## Can I VOUCH for Myself?

When we feel ashamed or very self-critical about something, we tend to want to hide those vulnerabilities from others. We might fear they will reject us or won’t understand. Maybe they will even agree with our self-criticisms?!? If the person listening to our vulnerable disclosures responds with judgment or criticism, we may decide they aren’t a very trustworthy friend.

However, the person who most often hears about those things we feel ashamed or self-critical of is *ourselves!* Have you ever stopped to think about what kind of “friend” you are to yourself in those moments when shame or self-criticism shows up? When those parts of you that feel shameful show up, do you respond in a way that is supportive and understanding, or do you respond the way you fear others might - harsh, critical, rejecting? Do you get critical of your own self-criticism? Not being a trustworthy confidante to ourselves can keep us trapped in a loop of shame and criticism. But what if you could learn how to respond to your own feelings of shame and self-criticism in a new, more effective way, the way a trustworthy friend might respond? What if you could *vouch* for yourself in those times?

Below is a handout you can use to help guide you to being a more trustworthy and helpful friend when you are faced with something you feel ashamed of or critical about. Next time your vulnerabilities make themselves known to you, try asking yourself the following questions. You can write any reactions or what you discovered in the process on the lines below:

**Can I VOUCH for Myself?**

**V – Vulnerability.** *What is the vulnerability here? What do I fear might happen by taking a look at these parts that feel so shameful and worthy of criticism?*

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**O – Open.**  *Am I open to listening to and learning from this part of me that is suffering? Am I open to treating this part of me that feels so vulnerable in a different way than I have in the past?*

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**U – Understanding.** *Can I be understanding of this part that feels ashamed? Can I try to take his/her perspective of what it feels like to be suffering in this way?*

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**C – Compassion.**  *Can I offer compassion that part that feels so shameful and criticized? What would be the compassionate thing to do in this moment?*

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**H – Honor.**  *How can I honor my values in this moment? How would I choose to respond to one who is suffering in this way with shame and self-criticism?*

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