

A number of people that I've talked with lately have been carry around tremendous guilt for a long time. They beat themselves up over any conceived flaw. Do you do this? Do you expect far more of yourself than anyone else? Do you berate yourself if you can't get it all done, and done right the first time? There are things you can do to break this destructive habit. Guilt is a tool our psyche uses to remind us of right and wrong. Most of us have a clear understanding of that. What we don't understand is how to separate appropriate guilt, such as acting in an unethical manner, to inappropriate guilt at not being good enough. What I call inappropriate guilt comes from a skewed belief that we have to be near as perfect as humanly possible, and if we fall short we feel guilty. When a person feels guilty for not being this perfect being, their inner critic has a field day. We beat ourselves up over the smallest things or the bigger things that we couldn't have change no matter what. If you find yourself in this cycle of negative self-talk, I'm here to say there is relief. The first step is to notice how you talk to yourself and when it gets ugly. Keep track of the next time you rank on yourself. Stop and write the scenario down. The next step is to break it down. Notice what part of yourself is name calling or being hurtful. Can you identify a voice from the past? Does is sound like something a former boss or an older sibling would say? Then draw on your compassion that is usually reserved for others and pour it onto yourself. If you can visualize yourself as an innocent child you can be more objective and hopefully more nurturing. That young child is still somewhere within, hiding until it's safe to emerge. The inner child is the one who takes the brunt of our nastiness when we allow ourselves to be guilt ridden and negative. That is why after a time it rebels or breaks down into depression, overeating and other compulsive behaviors. So, give yourself a break. When the inner demands surface, remember to be kind to yourself. If that seems much too self-centered, remember that the better we take care of ourselves, the more we'll have to offer.

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