

**“I am afraid to think what I have done; look on it again I dare not.”  
~ Shakespeare’s “Macbeth”**

Hello. I am Carol Courcy, Master Certified Coach and [thankfully] a former expert in using guilt to motivate and seemingly punish myself into performance. During my years of emotional agility research for my book “SAVE YOUR INNER TORTOISE”, I discovered how much precious time and energy I wasted with my “guilt habit”. No matter how many promotions, bonuses, kudos from bosses and customers, there was always *more I could have or should have done*. I lived with a nagging sense of inadequacy. My own discoveries matched those of my clients and students. For the most part, our guilt-ing ways were more an emotional habit and not THE WHOLE TRUTH, as we feared.

So I created the idea of *healthy* and *unhealthy* guilt. Overtime I devised and tested new strategies for using *healthy guilt* to make better decisions while bypassing *unhealthy guilt* that mostly produced discomfort.

***We do not have to suffer and suffer and suffer. We can honestly and honorably relieve our guilt—without exhaustion. ~ Carol Courcy, MCC***

I offer this paper to any who feel overrun with guilt AND want some relief from “shoulding” and criticizing yourself so much. I am passionate about teaching you to distinguish your HEALTHY GUILT from your UNHEALTHY GUILT in order to find more satisfaction and joy.

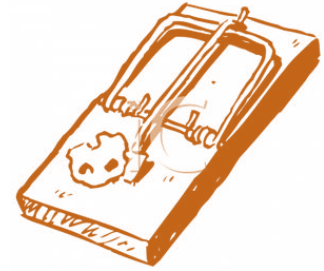
Join me in “saving our inner tortoises” and using our guilt for our well-being.

*Carol*

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## Escaping The Parent Guilt Trap

Most parents I know have a habit of guilt. They feel trapped in obligations between two or more worlds they care about. They feel guilty at work when not at home. They feel guilty at home when there are lots of To Do's at work. Many of us add other elements to this trap: Wanting to be fit and healthy; having career aspirations; wanting time for fun and friendships; responsibilities to aging or ailing family members; not to mention needs of the community or causes we believe in.



Some of us try to compensate by working long days, weekends and nights barely keeping up with expectations to the point of exhaustion. Most of the time our guilt is justified with some version of *this is just how has to be*. Sounding familiar?

**DEFINITION:** Guilt is a conscious or an unconscious emotional experience when we think—*true or not*—that we have betrayed or compromised our own standards of who we think we should be. When we feel culpable we feel a sense of responsibility and remorse-- as in a pang of conscience. We feel an innate urge to correct and return to a self we like better. Some call it our moral or ethical compass.

**Whatever you may call it, what part of your guilt is truly wise and which is simply a habit developed over time with repeated use?**

Let's look closely at the patterns of guilt:

- In your mind is there never-ending chatter of ***never doing*** or ***being enough?***
- Are your favorite words ***should --should have --should not have --need to?***
- Can you easily list all your insufficiencies or inadequacies? Does it feel like 100's?
- Do you find resignation (*I am not enough.*) or resentment (*Why can't others help as much as I do?*) seeping in?

Most of us complain about guilt and want to get rid of it or wish something were different BUT... (The “but” is what stops us from correcting our path. We do not have the energy, right kind of support or know how to change our situation which leaves us spinning with “shoulds” and “should haves”.)

***If you do not regulate all these shoulds, are regret, disappointment, second-guessing, self-recrimination, lack of self-trust and despair far off?***

**Did a bit of worry just arise in you?** Take heart... I will show you how to stop this madness with an activity to move you towards satisfaction (the opposite of guilt!):

**Carol's Coaching Corner:** There is nothing inherently wrong with you if you feel guilty. Guilt arises naturally with many who have conflicting priorities (taking care of family, parents, children, siblings, work, friends, community, self and?). Any sense of regret or remorse when not able to do more arises because you care. (Have you ever noticed that those who could care less do not feel guilt with responsibilities?)

My passion is to serve those who care by creating counteracting doses of satisfaction and joy to reduce overdone guilt leaving plenty of energy to do what we care about. A win...win!

**HEALTHY GUILT:** What I mean here is that some of our guilt is legitimate. If we follow our guilt's inner wisdom, it is actually healthy for us. In a sense it is TRUE GUILT since we ARE acting against our values or betraying the integrity we hold dear. Examples of LEGITIMATE/TRUE/HEALTHY Guilt:

- When breaking a promise. (You said you would do x by time y and did not. Nor did you revise or revoke your promise when you realized you were unable to keep it leaving others to expect you would do what you said.
- Justifying why you do what you do instead of apologizing for any breaches of trust. While a temporary escape of responsibility, this kind of disrespect of others undermines the possibility of healthy trust.
- Over committing as in double or triple booking your time. (Unless you are Superman® or Superwoman® this never works.)
- Saying *yes* when you meant *no*. (Insincerity)

- Knowing you *should take care* (health; fitness, \$, or?) and yet you postpone or procrastinate. *I'll get around to it later*. And later never comes.

**Carol's Coaching Corner:** Be careful to not confuse expectations with promises. Unless your “shoulds” have completion dates and specific things to do and complete, it is NOT a promise. It is an expectation. For example: *I should get more exercise*. Misses so many elements of a promise: What exactly is more? An hour a week? A month? By when will you start? What is enough exercise?

## Paying heed to your HEALTHY GUILT

Here we look for some “shoulds” that you really DO want to apologize for or correct. Instead of our normal disregarding of their wisdom, consider honoring your intentions. Why?

- YOU will feel better about yourself by taking care of what you say you care about.
- You will get boosts of well-being energy if you take the upcoming activity slow and easy. (I picked the fable of the tortoise and hare for my book... The slow and consistent tortoise won the race—not the rushing hare.)

## ACTIVITY: HONOR SOME OF YOUR HEALTHY GUILT

**Step 1:** For a few days, make a list of your **SHOULD**S (*I should... I must... I hope I can...I have to figure out a way to... If I do not, I'll regret...*)

- Do nothing with this list until you have a good representation of your “shoulding”.
- If helpful, take slow and deep breaths as you write each day.
- **Note:** This activity is not meant to embarrass or punish you. Allow yourself to simply tune into to what your mind has been busy with activating your “guilt” habit.

**When ready...**

**Step 2:** Prevent a future **SHOULD HAVE...**

- Take a few deep and calming breaths.
- Look at your list and do one thing you say you **SHOULD**.

**Step 3: After completion, DECLARE YOUR SATISFACTION:**

Acknowledge/thank yourself for doing what you said you would do.

- Do not forget or skip this part!
- Say it until you mean it. Sincerity is key to rebuilding self-respect.

**Like what happened? Want more? Try this activity every day or every week for several weeks. Repeat until you feel less destructive guilt-ing.**

**Carol's Coaching Corner:** The antidote or cure for guilt is some form of satisfaction, peace of mind or self-respect. It is a process not an event. The more you practice, you will travel from not thinking much of yourself deep down to actually liking and respecting who you are more and more. This ONLY happens as you actively do something you think you should and stop adding so much to your pile of shoulds.

On my journey away from unhealthy guilt, I had to learn to like satisfaction. That was easier said than done for me and possibly for you as well. Some of us discover our guilt habit is easier than doing what we say we should. If you discover that struggle is true for you as well... make Activity #1 a daily or weekly one for a few months. DO EASY SHOULD FIRST. (You need the practice!) Relax into satisfaction. Enjoy the ride.

*THANK YOU for inaugurating the possibility of a whole new life for yourself with more HEALTHY GUILT. Keep in touch!*

*Fondly,  
Carol*

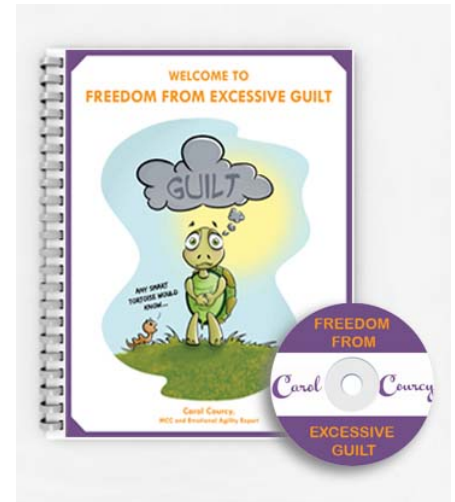
*P.S. Below are some resources to continue your learning.*

## RESOURCES TO CONTINUE YOUR LEARNING

Feel free to email me questions or outcomes! I love hearing what you invent!  
Need ideas? Ask away.

[Carol@saveyourinnertortoise.com](mailto:Carol@saveyourinnertortoise.com)

- ❖ If you'd like hearing what others say and want more support from me with reducing on guilt, check out my new video workshop **FREEDOM FROM EXCESSIVE GUILT**. This is my one-hour video class with accompanying 7-page workbook full of ideas, activities and support for easily and systematically reducing guilt and visiting satisfaction intentionally!



**As a gift to those participating in the Happy Parent Happy Kids Tele-summit, I am offering a \$50 discount. Use COUPON CODE: parent and your price is \$147 (instead of \$197) <http://www.saveyourinnertortoise.com/products/>**

- ❖ F-R-E-E emotional agility teleclasses. Periodically I do free teleclasses for my “tribe” as I like to call those of us who tend to over do destructive emotions and under do the constructive ones. I usually pick an emotion (guilt was a VERY popular one) or a life conundrum and the emotion behind it (Procrastination and fear was also well attended!) We have fun employing emotional agility learning strategies in REAL life. Check out my events page and enter your name and email to be notified of upcoming teleclasses. <http://www.saveyourinnertortoise.com>
- ❖ On my website read an excerpt of my book: **Save Your Inner Tortoise!** (Especially written to help the burned out, overwhelmed or exhausted feel more daily satisfaction and energy.) **Autographed copies available there too.** <http://www.saveyourinnertortoise.com/>
- ❖ I also enjoy doing tele-class events, series, retreats, and live speaking events for teams and groups about emotions and emotional learning. ***Please invite me if there's a good fit for your group.*** There is a list of topics on my website.