



Boundaries without Guilt

How to know if it's "Guilt" or "Shmilt"

Objectives

- ▲ Differentiate true guilt from false guilt (obligation, "shmilt")
- ▲ Remember how to process guilt (feelings processing reminder)
- ▲ Understand what true guilt creates (A/R) vs. what false guilt creates, and decide on purpose which one to choose

This week we differentiate "True Guilt" from "Not Guilt" and recognize triggers for each. Once you identify which you are operating from, you can practice setting and honoring your boundaries to connect instead of resent.

Think of the last time you felt guilty about something, either at work or at home.

Write about it here:

Definitions

True Guilt: the feeling that occurs when you act outside of your values. It arises from a thought about something you wish you hadn't done.

True guilt is uncomfortable, but usually ends up serving us by getting us closer to *aligning with our values*. Guilt is like a **red flag** pointing towards precious data about what you **value**.

If you become aware of and process the feeling, it can lead to positive action (*course correction, apologizing, preventing the action in the future, connecting to another person or yourself, etc.*)



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In order to get to the positive action -
you need to fully process the guilt.

- 
- **Name it**
 - **Describe the physical sensation, like you would when taking a history with a patient**
 - **Watch it in your body until it passes**
 - **Find the value it is pointing to (Trustworthiness? Honesty? Friendship?)**
 - **Decide if you truly like and want to keep that value**
 - **From this place choose your next best step**

False guilt, on the other hand, is the feeling you get when you act outside of **someone else's expectations or cultural norm.**

It arises from a thought about what someone else might think or feel because of you.

False guilt is from us trying to internalize the other person's (*imagined or real*) distress as our own, and we usually are compelled to try to fix it (often at your expense). The actions tend to be something like: Apologize, vacillate, be wishy-washy, etc. further signaling to others that it's ok or even right for you to cross your boundary, and often leads you to resent the other person.



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As life would have it, it turns out that acting from false guilt, (often a sense of obligation) is quite disconnecting.

Ever notice how you slowly start to resent the people that you are trying to please or protect? This is because you are **attempting the impossible**: *to control their emotions*.

It is counter-intuitive, but well defined in the data:

In order to
connect,
we must set
boundaries
and allow
others to
control
their own
emotions.

“

Boundaries are a prerequisite for compassion and empathy.

We can't connect with someone unless we're clear about where we end and they begin. If there's no autonomy between people, then there's no compassion or empathy, just enmeshment.

Brené Brown | ATLAS OF THE HEART





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Case: You are working with a prestigious mentor in your specialty who has offered you a lot of responsibility and autonomy for several projects. Your mentor is fairly hands-off, and appears to be very busy (hard to get a meeting or even an email response back from them). You really want to impress this mentor, and are hoping to get a letter of recommendation out of them for fellowship. You only have one month of time blocked off for this, however, to complete the work that has been assigned to you, and are feeling overwhelmed with the tasks at hand.

C: Your research mentor offered you three papers to first author which includes IRB application, data analysis, data management, and manuscript writing, all to be done within the span of 1 month

T: OMG this is too much, I'll have to stay up all night the whole month to get it done and I'll be miserable, but if I don't, my mentor will be so disappointed in me....

F: ****guilt***? Not-guilt?

A: Vacillate, don't fully commit to the three projects, but also don't say no. Do not tell your mentor how overwhelmed you feel. Decide to just cancel all of your plans for the month and sign up for an evening stats class to attempt to figure it all out. Start to resent research, secretly are irritated at your mentor for being unavailable. Judge mentor harshly, while still not saying anything to them. Complain to anyone who will listen.

R: You create research misery for yourself and disconnect from the projects and your mentor.



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The Intentional Model

R: You connect to both the research and your mentor.

A: Decide how much you can reasonably get done in the month without sacrificing your social, physical or emotional wellbeing. Communicate this to your mentor. Ask for what you need (including time, resources and training), while understanding that this may lead you to get less done. Be honest with yourself and your mentor about your capabilities, needs, and wants for this project. Remind yourself that *you are worthy as you are*. Practice seeing how well aligned you and your mentor are on this research. Define your values, and figure out how to go towards them. Assume the best intent/most generous interpretation of your mentor's thoughts.

F: Compassion

T: Oh- this is a LOT of work to get done, I'm going to have to decrease my contributions here. My mentor must not have a clear idea of my time or training limitations, shoot.... they might be disappointed in the situation, and I get that!

C: Your research mentor offered you three papers to first author which includes IRB application, data analysis, data management, and manuscript writing, all to be done within the span of 1 month.



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Go back to your initial thought download.
Is your feeling here "true guilt" or "false guilt"? Why?

If you identified true guilt, what can you learn from it?

Value:

Action you'd like to take:

If it is "false-guilt," can you write down a model from this feeling?

C

T

F

A

R

What boundary can you set to avoid future resentment?
