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## THE SILENCE

Why don't victims of sexual violence  
speak out?

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## THE DIFFICULTIES FOR RAPE VICTIMS

# LES DIFFICULTÉS DES VICTIMES DE VIOLS



# Obvious reasons

Because victims are terrorised

Because they are not taken seriously

Because a big majority of complaints are  
closed without follow-up

Because they are not treated  
well by police stations

Because only a small minority of accused  
end up in court

# SILENCE

**20%** of women are victims of physical violence within their family

**33%** are victims of sexual violence

Who do they talk to?

**42%** someone close, friend

**19%** professional

And speaking to the **POLICE** ?

**12%** of victims of physical violence

**8%** of victims of sexual violence



*I was raped!*

*The first person I spoke to didnt believe me!  
Worse, he said it was my fault... Worse still, he  
also raped me !*

*I was in a state of shock! My mind left my  
defenceless body!*

*I drove these fragments of horror from my  
memory in total denial!*

*I didn't speak about it any more!*

*Until my body experienced intense and  
unexplained pains.*

Laura Fischer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Q8uFzyc0s>



# What are the factors behind the SILENCE of victims?



# Sexual violence, trauma unlike any other cases

**NO SILENCE** if we have an accident, or natural disaster, or war, or unexpected grief!

But, **SILENCE** when we suffer autruistic violence !



# silence!

How do victims feel after a traumatic event?





The facts... indisputable! ???

Anger

Fear

Disgust

EMOTIONS!

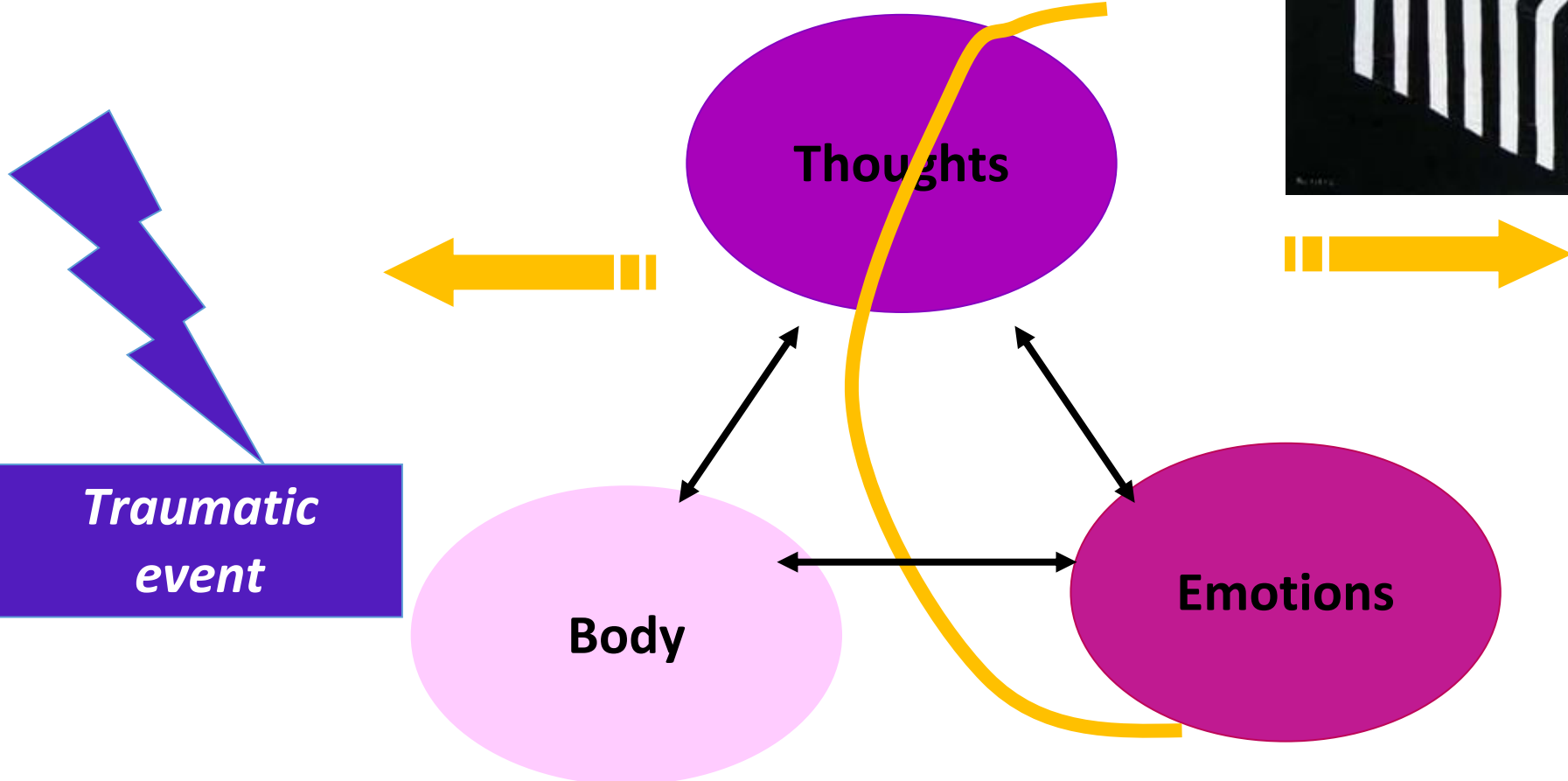
Guilty

Dirty

SHAME

Defeated

# Shock



27 FÉV.  
2018

Brut.

and still today I keep this fear

# Factors behind the SILENCE of victims?

**Shame**

**Shock**



**Trauma**

**Proximity of the aggressor**

**Myth of  
forgetting**

**Guilt**

**Lack of  
resources**

**Societal  
perceptions**



I am ashamed!



# Shame & Guilt

- **Shame** is an emotion that arises when we evaluate ourselves or judge ourselves in a negative way!
  - For example, we feel shame when we perceive ourselves as weak, uninteresting, bad or useless
- **Guilt** arises when we consider behaviour or an act to be negative
  - For example, if you borrow money from someone and don't manage to pay it back, you can feel guilty because you have done something you perceive as unfair or inappropriate.

# Guilt

- Can be a motivator to repair damage or apologise, or correct your behaviour
- Repairing damage lightens guilt and enables you to feel positive about yourself
- In that way, guilt is a useful emotion

# Shame

- Rarely useful
- Leads to auto-punishment (deliberate self harm)
- Keeps itselfgoing! Shame doesn't lighten shame in the long term, but makes it grow.

# Shame & post-traumatic stress

- Shame increases the risk of developing **PTSD**
  - For example, a link between shame and the severity of PTSD has been found in war veterans who were prisoners of war
  - For example, a link has been found between shame and the severity of PTSD in female victims of interpersonal violence
- These studies show a stronger link between shame and PTSD than between guilt and PTSD

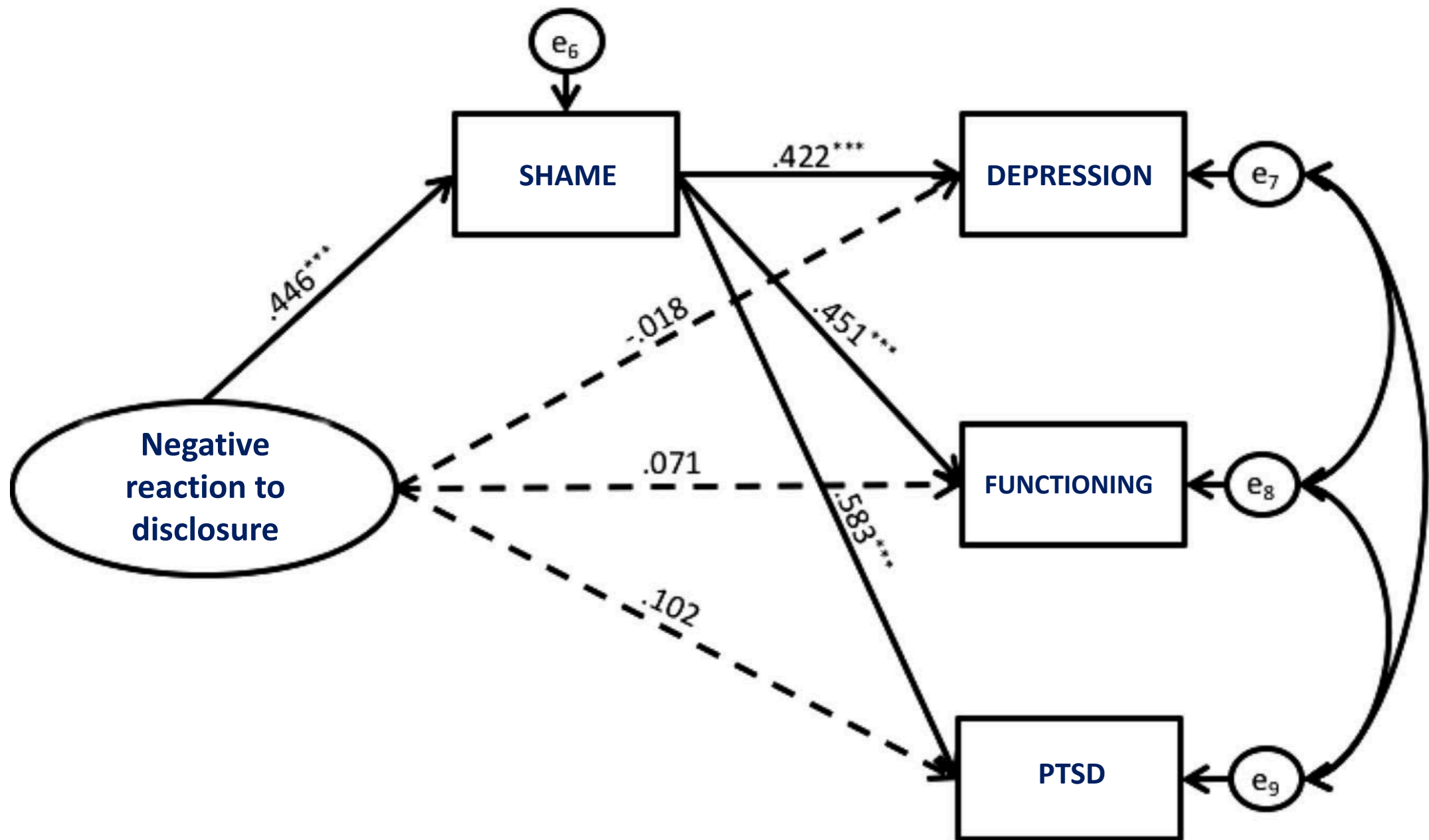


# Shame & other problems

- Experiencing shame as a result of an incident can lead to unsuitable **coping strategies**, such as turning to alcohol, pathological avoidance, self destructive behaviour.
- A person experiencing shame will find it hard to manage emotions linked to trauma, which will induce or aggravate symptoms of post traumatic stress, i.e. avoidance, isolation etc.

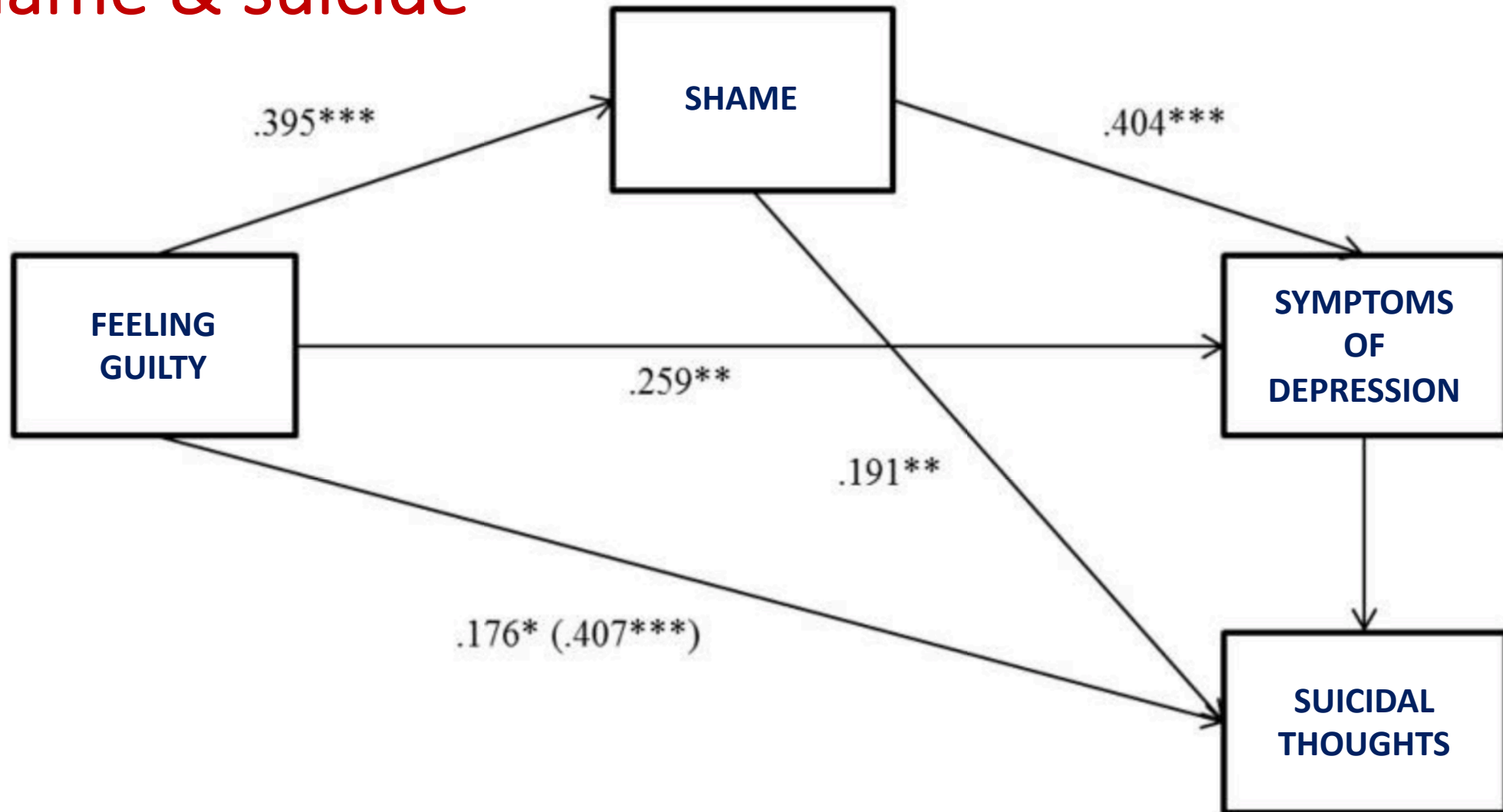
# Shame & silence

- Given that experiencing shame can be associated with judgments of weakness or value, victims can feel even more stigmatised by having suffered a traumatic event
- This feeling of being stigmatised will prevent victims from seeking appropriate medical care and will prevent them from talking about it



**The case of inappropriate reaction to a victim who speaks up!**

# Shame & suicide





Reduce feelings of shame!

# Dealing with shame!

- SHAME = **difficult** emotion **to confront and deal with!**
- When you feel shame, you have to create an opposite action, such as doing something to counter the emotion of shame
  - For example, if shame induces the need to self harm, a self-destructive behaviour, at that moment, you need to do something to look after yourself instead!
  - Look to self-relaxation and self-compassion strategies

# Dealing with shame!

- SHAME = **difficult** emotion **to confront and deal with!**
- Another strategy is **DISTRACTION**, doing something to distract attention that was focussed on the negative emotion
  - Focussing on a negative emotion keeps it going or makes it worse
  - Distracting yourself temporarily can allow you the time for your emotion to diminish, make it less intense and easier to manage

# Fear of not being believed!

- Are you sure?
- No, it's not possible !
- How can you prove it!?
- Lack of preparation for this type of situation !
  - At least say to children: if something happens to you, you **CAN speak about it!**
  - The message should be: if something happens to you, you **MUST talk about it!**

PARTICIPATIF

EXPRESS YOURSELF ”

## "Battue par ma nounou, j'avais peur de ne pas être crue"

Article édité et mis en une par la rédaction | ?

Propos recueillis par Emilie Tøn,  
publié le 12/12/2016 à 16:46



AUTRES FACTEURS DU SILENCE !

# Forgetting!

## Dissociative amnesia

- *Forgetting an event that carries a heavy negative burden*
- *Suffering makes a strong impact, with the aim of self protection*
- *Localised, continued, generalised, selective, ou systematic*

## Forgetting as a social injunction



# Proximity of the aggressor!

- How to report someone in authority?
- Lover of someone close?
- Making the aggressor responsible!!
- Threats of the aggressor!
- ...

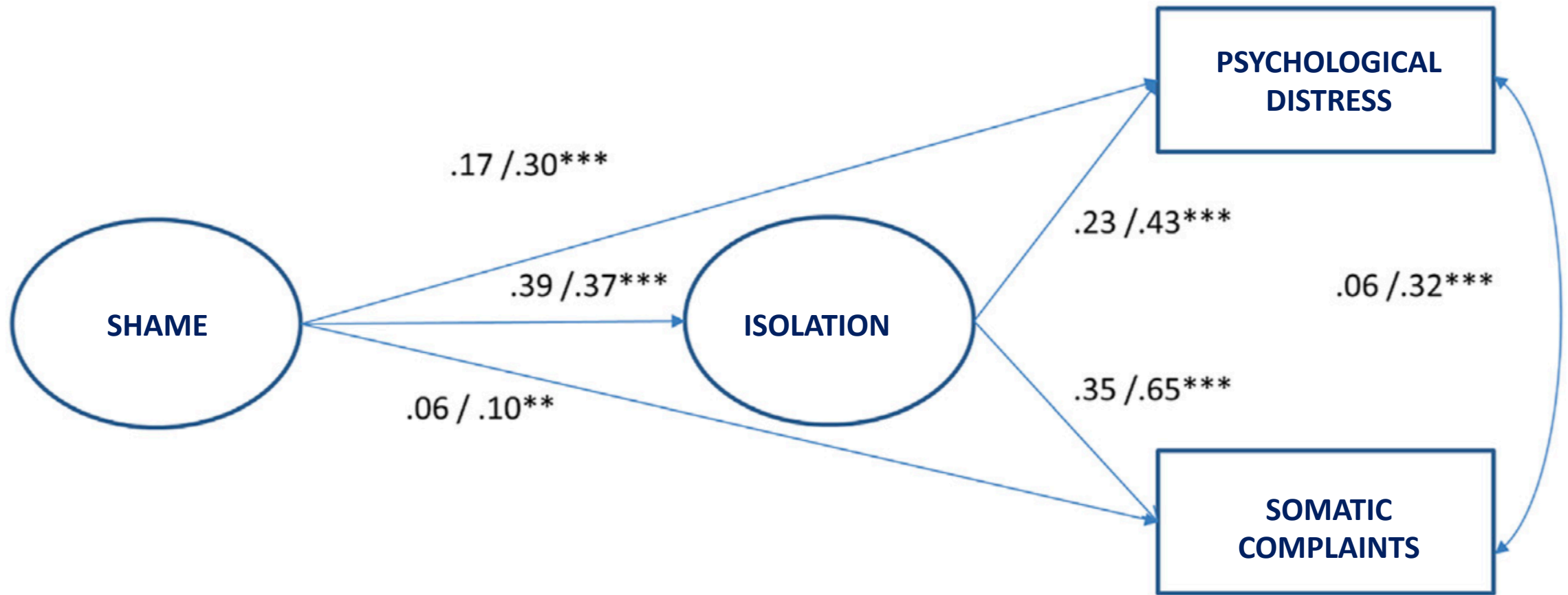




# Isolation

- How to talk about intimate matters?
- *How to talk about a trauma that attacks self esteem, produces anxiety and hostility*
- *Societal culture is at fault!*





**N = 505** adolescents and young adults (21 yr)

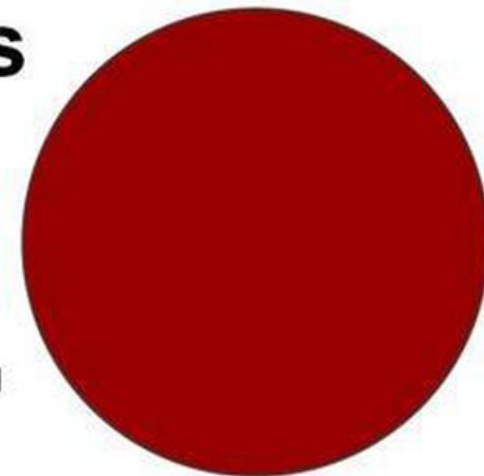
# Making society responsible!

- **Stigma!? Culture of rape?**
- 27% of French people asked said they thought that the perpetrator of rape is less responsible if the victim is dressed in a sexy way



[#ThisIsNotConsent](#)

## Les Causes du VIOL



# Barriers to speaking to the police!

**Table 2.** Percent Endorsement of Each Barrier to Police Reporting by Rape Tactic (DAFR/IR vs FR) and for the Total Sample of 441 Women Who Did Not Report the Rape to Police

Reasons for Not Reporting	DAFR/IR ( <i>n</i> = 119)	FR ( <i>n</i> = 376)	Total Sample
1. Did not want your family to know	54% ( <i>n</i> = 63)	62% ( <i>n</i> = 231)	59% ( <i>n</i> = 261)
2. Did not want other people to know	57% ( <i>n</i> = 67)	61% ( <i>n</i> = 221)	57% ( <i>n</i> = 253)
3. Lack of proof that the incident happened	64% ( <i>n</i> = 73)	53% ( <i>n</i> = 193)	51% ( <i>n</i> = 225)
4. Fear of being treated badly by police, lawyers, or other parts of the justice system	39% ( <i>n</i> = 46)	46% ( <i>n</i> = 166)	43% ( <i>n</i> = 188)
5. Not clear it was a crime or that harm was intended	87% ( <i>n</i> = 73)	49% ( <i>n</i> = 177)	51% ( <i>n</i> = 226)
6. Did not know how to report	36% ( <i>n</i> = 42)	48% ( <i>n</i> = 176)	44% ( <i>n</i> = 194)
7. Afraid of reprisal by that person or others	56% ( <i>n</i> = 66)	73% ( <i>n</i> = 273)	68% ( <i>n</i> = 300)
8. Did not think it was serious enough to report	63% ( <i>n</i> = 74)	38% ( <i>n</i> = 137)	42% ( <i>n</i> = 186)

Note: Frequencies for last column (Total Sample) do not add up to 100 because cases were nonmutually exclusive.



# ACT: as a person of confidence...

- Don't banalise, jolt, or hasten the victim
- Let the victim talk about the event as many times as they want to
- Encourage the free expression of emotions and sentiments
- Don't try to rationalise or counter emotions that are expressed
- It is not advisable to force someone to talk about a trauma
- Promote specialised help





BREAK THE  
SILENCE !



