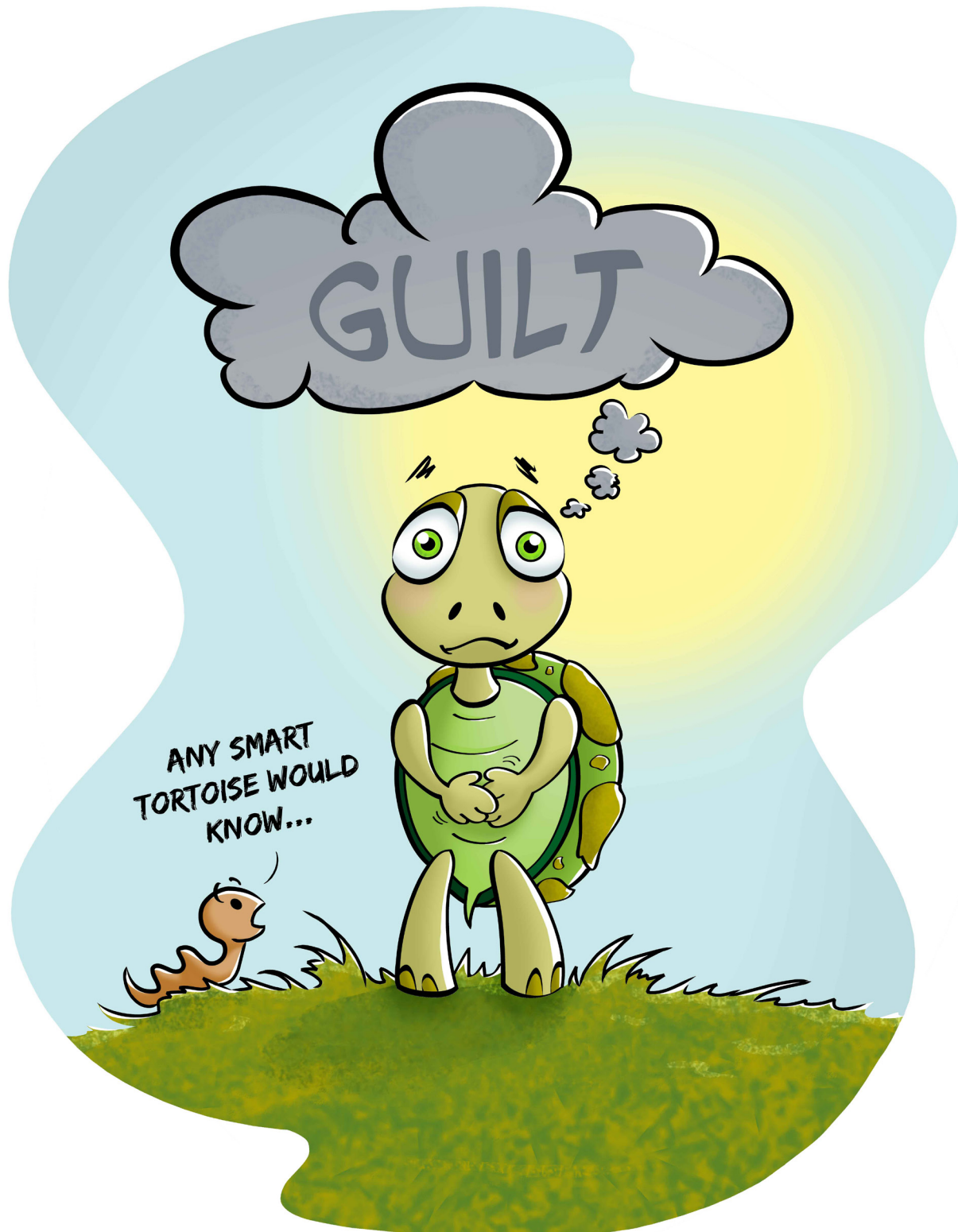


WELCOME TO FREEDOM FROM EXCESSIVE GUILT



Carol Courcy,
MCC and Emotional Agility Expert

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Hello. My name is Carol Courcy, Master Certified Coach (MCC). You'll meet me on the video in a few minutes. Before you begin, I wanted to set the stage for you. In the early 1990s, it was my coach training that ignited curiosity about emotional learning and especially about whether we could do anything about "destructive" emotions that take us away from our best selves and a well-lived life. One such destructive emotion is excessive guilt.

I chose guilt for this video workbook, as many of us suffer from it daily. We say, "I am so sorry. I wish I would... I should... I shouldn't always... I feel bad that I... I really want to do better at ..." What I rarely hear: I am truly happy and satisfied. Ready for some freedom from excessive guilt? Read on!

“ *Guilt is our inner police force, but if we give it too much emotional power, we risk turning into a police state.* ~Ruth Whippman ”

Today you have the luxury of relaxing and even laughing while taking a closer look at guilt.

Where might you use it too much (give it too much power)?

Where might you even add some guilt to return to the person you like better?

Yes indeed, there is a good aspect of guilt. As our inner police force, guilt helps us decide what we should and should not do to honor our values and feel true to ourselves. A not-so-attractive aspect is when we betray our inner wisdom or authentic self. That "true" guilt undermines our well-being and we suffer. If we don't watch it, such recurrent self-betrays become a habit and ultimately paralyze us, or worse yet, we exhaust ourselves by feeling guilty when we have done nothing wrong. (Ever feel responsible for fixing someone else's mistake?) Might you be a guilt-er, one who tries to coerce a friend, spouse, or child into doing something by "should-ing" them? Over time, guilt can become an unconscious habit.

Guilt is not only personal, it is cultural. We find it behind many of our professional and organizational "not enough" patterns. (*You are only as good as your last quarter's results. We can ALWAYS do better.*) Are you surprised that guilt is an emotion I relate to suffering?

ACTIVITY #1:

After listening to Carol's introduction and responses from participants, what is personally appealing to you about freedom from excessive guilt?

ACTIVITY #2:

Given your response above, what would be a desirable outcome from completing this workbook? A terrific outcome?

Our agenda is to put guilt into better balance, to learn:

- ▶ Why we must pay attention to emotions like guilt.
- ▶ What is good and not so good about guilt.
- ▶ The concept of being *emotionally agile*: having the right amount of guilt, at the right time, with the right people, and NOT overdoing it.

WHY MUST WE PAY ATTENTION TO OUR EMOTIONS?

Why bother paying attention to our emotions? Shouldn't we try to avoid, ignore, or override them? That is certainly the conventional wisdom. Here's the problem:

- 1) Human beings *are* emotional. Our emotional brain is older than our neocortex or thinking brain. We can live without our neocortex, but we cannot survive without our emotional brain.
- 2) Emotions are what give life its flavor and meaning. Life would be pretty boring without them.
- 3) If that's not enough reason to respect our emotional side... here's another.

EMOTIONAL REVERBERATION

“ *Gleeful people automatically remember happy times, while a depressed person effortlessly recalls incidents of loss, desertion, and despair. Anxious people dwell on past threats; paranoia instills a retrospective preoccupation with situations of persecution.*
~A General Theory of Love, Drs. Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon ”

Emotions predispose us for action. When **in** an emotion, we view life through its filter or viewpoint. We are prone to think and speak (or not speak) as the emotion dictates. When guilty, we cannot be at peace—we feel compelled or obligated to keep going. We are not free to say “no,” so we say “yes” to others. As a consequence, we rarely say “yes” to ourselves.

We often blame our circumstances or other people for our emotional state. NOT SO FAST!

Someone prone to **GUILT** has difficulty with a clear “yes” or a clear “no.” You hear “but” or “I can't because...” or let others “should” you. Guilt pre-disposes us to feel as if we *have* to take care of all these obligations. Some feel as if you will lose no matter what you do. Any idea, request or offer feels like a “should.” Little if any freedom to choose.

What should I do within this two-week time frame?

**Vacation? Work opportunity?
Family reunion?**



Someone prone to **SATISFACTION** is pre-disposed to come from choice because you are happy with your pattern of commitments. We can say “yes” or “no” to requests, offers, or possibilities. If there are dilemmas or consequences to a yes or no, from satisfaction one accepts them with the choice made. We have freedom to choose.

ACTIVITY #3:

After you listen to the discussion between Carol and the participants on their version of guilt, what is yours?

How about your version of satisfaction? _____

“ *Same circumstance + two different emotional attitudes
= two VERY different life experiences.* ~Carol Courcy ”

Let us look at two sides of guilt’s emotional reverberation or “automatic pilot.”

ACTIVITY #4:

GUILT IS GOOD... WHY?

- ▶ The guilty care about others—family, friends, their organization, colleagues, bosses, those hurt, deprived or marginalized. Self-sacrifice comes easy and does not turn bitter or angry.
- ▶ We fulfill our purpose or give life meaning by doing what we should, fulfilling our obligations and responsibilities. We feel a sense of largesse or generosity from acting on this sense of obligation.
- ▶ We like pleasing others. We do so without expectation.
- ▶ The right amount of guilt motivates us to keep our commitments. We make a good effort, and when we can’t fulfill a commitment, we let others know ASAP.
- ▶ We do the right thing in the face of opposition. **HINT:** This kind of guilt does not deplete well-being; it increases it.
- ▶ When we feel bad about what we haven’t done—we find the motivation or help and do it.
- ▶ When an apology is in order, we make it. (Better late than never.)
- ▶ A blessing or gift from guilt? ***We are close to what we aspire to be.***
- ▶ From acting on these responsibilities we feel a “good” tired because of best efforts. A sense of overall satisfaction for hard work done. Responsibility and obligations are not a burden. We can sleep at night!

Where is your well-being and guilt in good shape?

Look at the list above for clues as to where you fulfill obligations and honor your sense of responsibility. (Consider the domains of health, work, family, finances, friendship.) **What’s going all right and what are you proud of?**

NOTE: The standard is satisfaction, NOT perfection!

<< **Should you need to activate a calming emotion, take three slow, deep breaths.** >>

ACTIVITY #5:

OVERDOING GUILT—NOT SO GOOD. WHY?

Going to the opposite end of the guilt spectrum, excessive guilt can paralyze us, resulting in all sorts of self-recriminations, regrets, and no corrective action:

- ▶ **Instead of making that apology, we fret, worry, and say nothing.** We hide from or avoid the person or situation. We think about making an apology, and yet weeks, months, and years pass.
- ▶ Pleasing can become a habit. **Do you have a yes or I'll do it habit?** Do you resent others?
- ▶ **Do you say “yes” when you mean “no”?** (Our obliging self says “yes” without thinking.)
- ▶ **Do you like being needed? Do you surround yourself with those who expect?** Watch out! When we are pleasers, others will expect us to say “yes” as we have in the past.
- ▶ **We don't ask for what we want (I'll just do it myself.)** And yet we resent others for not guessing what we need. (*They should... They should have... They shouldn't have... Why don't they ever...?*)
- ▶ **We make indirect requests.** (*Your room is a mess. This is awful. Someone should fix this.*)
- ▶ **We make assumptions or are righteous about others being unable or unreliable.** (*It will be better or faster if I just do it. Poor me... I work so hard. I'm the only one who cares or can.*)
- ▶ **The guilty tend to dislike tension or discomfort in others, so they often “take up the slack” (volunteer before others) to relieve tension.**

WARNING SIGNS OF OVERDOING GUILT:

Persistent exhaustion, agitation, overwhelm, anger, resentment. Are you working hard with little satisfaction? Instead of leaving these circumstances, do you stay the same and complain?

<< **Should you need to activate a calming emotion, take three slow, deep breaths.** >>

Part 1: Where are you off target with an obligation? Personal responsibility? Where do YOU say you are missing the mark? Doing too much? Doing too little? (Self-care? Health? Work? Family? Finances? Friendship?)

Part 2: What is your reaction to your list in Part 1? What emotions arise?

ACTIVITY #6:

WANT A VACATION FROM EXCESSIVE GUILT?

Introducing Emotional Agility

Guilt: The feeling of having failed in an obligation; finding yourself off target from your core values or beliefs, or missing a mark you'd like to get closer to or return to.

Emotional Agility with Guilt: What for you is the right amount of guilt, at the right time, with the right person, for the right purpose/outcome and to the right degree?

<< **Activate a calming emotion: Take three slow, deep breaths.** >>

Instead of guilt beating you up, where might you use guilt wisely? What obligation would you enjoy instituting? What responsibility would be a relief to let go of partially or totally?

<< **Activate a calming emotion: KEEP B-R-E-A-T-H-I-N-G!** >>

- ▶ **What on your to-do list or calendar does NOT fit with your values and beliefs?** (Self-care? Health? Work? Family? Finances? Friendship?)
- ▶ **Given those values and beliefs, what is missing from your calendar or to-do list?**
- ▶ **What might you say no to?**
- ▶ **Is there an “I should...” you could replace with “I will... by (date/time).”**
- ▶ **What to postpone?** (To relieve pressure, delay the start or completion of something. **HINT:** Put the new date on your calendar to feel secure it will be taken care of. Tell anyone else in the loop.)
- ▶ **What could you cancel?** (*I promise not to _____.*)
- ▶ **Interrupt your “yes” habit and start a “postpone responding” practice.** (For any ideas, offers, or requests, your response is not “yes.” It is: *I will let you know “yes” or “no” by (date/time).* Review your values, to-do list, and calendar. Where does it fit? Get back to people with your response by the date you promised.)

LIST FOUR POSSIBILITIES (These are possibilities! Not shoulds, and NOT yet promises.)

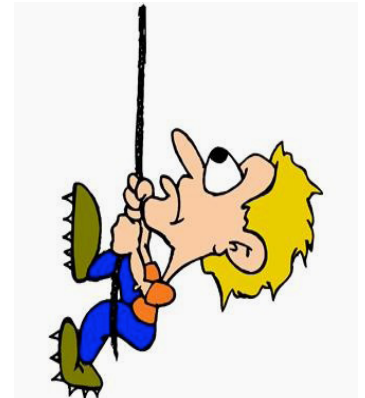
1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

“ *Luck is the residue of design.* ~Branch Rickey ”



ACTIVITY #7:

What luck will you make for yourself? How will you honor what you say you want? Of the four, what ONE possibility listed on page 5 do you promise to keep— no matter what?

<< **Activate a calming emotion: KEEP B-R-E-A-T-H-I-N-G!** >>

CAROL'S COACHING CORNER: I recommend emotional agility, NOT emotional perfection! Even a bit more daily satisfaction, ease, hope, relief, or sense of balance IS progress for experts at guilt! To become an expert at satisfaction, **REPETITION IS KEY!**

If you like what happens for you and you want more, do this exercise once a week for two or three months or until you find yourself following your authentic cues naturally. (Like learning scales on the piano, it will feel awkward in the beginning and get easier as you practice.)

CAROL'S COACHING CORNER: On the video I mentioned something called SIMPLE PRACTICES. I want to introduce that idea and combine it with what we are learning about emotional reverberation. (We have the choices our emotions allow.) Emotional reverberation is true for all emotions. When in love, no one can talk you out of it. When out of love, no one can talk you into it.

Want less guilt and more satisfaction or peace of mind?

Try this SIMPLE PRACTICE: **A little bit each day, carefully and consistently do the opposite of what you do in guilt!** Eventually you will easily say “yes” when you mean “yes” and “no” when you mean “no” with dignity and have few, if any, regrets.

Is it simple to reduce guilt? Yes. Easy? Not always. It takes practice ! Feeling less guilty requires letting go of shoulds you will not honor and doing what you say you will do more and more often.

Remember the fable about the tortoise and the hare? The slow and steady tortoise won the race, NOT the hare!

RESOURCES TO CONTINUE YOUR LEARNING

- ❖ Feel free to email me questions or outcomes: Carol@saveyourinnertortoise.com. I love hearing what you invent for yourself. If you need ideas, ask away.
- ❖ **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 overdo destructive emotions and underdo the constructive ones. I usually pick an emotion (guilt was a popular one) or a life conundrum and the emotion behind it. (The class on procrastination and fear was well attended!) We have fun employing emotional agility learning strategies in REAL life. Check out my events page and sign up for teleclasses: www.saveyourinnertortoise.com/events/
- ❖ Check out 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 on my website.**
- ❖ I also enjoy doing teleclass series, retreats, and live speaking events for teams and groups about emotions and emotional learning. A list of my topics and upcoming events is available on my website. Invite me where I am a good fit!

May you enjoy many, many moments of the emotions you prefer to be in rather than the ones you have been stuck with recently! THANK YOU for inaugurating the possibility of a whole new life for yourself. KEEP IN TOUCH!

*Fondly,
Carol*

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