

OVERCOMING PARENT GUILT

By Kirsty O'Callaghan

Guilt is a natural emotion that is triggered when we feel, perceive or know we have done something wrong, or could have done better. Guilt can be useful, as well as quite harming, to you and those around you.

First, let's look at common areas guilt may raise itself:

- a) I don't spend enough time with my child/ren.
- b) I lose my temper; get angry and/or frustrated too often.
- c) I can't give my child/ren all I want to or all they want (physically, emotionally and materialistically).
- d) I worry I will or am doing the wrong thing.
- e) I am to blame that my child isn't happy or satisfied, or for their performance.

When we feel guilt, it can wear down our self worth and esteem. As this happens we may make decisions based on not feeling adequate and that we are, or possibly will be, failing. We open ourselves to criticism from self and others and begin to doubt our own judgement. We lose contact with the present situation and take a generalised view of the circumstances, creating decisions and outcomes that are not appropriate and definitely not effective.

To overcome these states of guilt driven behaviours and possible outcomes firstly requires you to step back, take a deep breath and ask yourself:

- Does this feel right for me and my child?
- Am I doing the best I can?
- How can I improve?
- Where can I find out more about this particular situation that I am dealing with today?

By asking these questions you are immediately placed in a more resourceful state so that you can either consult with someone you trust, ask more questions objectively from your child, learn from your experience and change areas you would like to change, and most importantly be solution focused rather than problem focused. It has been said that "when we change the way we look at things, the things we look at change".

Now it is time to look at possible insights into the common areas of guilt:

- a) Time with children is all about being present, getting on their level physically and understanding where they are at. Laughing and

having fun and providing a safe, secure and nurturing environment is paramount to their needs in all areas of development.

- b) You could be losing your temper or getting angry for a couple of main reasons. One, that your child does not follow through with expected behaviour; have you made the expectations clear age appropriately? Two, under all anger is an element of fear. If you find yourself angry or expressing anger more often than you would like; what is it that you are most afraid of?
- c) What is it that you feel is missing that you want to give your child? What is important to you that you feel your child could have? Could it just be a case of giving more of you, or making more time for play and outings?
- d) Worry is being concerned with things that have not yet happened to you. A startling statistic suggested that 95% of what we worry about never comes about. You may also have taken on others opinions and their outcomes as red flags for you. You are an individual that is able to create the outcome you want. All you need is some effort and a clear idea of what you are expecting.
- e) No one is to blame for the past. The past is opportunities to take what has happened, and learn what works and what doesn't. There are points in all our lives where we 'could've, would've and should've'. Is this helpful to run that dialogue? Ask yourself what is it that I can do differently to get different results?

So I now suggest to you, that guilt is healthy in short bursts to gauge our progress and behaviours. How can you put the information above into action so that you are moving forward and not being pulled back or stuck in the past?



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Kirsty uses focus on a holistic and individual basis; knowing we are all capable of greatness, with the right knowledge, tools and support.

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