

Conquer the Guilt by Chris Vasiliadis

Dictionary.com defines guilt as "a feeling of responsibility or remorse for some offense, crime, wrong, etc., whether real or imagined."

Let's focus on two pieces in that definition: responsibility and imagined. In my discussions with clients and prospects, I've noticed a theme of wanting to do the right thing and being responsible, but taking it to such an extreme extent that it backfires and works against them.

Many create this belief or story of what it means to be responsible, and/or what a particular role in their life (business owner, executive, parent, child, spouse, partner) should look like. (Ah - should - another trigger word around guilt.) Frequently, the definition is unrealistic, works against you, and makes you feel bad. Not the best foundation for creating new and improved wellness habits!

Our beliefs or stories are what we imagine - what our mind creates. The good news? At any point, we can change our beliefs or stories when we notice they're not serving us.

That point has been an A-HA moment for many so let me pause here to emphasize. Since you create your beliefs and stories, you have the ability to change or redefine them to better support your wellness.

First, notice the stories that are suspending you. A first sign of this is simply not feeling great, and/or feeling heavy, deflated, constricted. Stop: be present. Tune into how you feel, and what's causing you to feel this way.

Now, choose a more powerful way to feel about the situation, that's at least as true as this not-so-great story. (An excellent technique for this process is called "The Work" by Byron Katie. Four steps, and a turnaround statement.) You know you've hit a great turnaround when you have a new statement that makes you feel lighter, energized and expanded. Use that new perspective as your springboard for moving forward on the wellness vision you created for yourself (discussed in the December 2009 Be Well newsletter).

Don't dwell in the guilt. It's just a made up story, and/or it's keeping you stuck in the past: there's nothing real, positive or forward-moving about it. Notice it, and use it as your trigger to turn it around.

"A person with a clear purpose will make progress on even the roughest road. A person with no purpose will make no progress on even the smoothest road." - Thomas Carlyle

I would be remiss if I didn't address the purpose piece and the obstacles (otherwise known as life) that sometimes get in the way. If you had a new wellness goal and have fallen off the wagon for whatever reason, don't beat yourself up about it: just get back on. And if you fall off again, get back on again. Start where you're at. Keep your purpose -- the big picture wellness vision and why it's important to you -- in the forefront. It's about forward momentum. As you perform each step, focus on that step 100%. If your mind goes elsewhere, gently notice it and bring it back to what you're doing. Combined with changing your story, presence, persistence purpose are powerful allies against the guilt beast.

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