



Shepherd Care®

To Care for People Where They Live and Work

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COMMUNITY Care TOPIC

Dealing with Guilty Feelings

What is Guilt?

It is the way your body tells you that something needs to be thought about or processed. The thinking on your part that you would probably benefit from getting into your brain is as follows:

- Guilt feelings are just your brain wanting you to go over things to be sure you haven't missed something and to make sure you don't do such things in the future without a lot of thinking. Ask yourself the question, "upon consideration, was the action a mistake?"
- Feeling shame or guilt in some situations is simply a form of life "dues" that you pay for being committed to being a good, caring sensitive person and for having ethics and empathy. This applies if you did not do any wrong action.
- The alternative to being a person who would have such feelings is either:
 - a) being an insensitive, callous person or
 - b) being an angry, hostile, vicious person, or
 - c) both a. and b.

Dealing with the Misplaced Guilty Feelings

In dealing with misplaced guilty feelings, please ask yourself:

1. What do you need to change what you are doing because the guilt feelings tell that you made a mistake?
2. If your guilty feelings are off base and cannot be resolved with your reality (e.g., you decide you were full of baloney in your guilty thinking)?
3. Was there really no alternative to what happened at the time? (Even if you realized you made a mistake, do you decide if you would be less likely in future to make such a mistake?)

Remember that guilty feelings most always soften with time. You have felt guilty before and you will surely feel guilty again because no one is perfect (but that is not an excuse for continuing inappropriate behavior or actions).

Lastly, sometimes counseling is necessary to resolve the feelings and effects of compound guilt. A Biblical faith perspective of having a right heart *and* right relationship with God is also very effective.

Introducing your Community Chaplain

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A Typical Question:

I made a "positive" or "negative" choice or action, and I cannot shake the feelings of guilt. I need to be able to let go of this guilt trip that grips my daily living.

"There is therefore now no condemnation (guilt or shame) to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Romans 8:1

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