to analyze the underlying causes of this emotional response. It is worth considering that, in certain instances, shame is not just a negative thing in its very existence. It can serve as a catalyst for personal growth. One perspective is that individuals could harness shame as a tool to motivate self-improvement and transformation, as soon as they are aware that the shame comes from within the self, and is not ontological in nature. This is the "reclaim" part of Reclaim Your Shame. Specifically, Nussbaum, a philosopher and ethicist, proposes an interesting perspective on shame by distinguishing between "healthy shame" and "toxic shame."

She argues that healthy shame can be a constructive emotion that helps individuals recognize and rectify their mistakes, while toxic shame is destructive

and can lead to self-loathing. Nussbaum's approach focuses on actively cultivating healthy shame as a means of moral growth and self-improvement. (Nussbaum, 2004)

If somebody has been consistently late for work and missing deadlines, healthy shame, according to Nussbaum, prompts them to reflect, take responsibility, and make positive changes. Rather than sinking into self-loathing, This person acknowledges their supervisor's concerns, commits to improvement, apologizes to their colleagues, and prioritizes their responsibilities. Shame in this situation leads to self-reflection, accountability, and concrete actions to rectify their mistakes and contribute effectively to the team, and overall a better person.

It is important to note that while Nussbaum refers to "healthy shame," the author prefers the term "productive" to better convey the concept's essence, particularly when communicating with stakeholders and the target audience. The term "healthy" can inadvertently imply actively seeking or pursuing shame, which is not the case. Shame is a natural emotional experience that arises in life.

This complexity is amplified when considering individuals with disabilities. For instance, if a person in a wheelchair is consistently late due to inaccessible buildings and feels ashamed, their shame can be productive in prompting necessary changes for accessibility. However, it is not necessarily healthy for that shame to exist in the first place.

Therefore, the author has found that adopting the term "productive shame" captures the idea more accurately, emphasizing the transformative potential of shame without implying its desirability or pursuit, especially in the case of those with disabilities.

By describing shame as productive, we emphasize its capacity to drive positive change and encourage individuals to reflect on their actions, values, and behaviours. Unlike toxic shame, which tends to be paralyzing and destructive, productive shame prompts individuals to confront their shortcomings, make amends, and seek self-improvement.

Sartre also acknowledged the transformative potential of shame, suggesting in *Being And Nothingness* that it can serve as a catalyst for self-reflection and personal growth. By confronting and being made aware of the dissonance between their authentic selves, who they want to be and the perceived expectations of others, individuals have the opportunity to reassess their values, challenge societal norms, and strive towards a more authentic existence; reclaiming their shame.

Reclaiming And Internalising: Pride And Queer Theory

When one thinks of the words reclaim, various other marginalised groups come to mind. Various authors have already viewed the disabled struggle through the lens of other marginalised groups. In the book "Feminist Queer Crip" by Alison Kafer, she explores how the pride and strength of feminism and queer communities could assist disabled individuals. (Kafer, A. 2013)

Also, in a general sense, pride, which is a word commonly associated with queer individuals as an emotional concept can be considered the opposite of shame. Pride is typically associated with a positive sense of self-worth, self-esteem, and satisfaction in one's achievements or qualities. It involves feeling a sense of accomplishment, confidence, and dignity. In the context of LGBTQ+ Pride, it's not so much about being the direct opposite of shame, but rather about countering the shame historically associated with non-heteronormative sexual orientations and gender identities, and promoting self-acceptance, self-love, and dignity, but it's still an interesting overlap.

As Kafer argues, shame becomes intertwined with the challenges of navigating a physical world. The unrelenting pressure to conform to able-bodied norms can lead to the internalization of shame, resulting in a reinforced sense of otherness and exclusion. Individuals with motor disabilities may internalize the belief that their bodies and abilities are somehow deficient or inferior to those of their able-bodied counterparts. This internalized shame often permeates their self-perception, contributing to feelings of unworthiness and a distorted sense of identity.

However, as shown by the successful feminists and queer activists of the 20th century, the first step to freedom in the individual's mind, in any form of marginalisation, is to recognise this internalisation and to de-internalise this form of stress. For individuals with motor disabilities, this means recognising that the pressure to perform and fit in a certain societal mould is not a core part of human existence, but rather a byproduct of our capitalistic and competitive society, since in many indigenous societies, there is often a more communal approach to disability, seeing it as a communal responsibility rather than a personal one.

Kafer encourages a shift towards embracing diverse bodies, disabilities, and identities as valuable and worthy of pride in the same way that sexual identities that deviate from the norm are. Furthermore, Feminists and queer activism have emphasized the significance of community and collective action in reclaiming their shame as a tool for the good of the marginalised.

Activism has proven that for the greatest impact, a group of individuals who have rejected societal norms should first establish inclusive spaces within their community. These spaces should challenge ableist and heteronormative ideologies, fostering support, solidarity, and a sense of belonging for people with motor disabilities. These communities play a crucial role in fostering resilience, dismantling shame, and promoting a shared vision of pride that celebrates all intersectional identities. At the very least, being a part of a community like this can make the disabled feel less alone, even at the risk of whiplash upon re-entering an ableist society.

How People Help The Disabled

So, in short, ontological shame and shame, in general, present significant challenges for individuals with motor disabilities. This unique approach to tackling

modern issues for the disabled community offers an opportunity for exploration and intervention, as it remains largely untackled by disability organizations whose focus often centres around the other following issues:

One prominent area where shame manifests is in the realm of loneliness and community. In recognizing loneliness, initiatives such as the HandicapNL buddy program have emerged to connect lonely disabled individuals, providing them with opportunities to form meaningful friendships and combat social isolation. Additionally, organisations like AbilityNet's Tech4Good Awards champion projects that leverage technology to foster social connections among people with disabilities.

Another critical aspect that a lot of organisations in disability are focused on is accessibility, which is also a leading cause of shame. Disability organizations, like the Accessible Travel Foundation, actively work towards enhancing accessibility in public spaces and transportation systems. They advocate for features such as ramps, elevators, and tactile paving to ensure that individuals with motor disabilities can navigate their surroundings with ease. The Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (GAATES) advocates for universal design principles, aiming to create environments that are inclusive and accessible to all so that the motoric disabled can more easily use technology.

Campaigns like Scope's "End the Awkward" challenge prevailing attitudes towards disability, promoting inclusivity and understanding. The Special Olympics utilizes the power of sports as a platform to raise awareness and foster acceptance of individuals with disabilities, showcasing their abilities and breaking down barriers, but even they don't directly advertise shame as a problem to directly tackle.

All these organisations are doing great things for the disabled community. However, where the author believes they have a unique way to tackle modern issues by tackling shame directly, as this aspect is not yet directly tackled by any disability organisation.

Another unique way the author can help is with their game design background, leading us into:

SHAMELESS GAMES

How Everything Is Really A Game

According to Homo Ludens, our human brain and culture are obsessed with games and especially role-playing games. "Serious" functions are all role-playing games when looked at from a game design lens. (Huizinga, 1950) Consider, for example, a class at school is most often divided into two main roles:

- Teachers, the role in which you teach the student a subject. Often in the form of lectures, assignments. All the student's attention is fixated on the teachers.
- Students, who listen to the teachers, take notes and complete any given assignments.

When people enter a classroom, people accept these roles naturally, and most students will take a seat where students are supposed to sit. This kind of 'invisible contract' behaviour is called a *magic circle*. Magic circles appear over and over again in our society, and even our society as a whole has these predetermined roles for people to follow. (Huizinga, 1950)

Roles In Our Society And How To Break Them

In our society, people are assigned and expected to fulfil various roles in the game of life. based on societal norms and expectations. One prominent example is the role of motherhood. When a child is born, the mother assumes the role of a caregiver, influenced by the behaviours of other individuals who have previously occupied the mother role. Not all roles are as permanent and life-altering as motherhood however, roles like being drunk or under the influence of cannabis are temporary and come with different expectations for behaviour. People often accept eccentric or unusual behaviour from individuals in these roles, using intoxication to explain their actions.

Breaking away from established roles and conventions requires explanation, as it challenges societal norms. If life is a game, and our society is a giant magic circle, this process can be likened to cheating in a game, as individuals are deviating from the expected rules and behaviours. To lead us back to queer culture, in our culture, gender roles have traditionally been divided into male and female, each with its own unwritten rules and expectations (Bettcher, 2014). The increasing recognition and mainstreaming of non-binary gender identities can be seen as a "cheat code" for individuals who have suffered under the confines of strict gender roles. Non-binary individuals are no longer bound by the limitations of the male or female roles, which may be perceived as unfair by those who have experienced significant hardships due to these gender expectations (Bettcher, 2014). Similar feelings arise in, for example, those in the same religion who do not follow the same code of conduct and break established rules in the religion, or somebody of a lower social class seeing another lower class worker enter a higher socioeconomic class, which was previously thought impossible.

As such, leading this back to the motor disabled, seeing other disableds prosper could foster negative emotions in those who have internalised ableism and shame, since it challenges their notion of having a less worthy life, "cheating" from the suffering caused by a disabled life with internalised ontological shame, which was always considered a sort of defined rule. Framing this as a metaphor; the rules of the game of society need to change.

This is why presenting youth with the option of seeing shame in a new light is so important. To be able to uninternalise the shame of an ableist society, the option that the rules of the game of life itself are broken rather than the shamee needs to be brought up. Simply seeing others live their best life might actually have an adverse effect.

Serious Games

Games, including the encompassing concept of magic circles, offer individuals with motor disabilities a valuable avenue for escapism, allowing them to break free from societal norms and find relief from their own identities. Role-playing games, in particular, provide a sense of liberation as they enable players to assume alternate personas. Online Massive Multiplayer Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs) and virtual realms such as VRChat have gained popularity among disabled youth as platforms for communication and social interaction, transcending physical limitations. Motor-disabled individuals often flourish in these digital domains, provided that accessibility measures are in place. Consequently, it is not surprising that many individuals with motor disabilities resort to digital realms as coping mechanisms, fostering unique forms of self-expression (Davis & Boellstorff, 2016).

Within the context of gaming and disability rights, one might posit that "serious" and applied games could serve as effective tools for educating the able-bodied population about the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. However, a significant challenge arises when attempting to convey these issues through games, be it board games or video games. The inherent allure of role-playing and the desire for amusement and play can impede the translation of experiences within the magic circle to a genuine understanding of real-life disability issues, as the author has found out by designing interventions with this goal. VR simulations of Parkinson's tremors were seen as bugs by players.

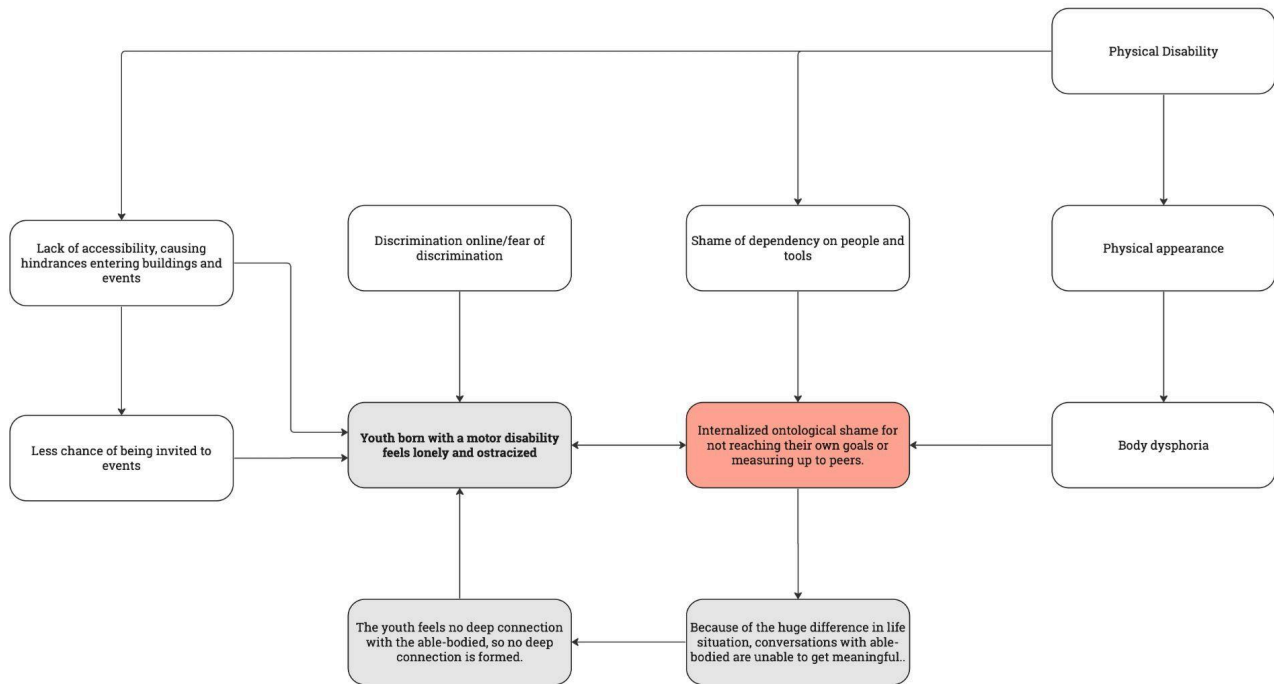
This discrepancy between the game world and reality poses a hindrance to meaningful empathy and comprehension among players. In light of this, the author of this study has chosen to focus on elevating and deinternalizing shame in motor-disabled youth, prioritizing interventions that address the emotional well-being of the target audience rather than relying solely on playful interventions aimed at eliciting empathy from those outside the demographic.

Similarly, while the author was using shock value, it was deemed as not appropriate or impactful to use by stakeholders. Shocking situations are seen as too improbable, and using fantasy ableism doesn't reach the desired effect after testing.

Thought Models Of Shame And Other Issues

To make the issue of shame much more clear in relation to other disability issues to stakeholders that were focused on the issue of loneliness amongst the disabled, and see where an intervention could make a huge difference, an

addition was made to the thought model previously seen in the chapter “Shame And The Motor Disabled.” It’s as follows:



-> = leads to and/or causes

The situation highlighted in grey is a common problem with the disabled. Motor-disabled youth may encounter challenges in forming connections with able-bodied peers due to the potential lack of understanding, misconceptions, and physical barriers, leading to them not feeling heard or seen. When individuals do not experience true connection, it can result in feelings of isolation, disengagement, and a lack of belonging, which can lead to spiralling down further into loneliness.

A problem facing disabled youth is still discrimination, particularly online in the modern era. However, while this problem is one of the major ones stakeholders are tackling, the author felt that that issue was being plenty tackled by stakeholders and other disability organisations.

Using this thought model and game design principles from Homo Ludens for designing a creative expression was going to be the next step.

The Author's Previous Disability Designs

Before the establishment of the thought model and the connection with Shame theory, the author had designed a few designs, mostly focused on fostering awareness of the struggles of the disabled to the outside world.

The first one, which was a parody of horror slasher movies where the target audience was more those oblivious to the reality that they too could get a disability, failed to really garner any interest of any stakeholders. Combining a touchy subject such as disability with a shocking commercial didn't elicit any good response from both the target audience or any stakeholders, as it might have been rocking the boat too far.

By considering the principles of being a "tempered radical" from the book *Rocking the Boat: How Tempered Radicals Effect Change Without Making Trouble* (Perkins, R., 2004), the author recognized the importance of finding a balance between provoking thought and avoiding excessive resistance. Future design efforts aimed at raising awareness of disability struggles would need to take a more tempered approach, promoting understanding and initiating conversations while avoiding shock value or extreme disruption.

The other designed interventions utilised magic circles to create situations where those without disabilities could step into the role of somebody who does.

First, this was done by a board game inspired by the game Magic Maze where people could help other players when they would encounter obstacles not able to be traversed by their in-game disability.

Second, a VR game was designed where people could play a bowling minigame with worsening tremors with each throw. As mentioned earlier, The discrepancy between the game world and reality hinders meaningful empathy and comprehension among players.



The author also created a 'tearaway' style calendar with disability facts on the pages. The biggest lesson learned from this project is the fact that most people prefer a positive message at the end. This is also one of the reasons why the author has been focusing more on uplifting the target audience rather than informing the rest of the world.



HOW TO DESIGN SHAMELESSNESS

Changing Our Metaphors

A great tool the author found while looking for ways to change the target audience's perspective on their shame is to use metaphors. In the book *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff describes how metaphors can manifest themselves into reality. i.e.: the metaphor of "time as money." This metaphor has become deeply ingrained in our society, influencing the way we think, behave, and prioritize. We often speak of "spending" time, "saving" time, or "wasting" time as if it were a valuable currency. Consequently, we find ourselves constantly chasing deadlines, multitasking, and feeling the pressure of "running out of time." By recognizing the metaphorical nature of this concept, we can begin to question its validity and explore alternative ways of understanding and experiencing time.

To properly understand how shame, the author found that using metaphors had a noticeable positive effect. To test this out, a session was held with the target audience, and some incredibly interesting metaphors came from these sessions:

For example, "shame as a teacher" can lead to reframing shame as a productive tool. One metaphor that resonated strongly was "shame as a mirror."

Just like a mirror reflects our physical appearance, shame reflects our internal sense of self. It allows us to recognize the misalignment between our actions and our values, pushing us to examine our choices and make amends. Rather than avoiding shame or hiding from it, viewing shame as a mirror encourages self-reflection and personal growth. Viewing other people's metaphors for shame also seemed to help develop them better understanding of the positive and negative effects of shame.

However, it's important to notice that this session failed to reach a lasting impact since one workshop-like session is not enough to retain information, but it seemed like there was an interesting way to approach reclaiming ontological shame.

Rules For Designing Shamelessness

Taking in all the information retrieved about the target audience, the main goal and previous designs, the rules of a designed playful intervention about shame should be:

- The main goal of the intervention should make the target audience (motoric disabled youth aged 18 - 30) aware of, and, in the long run, deinternalise their shame caused by ontological causes as defined by J.P Sartre, making sure that their shame emotional response is not caused by ontological shame put upon them by society or internalised ableism. It's important that people get to this conclusion themselves and don't just see another disabled person thriving.
- Lead to some form of community building, where the community is free from ableist norms.
- The target audience should feel a sense of belonging and feel safe discussing these topics. Preferably, it should be other people with a similar lived experience, so it's easier to open up.
- Because the target audience has problems with accessibility, the information should not be physically hard to reach. Stakeholders such as HandicapNL also stressed the importance of an online component, since a part of the audience is spending most of their time at home.
- The community should be able to grow by itself, so the information has to be decentralised and not exclusive to the author or any other single person.
- Do not use too much fantasy and stay grounded in real life, so as not to deviate from the message too much.
- The intervention should in one way or another serve the target audience as a constant reminder since information is not retained if it's only heard once, as was demonstrated by the session about metaphors but also, for example, Ebbinghaus' Forgetting Curve. (Ebbinghaus, 1885)

As such, with these rules set by the author, a workshop with an online forum and sharing component seems to be an excellent way to take this in.

Design Iterations And The Why

As mentioned before; the first design iteration of RECLAIM YOUR SHAME was largely related to making a playful iteration of “Metaphors We Live By.” The target audience would receive a short intro about where ontological shame comes from and why it is internalised. The next step was for the target audience to come up with metaphors of how shame could be reframed for them and be used more positively, i.e. a master or a parent.

The biggest issues concerning this iteration were:

- Lack of repetition, or the lack of being able to get it in a continuous matter hindered the target audience's ability to really correctly take in the rather complex message.
- The author themselves were still part of a workshop-like environment, so no way for the intermission to really grow and get better.
- The stakeholder HandicapNL wanted some kind of giftshop-like experience to be able to share the messaging without any part being limited to a person having to share the messages of the book, as well as an online component to draw in those who do not visit HandicapNL's home offices.

The biggest wins concerning this iteration were:

- The messaging seemed to connect to the target audience, and the metaphors seemed like a good direction to take it in.

The problem of the lack of repetition was a specifically huge one, so a second iteration was needed.

Cards were the second form of an intermission that was designed. Instead of requiring an entire workshop to explain, simple cards were designed that would be instructed to be pulled out

When the user felt shame, and be able to distinguish their internalised feelings of shame between an ontological feeling as provided by J.P. Sartre and a sense of shame that's productive, as provided by Nussbaum. Cards are also reminiscent of games.



The colours yellow and purple were chosen to represent pride and confidence due to their historical and cultural symbolism. Yellow often represents happiness, optimism, and the strength to embrace one's true self. Purple is associated with royalty, power, and dignity, symbolizing the inherent worth of every individual. Together, they create a harmonious blend that embodies the essence of pride and confidence. Also, as a nod to the origin of much of the theory: These colours have gained prominence in LGBTQ+ communities, serving as a visual reminder of resilience, self-acceptance, and the ongoing struggle for equality. These colours are also very good contrasts and are visible to those that are colourblind.

For the icon in the bottom-left, the wheelchair user with a sun for a head embodies the idea that disabled individuals can shine brightly and assert their worth, capabilities, and contributions to society. The wheelchair, often associated with mobility limitations, represents the physical challenges and barriers that individuals with disabilities may face. It is a symbol of their unique experiences and the need for adaptive devices to navigate the world.

On the other hand, the sun is commonly associated with warmth, light, and energy. It is a powerful and radiant symbol, often representing vitality, strength, and life-giving forces. By depicting the head of the wheelchair user as a sun, it signifies an individual who radiates confidence, self-acceptance, and a positive outlook despite societal stigmas or internalized shame associated with disability.

It encourages a shift in perspective, promoting disability pride, advocacy, and inclusivity. It challenges the notion that disability should be hidden or something to be ashamed of, urging society to recognize and appreciate the strengths and unique perspectives that individuals with disabilities bring to the table.

The text summarises the types of shame as follows:
 Ontological Shame - Shame for who I THINK I SHOULD BE
 Productive Shame - Shame for who I WOULD WANT TO BE.

The biggest feedback the author got on this set when discussing it with stakeholders and their target audience, is that not all of the same that the shamee feels is this “big.” A request was made to add an extra card for the kind of shame that’s felt when simply being embarrassed at a situation, not at an enormous act or situation., and as a reminder that shame can also be felt on a low level. So a third card was created specifically for this kind of situation.

Another popular demand with stakeholders was to talk about pride and create ‘counter’ cards that are about where pride comes from. Stakeholder HandicapNL particularly wanted to have a card to distinguish between pride from the point of self, and other people and by focusing on disability.



Some issues still remained about this design:

- The link with “metaphors we live by” was just gone, despite that feeling like an interesting part of the design.
- There’s no online component where people who are lonely and spend the most time of their days online can interact with this design.
- There was a lack of a ‘call to action’. What could you do with the information if a simple reminder didn’t help?

And as such, another revision utilised a QR code on the back of the cards:



RECLAIM YOUR SHAME

Schaamte En Trots

██████████@gmail.com [Ander account](#)



Niet gedeeld

Ik ben een:

☐ Jongere (18 - 30)

☒ Heb een motorische beperking

Schaamte was voor mij in deze situatie:

Jouw antwoord

Trots was voor mij in deze situatie:

Jouw antwoord

Which would normally link to a website where people could share their experiences about shame. For test purposes, however, a Google form was devised where people could still leave behind their feelings and view others' responses:

Schaamte was voor mij in deze situatie:

4 antwoorden

Test

Niet het juiste antwoord

Een heftige leermeester. Het gaat erg lastig. Maar ik kom er wel.

Het ergste wat ik kon doen.

Trots was voor mij in deze situatie:

3 antwoorden

Test

Trots dat ik er nog ben.

Trots op mijn vader dat hij er zo goed mee omging.

And in this way, still find a connection.

Unfortunately, people can't leave behind contact information, as it would be irresponsible to leave behind contact information publicly on the internet.

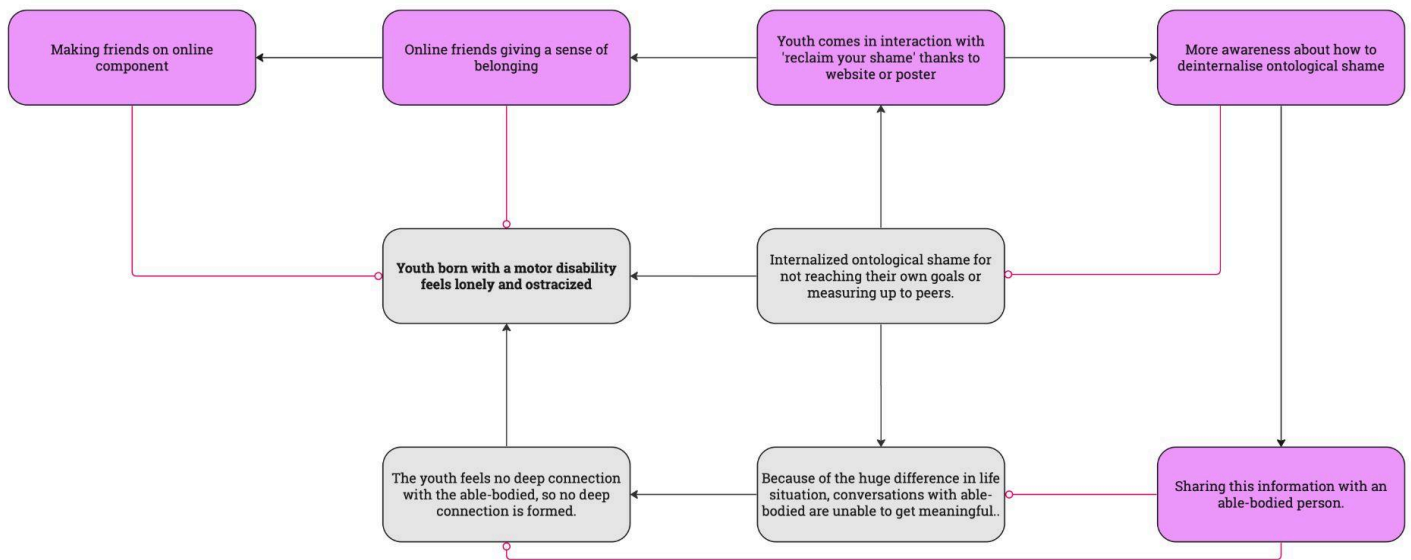
Some problems with this design as noted by stakeholders:

- The cards have no fully thought out design, and could use some touching up from where the elements are displayed.
- The online component needs a way to integrate people who are introduced to the concept via online tools rather than a hypothetical workshop.
- The deck needs an explanation card as well.
- Some additional ways to get to the website, like posters or a networking card.

These points of feedback have led to:

The Final Design

To fully communicate how the RECLAIM YOUR SHAME cards would lead to the betterment of the target group, the author has updated the original thought model to include how RECLAIM YOUR SHAME could benefit them:



-> = leads to and/or causes

-o = softens and/or weakens

This has made it very clear to the stakeholders how this intermission could help to tackle loneliness and help create better connections between the disabled and able-bodied. Sharing the information provided could also create an oil-spill effect where they could also relate this information to other minorities and those who suffer from ontological shame.

The cards were updated as well:

 TROTS



Beperking

Trots omdat ik
iets kan
ONTDANKS MIJN
BEPERKING.

 TROTS



Reclaimed

Trots omdat ik
ben
WIE IK BEN.

 SCHAAMTE



Situatie

Schaamte voor
WAT IK DOE
in een bepaalde
situatie.

 SCHAAMTE



Productief

Schaamte voor
mezelf, om
wie ik WIL ZIJN.



With help from a classmate and graphic designer, the cards feature a striking and more recognisable look.

The website was updated as well to include the cards:

RECLAIM YOUR SHAME

Schaamte En Trots

██████████@gmail.com [Ander account](#)



✉ Niet gedeeld

Schaamte Heeft Veel Vormen. Kan je erover nadenken waar de schaamte vandaan kwam?

SCHAAMTE

Situatie

Schaamte voor
WAT IK DOE
in een bepaalde
situatie.

SCHAAMTE

Productief

Schaamte voor
mezelf, om
wie ik **WIL ZIJN.**

Giving more context to the website. This change was received quite positively by stakeholders but needs to be more rigorously tested by the target audience.

Born Versus Later In Life

An unexpected late shift of the target audience happened later in the development process was the huge gap between those who were born with their

disabilities versus those who got them later in life. In general, those who got their disabilities later in life seemed to respond less well to any of the theories laid out in this supportive narrative, and as such, late in development, the target audience for the intervention was narrowed down to those born with their disabilities: one mayor reason is that the author was born with their disability, and it was much harder to relate to the later-in-life disabled.

This was still a huge finding as it was extremely obvious that people who acquire motor disabilities later in life may experience a significant sense of loss as they must adjust to the limitations and changes brought about by their disability. They might mourn the loss of their previous physical abilities, independence, or the lifestyle they were accustomed to. Conversely, individuals born with motor disabilities may have grown up with their condition and developed a different perspective, focusing on their abilities rather than the loss of something they never experienced. Something designed to also include those who get their disabilities later in life might require something that even includes elements of trauma or loss therapy.

REFLECTING ON SHAMELESS DESIGNS

As the author's year on the master Creative Crossovers ends and the designs of RECLAIM YOUR SHAME do as well, it's important to end this supportive narrative by reflecting on what parts of the design work, which ones didn't and what could be developed with more time.

Reflecting On The Good

A huge boon of the author was the fact that the author themselves have a physical disability. This made talking with stakeholders, the target audience and designing everything feel much more genuine, and there's no barrier between the understanding of the author and the target audience. This made working on everything much easier.

The idea behind the crossover creativity master was to handle societal problems by creating new unique combinations of backgrounds, and viewpoints, as well as methods of creating. Game Design was a very unique and interesting background to pull from and create with. By viewing it as a game with a quantifiable ending, the author was able to design interesting games. Huge crossovers were made between queer theory, existentialist philosophy, and game design in the final design.

The author wasn't afraid to 'kill their darlings', and quickly shelving projects that didn't get a good reaction from stakeholders worked well in the design process the author went through, as it led to quick rapid-fire discoveries.

The usage of many different scientific sources and bringing them together in a unique way also worked really well for the author.

The problem of shame is not really directly and publicly tackled by any disability organisation, so the author found an interesting and unique problem that influences major issues, so there are further opportunities to be had there.

Reflecting On The Bad

Initially, the author experimented with shock value and fantastical depictions of ableism in their designs but found them to be ineffective and inappropriate. This realization highlighted the delicate balance required to engage audiences and provoke thought without resorting to sensationalism or unrealistic portrayals, though an interesting link could be made here with how the disabled are represented in media.

Some of the designs that were more closely monitored by stakeholders and were designed in conjunction with them sometimes lacked scientific backing, and maybe the author should have spent more time correctly researching the concept of pride. (As an emotion, not the queer concept.) Similarly, the concept of metaphors was an interesting connection that got brushed aside too quickly.

Reflecting On The Ugly

While the author addressed shame in the context of motor disabilities, they provided a limited exploration of the perspectives and experiences of disabled individuals themselves, other than the author's own lived experience. Deepening the understanding of more diverse lived experiences could have further enriched the author's work and its relevance. Similarly, While the author briefly acknowledged the intersectionality of disability with other marginalized identities, such as queerness and feminism, they missed an opportunity for in-depth exploration in the field. A deeper understanding of the unique challenges and experiences faced by individuals at these intersections could have added layers of insight to the author's analysis and interventions.

The author acknowledges a gap in direct collaboration with more existing disability organisations other than HandicapNL, indicating a missed opportunity for synergy and collective efforts. The absence of meaningful engagement with established entities working on disability rights and inclusion may have hindered the impact and reach of their endeavours.

With More Time

Since the author had a year to fully explore these deep and nuanced topics, there's obviously a lot left on the table that could be the next steps in the development process:

- Creating a more elaborate online world or forum where people could leave behind their contact information with just the people that they would want. Building a community that's accepting is the first step before building a more accepting society, so getting people who have suffered from the

same kind of shame together and forming friendships or even groups would be very transformative. However, online worlds and forums have a massive task in the form of moderation, to make sure there are no trolls or predators preying on vulnerable people, as well as an accessible and easy-to-use interface.

- Testing the impact of RECLAIM YOUR SHAME, and seeing if people have been happier, and more confident with quantifiable data.
- Dive much deeper into the difference between born-with and later-in-life disabled, how can the groups help each other? There seems to be a huge design opportunity/buddy system waiting here in dichotomy, but this would also require a deep dive into trauma therapy and healing.
- The Stakeholder HandicapNL was very adamant about how to reel the lonelier disabled in. With the author's design background, there should be some interesting way to get those who seek refuge in online worlds and games and hook them into RECLAIM YOUR SHAME. However, such a specific research about what the disabled play doesn't really exist and is difficult to imagine. A social media campaign might be an interesting approach to less body-focused social media. (i.e Reddit) But it would require its own completely unique approach.
- Seeing the world of the motor disabled in more dimensions could bring new insight. How are paralympic athletes affected by shame? How do religious people cross their faith with the way they view their disability? How do different countries or political beliefs view this ontological shame?
- Seeing interesting ways feminist, POC or queer disabled interact with their identities. There are many traps and opportunities in the way that disabled handle their own minority statuses sometimes influences the way they handle their (sometimes newfound) disability status, which is a mountain of inspiration.
- Seeing pride interacts with shame, are they really opposites? Do The pride cards add anything to the design, or could they be removed?
- What is a call to action for those outside the target audience? How could they help with this information?
- How could 'metaphors we live by' be re-included in the design?

How Everybody Can Design And Reclaim Shame

While this supportive narrative and the creative intermissions have all been designed around motoric disabled youth, hypothetically this is a common experience for all humans. A lot of the research and methodology obviously came from queer and feminist methodologies and were repurposed for the disabled, but they could also be readjusted for other groups, although the author is less an expert on those groups:

A big hurdle for some other groups of people could be that there's a way to 'pass' as the social norm. For people with disabilities, and especially those that are very visible, there's no option to hide what they are so ashamed of for the disabled. A lot of queer people especially still choose to remain in the closet because of shame. For that reason, a queer-focused RECLAIM YOUR SHAME would require more explanation, such as the adverse effects of hiding your

identity for life. Queer people also tend to gather more aggressive negative responses that could be a barrier to deinternalisation.

Most people in the target audience are well-versed with technology, however, if there was the need to introduce the elderly or other less tech-savvy people to these concepts, the online component would need to be substituted with something that could replace the community-building aspect of RECLAIM YOUR SHAME.

And for those that do not belong to any shared minority statuses, or even more amplified, not the same social roles (i.e Mom, student) opening up about shame in a group is a lot tougher, so some intervention that makes them recognise a shared shame or humanity might be required.

Youth with motor disabilities also tend to be, broadly speaking more progressive than a lot of other societal groups due to their dependency on health care and need for social justice, and the tendency of young people to be more progressive. and open to these kinds of ideas. For more conservative people, topics of mental health, ontological shame and deinternalisation might be controversial to bring up, so something would need to change about the design.

CONCLUDING

It's clear that there's an interesting way that we could use to make correct distinctions between various causes of shame as a way to uplift disabled youth and other minorities. To answer the original design question the author started the year with: how could those with disabilities benefit from creative expressions like games and movies, leading to various projects made? The answer would be: To make those forms of media an inspiration that can make those with disabilities realise that the feelings of shame they internalised for existing are not their fault, but rather it's more productive to use those feelings of shame to get more out of your own life. Constant reminders are a key part of this, as are giving them a sense of community and pride.

Thank you for reading!

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