

Guilt

What is guilt?

Guilt is an emotion experienced and expressed when a party believes they are compromising their values, morals, or obligations for which they think they are responsible for.

The person who experiences it can only bring on this emotion on himself or herself; guilt cannot be put on someone.

It is perfectly normal and healthy to feel guilt. We should all have values, and recognize when we have let ourselves, or someone else to whom we have responsibility down.

What we should strive for is to use this type of guilt, or *“justified guilt”* as a means to improve our future performance.

Unjustified guilt: When one has objectively not, but believes they have, compromised values, morals, or obligations for which they are responsible.

We should strive to recognize that unjustified guilt is a matter of perception, and that we cannot do everything, for example, say “Yes” to every request.

Tips for dealing with guilt

1. **Ask yourself if it is justified:** did you objectively and recognizably so compromise values, morals, or obligations for which they are responsible?
2. **Apologize, and accept responsibility:** If you are justifiably guilty inform those affected, including yourself, that you acknowledge responsibility and are remorseful
3. **Repair:** If there is anything you can do to ameliorate the situation take action
4. **Recognize you are not superman or super woman:** You cannot do everything; it’s okay to say, *“No, I can’t do that this time.”*
5. **Let it be:** Apply mindfulness to practice acceptance of the situation. This will lower guilt and anxiety associated with letting yourself and others down.