

The Importance of Guilt and Resentment

By
Dr. Darlene Treese

***“The New England conscience doesn’t stop you from doing what you shouldn’t.
It just keeps you from enjoying it.” - Cleveland Amory***

Guilt and resentment are miserable games we play in our minds. They are the result of not taking an honest, realistic view of others and ourselves. They are games of make-believe with bitter outcomes. Guilt is defined as anger directed to self. Resentment is anger directed to others. They are actually continuums of the same faulty thinking, negative emotions and unrealistic expectations.

It all starts with unfounded ideals and expectations of how things and people *should* be. We become angry over things that we or others should or should not have done and the punishment becomes greater with every repeated occurrence. The self-talk becomes “I/they should have known better! A *good person* would...”

Soon fear sets in. We become afraid of situations in which we or they might fail to live up to our personal expectations. We avoid new people, situations and activities and enter into a predictable rut. We feel more guilt and resentment because we are not doing more for ourselves and life has lost its excitement. Some people become immobilized, afraid of doing anything for fear that they be disappointed or let down again.

This negative cycle of emotions has devastating effects. It poisons relationships, inhibits growth, and creates feelings of hate or unworthiness. It puts enormous stress on the mind, emotions and body. The most tragic thing about guilt and resentment is that they are totally misused.

Why do we hold on to these things? As practiced in our culture, guilt and resentment allow us to maintain our inaccurate image of what “good people” are and do. We expect perfection from imperfect people (self included). Guilt and resentment allow us to believe one thing and do something completely contradictory and to let us continue doing these things that are not in our best interest as long as we are willing to pay the price of having more guilt and resentment.

The importance of guilt and resentment is that they signal to you an ironclad expectation you hold of what you want but may not get. To get out of the negative cycle and faulty thinking, change the image or change the action. To change the image try adding the phrase “-and sometimes they are not”. Examples: “Friends are always honest... and sometimes they are not. Families are always loving... and sometimes they are not. Bosses are always fair... and sometimes they are not. I am always true to my diet... and sometimes I am not.” To change the action, avoid those traps or set-ups to prove how wrong you or others are. Go for the win-win in every situation.

Breaking the negative cycle of guilt and resentment allows you to have a more realistic view of humanity –with all of our individual quirks, habits, preferences and choices. It allows you to set more realistic goals and be kinder to self and others. But most of all, it allows you to do the things that are important on a daily basis and focus with clear determination to do those things that create more peace, harmony and happiness in your life and in your world.

Dr. Darlene Treese has been in private practice in hypnosis and counseling since 1983. She is a Diplomate in Counseling with the National Institute of Sports, Past President of the American Psychotherapy and Medical Hypnosis Association and Vice President of the Rotary eClub of Southwest, USA. Darlene has been internationally acknowledged for her positive action and solution-based therapies and work with corporations. “A person for the people,” Dr. Dar is always available to help with your questions and dilemmas through office visits, email or telephone consultations. Call her at **850-201-0073** or visit **www.AskDrTreese.com**