

*Taking action on emotional awareness*

Just as guilt is a natural human emotion that serves a social purpose, the *resolution* or *discharge* of guilt is also natural, *but only if certain things are done*. The purpose of this worksheet is to help you do those things so that you can discharge guilt and feel the sense of release and liberation that will almost always follow.

**STAGE 1** - The first stage in this process is to understand *what* we feel guilty about. We encourage a three-step process here (remember, for now don't try to analyze whether you *should* feel guilty, only if you actually do):

**Step 1:** Make a list of things below you feel guilty about that are immediate and easy to identify:

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**Step 2:** Over the next several days, go through the history of your life from childhood forward and add any other situations or events that you feel guilty about:

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**Step 3:** Over the next several days identify the most important relationships in your life and with each of those people identify whether there are any things you have done to them that make you feel guilty:

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**STAGE 2** - The second stage in this process is to determine if our guilt is *rational* or *justified*. This basically means that you have done something which has caused harm to another (and for some of us this will include other living things, not just people), whether it is physical or emotional harm. At this stage we want to be very aware of what we have been taught about guilt and/or told we should feel guilty about. *Unless true harm to another is involved, we can release our guilt as unjustified*. So go back and look at your lists and make three categories by highlighting items in some way. The first category are things you can definitely let go of now that you better understand guilt. The second category are things that you are not sure about. With respect to this second category, consider sharing your confusion with several trusted and mature friends or contacts and ask for their opinion. See if this helps bring clarity to the issue of whether guilt is justified or not, and then re-categorize them. The third category are those remaining items where your guilt seems valid and justified.

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**STAGE 3** - The third stage is to take the remaining items where you believe your guilt is justified and identify whether those that you harmed are still living or not.

**STAGE 4** - The fourth stage is to make amends with the living by following these specific steps:

- Step 1:** Make a specific and unconditional acknowledgement of what you did to the person that you hurt. Apologize for it. Do not in any way try to rationalize or justify your actions. At this stage do not ask for their forgiveness because this is about what you are doing for them, not what they are doing for you.
- Step 2:** If there is an obvious way to make repairs or compensate for what you have done, do so. If there is not ask the other "What are the specific things I can do to repair the harm in this situation?" As long as the response is proportional to the situation, do them.
- Step 3:** Do not in any way get caught up in the other's response or reaction. They may or may not say things you like or want to hear. Focus only on what you say and do.
- Step 4:** After this, take a look back at the situation and make an honest effort to learn from it. Take whatever steps you can so you don't repeat your harmful actions.
- Step 5:** If you have any form of spirituality you practice, make a specific and unconditional acknowledgment to your God, Spirit or Higher Power and ask for forgiveness *here*. Apologize for it. If you have justified guilt and you have followed all of these steps, this may be an emotionally intense experience that may also involve cleansing grief.
- Step 6:** Let it go and move forward and don't ever feel the need to look back. You have done what you need to do and you have done all you can do.

**STAGE 5** -The fifth stage is to process your guilt where those that were harmed are no longer alive. The steps will be somewhat similar:

- Step 1:** Make a specific and unconditional acknowledgement of what you did – and make this to yourself. Once again, do not in any way try to rationalize or justify your actions – even inside your own mind.
- Step 2:** Consider if there are still things you could do that might compensate in some way. This might be an action to help another that has been harmed in a similar way. It might be a symbolic action such as visiting a grave site or writing a letter of apology.
- Step 3:** After this, take a look back at the situation and make an honest effort to learn from it and take whatever steps you can so you don't repeat your harmful actions.
- Step 4:** If you have any form of spirituality you practice, make a specific and unconditional acknowledgment to your God, Spirit or Higher Power and ask for forgiveness *here*. Apologize for it. If you have justified guilt and you have followed all of these steps, this may be an emotionally intense experience that may also involve cleansing grief.
- Step 5:** Let it go and move forward and don't ever feel the need to look back. You have done what you need to do and you have done all you can do.

It is extremely likely that by following these steps you will feel a great sense of improvement and perhaps the complete elimination of guilt that you have carried. It will take courage to write some of these things down. It will take courage to acknowledge them specifically and unconditionally without trying to justify them. It will take courage to face people you have hurt and apologize to them. But nothing else will truly work and in the end the effort will be well worth it.