**Guilt**

**A lot of guilt comes from the feeling that we have more influence than we really do. *(Dan Gottlieb)***

**Doctors who say they’re sorry end up paying less in medical malpractice suits. In a study of 225,000 such malpractice cases from 1991 to 2009, doctors who practiced in states with “apology” laws, which let physicians apologize without admitting guilt, settled serious suits 20 percent faster and paid an average of $55,000 to $73,000 less than those in states where physicians can’t apologize with impunity. *(The Wall Street Journal, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 9, 2011)***

**Food, love, mother and career: the four basic guilt groups. *(Cathy Guisewite)***

**Guilt -- being behind the ought ball. *(Vicki Woodyard, in Reader's Digest)***

**Even Leonardo da Vinci had his guilt trips, evidently. He wrote: “I have wasted my hours.” *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The only difference between Catholics and Jews is Jews are born with guilt and Catholics have to go learn it in school. *(Elayne Boosler, in That's Funny, p. 89)***

**If a man had been guilty of despicable actions, especially toward me, I would try to forget him. I would write his name down on a piece of scrap paper, drop it into the lowest drawer of my desk, and say to myself, “That finishes the incident.” The drawer became a sort of private wastebasket for discarded personalities. Besides, it seemed to be effective and helped me avoid harboring useless black feelings. *(Dwight D. Eisenhower)***

**Everyone is guilty of something or has something to conceal. All one has to do is look hard enough to find what it is. *(Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn)***

**Guilt is a gift that keeps on giving. *(Quoted by Loretta Ivory)***

**It is quite gratifying to feel guilty if you haven’t done anything wrong: How noble! Whereas it is rather hard and certainly depressing to admit guilt and to 0repent. *(Hannah Arendt, German-born American philosopher and historian)***

**What! You’re feeling a little guilty at the moment? Good. Theodor Reik said: “The sense of guilt is the hallmark of civilized humanity.” *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Perhaps you are harboring a sense of guilt for something done or left undone in the past. Your past is retained only by your thought. It is not the incident but the memory of it that causes the effects of it today. The moment it is dropped from your consciousness, it is gone from the only place it ever existed. (Eric Butterworth, in Celebrate Yourself)**

**As Hagar and his men steal all of the goods from the castle, the king yells: “I hope you realize this will cause my house insurance to double or triple!” Servant: “Don’t listen to him, Hagar. He’s just trying to make you feel guilty!” (Chris Browne, in Hagar comic strip)**

**The same sense of perspective will help to keep our feelings of guilt in line. All human beings do thoughtless, impulsive things which bring them a miserable train of circumstance. Everyone misses golden opportunities through stupidity or inability to understand the other fellow. Everyone is occasionally selfish, thoughtless and unkind. We can’t help being full of despair about the results. But we needn’t feel as though we are exiled from the human race because we have done wrong. *(Ardis Whitman, in Reader’s Digest)***

**If it turns out that our guilt is appropriate, we should be careful that the emotion attaches to the deed, not to ourselves. The husband who betrays his marriage vows and the wife who abuses the family credit card should feel guilty. Guilt is useful as a motivator to change. But it is useless and destructive when it paralyzes the person with a sense of unworthiness and unlovability. *(Harold S. Kushner, in Reader’s Digest)***

**A lot of guilt comes from the feeling that we have more influence than we really do. *(Dan Gottlieb)***

**What makes me feel so guilty is that I no longer seem to feel enough guilt. *(Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)***

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**Guilt is the pledge drive constantly hammering in our heads that keeps us from fully enjoying the show. *(Dennis Miller)***

**Guilt: God’s way of letting you know that you’re having too good a time. *(Dennis Miller, in Reader’s Digest)***

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**Washing guilt away: The idea of moral cleansing isn't just metaphorical -- it's a physical urge. A Canadian study found that people who had just washed their hands felt more ethically secure that those who hadn't. Researchers call it the "Macbeth effect" after Lady MacBeth, who scrubbed her hands bloody after conspiring to kill the king in the famous Shakespeare play. *(The Week magazine, December 29, 2006 - January 12, 2007)***

**Guilt to motherhood is like grapes to wine. *(Fay Weldon, author)***

**Most people feel “guilty” about things they shouldn’t feel guilty about, in order to shut out feelings of guilt about things they should feel guilty about. *(Sydney J. Harris, Publishers-Hall Syndicate)***

**There’s no problem so awful that you can’t add some guilt to it and make it even worse! *(Calvin, from the comic strip Calvin & Hobbes by Bill Watterson)***

**Jesus tells a story of the Prodigal Son. You know the story. But the unexpected element in this story is forgiveness. He expects punishment. He finds only freely flowing love. Feeling almost overwhelmed by guilt, he is met without a word of reproach, anger, or judgment. The past is completely forgiven. It is wiped out. *(Christopher Ian Chenoweth)***

**Guilt punishes the author of the crime. *(Juvenal)***

**Sweden’s embrace of “green” cars, ranging from hybrids to ethanol- and clean-diesel-powered vehicles, has actually led to a net increase in greenhouse-gas emissions, according to the Swedish government. The government says improved fuel economy – and a reduced sense of guilt – has led Swedes to drive more, thus burning more fuel. *(Treehugger.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 25, 2011)***

**Out of a storm of fear and guilt comes the beautiful rainbow called today. *(David Addington)***

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**Ziggy: “I feel so guilty when I take time off from work that all my vacations end up turning into guilt trips!” *(Tom Wilson, in Ziggy comic strip)***

**Sylvia: “You’re not fooling me, Mom. I know why you’re taking care of that baby. You’re trying to make me feel guilty for not giving you any more grandchildren.” Mom: “That’s ridiculous, Sylvia. Whether or not you have any more children is entirely up to you and Dan. And your conscience.” Sylvia: “Aha!” *(Brian Crane, in Pickles comic strip)***

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**Garfield: “Today’s the day. The day you’re all allowed to eat without any guilt whatsoever. Welcome to my world!” *(Jim Davis, in Garfield comic strip)***

**Every man is guilty of all the good he didn’t do. *(Voltaire)***

**Washing your hands of guilt: People with guilty consciences get a powerful urge to wash themselves – and the scrubbing actually helps ease their guilt, says New Scientist. Researchers call the urge of liars, cheats, and murderers to wash their hands “the Macbeth effect,” after Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth, who shouts, “Out, damned spot,” while scrubbing away imaginary bloodstains. In the University of Toronto study, volunteers were asked to think of unethical acts from their past, such shoplifting or betraying a good friend; when later offered the chance to clean their hands, they jumped at the offer at twice the rate of study subjects who had not imagined past transgressions. The washing had an interesting effect. Guilty subjects were then offered a chance to sign up for a charity project to assuage their consciences. Those who had already literally washed their hands were far less likely to sign up than those who didn’t wash – indicating that the physical act of cleaning up had also cleansed them of guilt. Psychologist Philip Tetlock of the University of California, who was not involved in the study, said it had shown that “there is a deep psychological connection between morality and physical cleanliness.” *(The Week magazine, September 29, 2006)***

**Sometimes, though, people cannot handle our mistakes. Perhaps our parents need us to be flawless, or our mates harp on our failures because they want us to improve. Perhaps our friends are unforgiving because our failure touched them at a vulnerable time. These responses can make us feel guilty. But before taking on that guilt, we need to ask ourselves whether it’s truly warranted. Some years ago two elderly women in my congregation died the same week in January. One afternoon I visited both families. At the first home, the oldest son said to me, “It’s my fault that Momma died. I should have insisted on her going to Florida, gotten her out of this miserable cold weather. If I had done that, she would still be alive today. I tried to console him, then made my way to the second family’s home, where the oldest son told me, “I feel it’s my fault that Mother died. If only I hadn’t insisted on her going to Florida. The long plane ride and the abrupt change of climate were too much for her.” *(Harold S. Kushner, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Judge to defendant: "It's 'guilty' or 'not guilty' -- you can't plead 'I gotta be me.'" *(Bob Thaves, in Reader's Digest)***

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