



Zap your Guilt Gremlins in Five Steps

"Guilt: the gift that keeps on giving." Erma Bombeck

1. Define Your Code of Conduct

What is right for you and your family? Being clear on your core values as an individual and as a family means that you can make clear choices about how you live your life as a parent, without worrying what others think.

What are your boundaries and "hard edges"? In other words, what is ok for *you* and your values and standards? What are the definite "nos" and "yeses"?

2. Talk it away

When you get jabbed by guilt, talk it over with your partner or a good, like-minded friend. Ask them to remind you why you are such a good mum!

3. Avoid Psychic Vampires

These are the people who say things like,

"I hope you don't mind, but I gave your son a drink and a biscuit at the end of football club as he doesn't seem to have a snack"

and

"Is everything ok with the new baby, as I noticed that you were late for your daughter again?"

There will always be the odd one like this around; recognise their comments as being simply about their need to assert themselves in a mis-guided way, and not about you. Avoid them and don't befriend them.

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4. **Adjust your Expectations**

If you feel guilty about not being at every school sports day/PTA meeting etc, yet you are a working parent, then you need to modify your unreasonable expectations of yourself. It is not reasonable to expect that you attend all such events. Examine the source of guilty feelings: Do they come from you, your kids or outsiders (see no. 3)? Once you've looked at the source of your guilt, release it by looking at it logically.

5. **Accept that you'll never be absolutely Guilt-Free**

I have a theory on guilt. I believe that an extra strength version of guilt replaces the placenta as your first child is born and it just stays there, like some sort of invisible appendix. Like the appendix, guilt is essentially useless. Perhaps guilt had a purpose at one time long ago (possibly to stop us abandoning our young?) We don't need it to be good parents, but it's there all the same!

Let's face it, as parents, we're bound to feel guilty at times and there's no foolproof way to eliminate guilt all of the time. Keep battling it and refer back to this article when guilt raises its ugly head.