

CONQUERING GUILT!

When we played softball, I'd steal second base, feel guilty and go back... Woody Allen

WHAT TO KNOW!

- ❖ Guilt is an affective and cognitive realization that one has done something wrong
- ❖ It is driven by conscience and does not disappear easily
- ❖ A guilty conscience comes from thoughts that we have not lived up to our moral code
- ❖ It can be used as a sense of control over others to influence their behaviors
- ❖ Guilt is not produced by a situation but by the person's interpretation of their actions in the situation and whether it violates their moral beliefs
- ❖ Shame and guilt: In shame, a person feels he could not have avoided a harmful action; in guilt, a person feels a responsibility for the action
- ❖ Guilt can be remedied through punishment, forgiveness, or remorse
- ❖ Guilt can also be remedied through an understanding that what makes you feel guilty is irrational, illogical, or irrelevant.
- ❖ Psychopaths or antisocial personality disorders typically do not experience a sense of guilt in their destructive behaviors
- ❖ Guilt can serve as an inhibitor and indicator that we are doing something wrong
- ❖ "Healthy" guilt is appropriate for a wrongdoing and can be resolved through atonement
- ❖ "Unhealthy" guilt is a persistent sense of wrongdoing that is not resolved through forgiveness and can lead to depression
- ❖ "Unhealthy" guilt is learned through continuous shameful statements that criticize the person rather than the behavior
- ❖ "Healthy" guilt can motivate people to apologize to each other, to try to repair hurts, to seek forgiveness, and to change behaviors to improve relationships
- ❖ Confessing guilt has been shown to decrease anxiety and improve health
- ❖ In general, women tend to feel more guilt over violating a moral code than do men who are more concerned about getting caught
- ❖ People with low self-esteem are more prone to guilt feelings
- ❖ Feeling guilty may be associated with shyness, unassertiveness, and loneliness

WHAT TO DO!

- ❖ Do not get stuck in guilt and disparage oneself over having done something wrong
- ❖ Recognize the kind of guilt you have, healthy or unhealthy, so that it can help you grow and improve your relating to others
- ❖ Do something, like apologizing or making amends, to fix the hurt or problem
- ❖ Acknowledge that you did something wrong, fix it, and then let go of it
- ❖ Learn from your behaviors and make changes
- ❖ Recognize that one is not perfect and that mistakes will be made
- ❖ Allow guilt to be a signal to you that you need to change your attitudes or behaviors
- ❖ Allow guilt to motivate you towards self improvement
- ❖ Verbalizing wrongdoings and asking for forgiveness can emotionally unburden you and strengthen your relationships with others
- ❖ If guilt persists and leads to depression, seek professional counseling

WE CAN HELP!

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