



The Battle Against Parent Guilt and Other Emotions

0-4 MONTHS

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If there's one feeling that unites mums and dads all around the world in the rollercoaster of parenting emotions, it's guilt—and most commonly it's a mother's guilt. Let's break the silence on parent guilt and other common feelings.

What is parent guilt?

Am I doing enough? Am I doing things right? No matter where you live or what your

background is, it's likely you've felt this way at some point on your parenting journey. While some level of parenting guilt is completely normal—and probably inevitable at some point—it becomes a problem when it gets in the way of your day-to-day life. For example, if you're constantly struggling to make decisions or you're backtracking on those you've already made.

Maybe you're beating yourself up about returning to work after parental leave—even though this may be a necessity to support your family finances as well as your mental wellbeing. Or you're cancelling that date night because you're having second thoughts about the babysitter that you spent so long vetting. If things are getting out of control for you then you might need some help dealing with parental guilt, it's best to talk to a healthcare professional.

What causes parenting guilt?

Parenting guilt can come from a combination of internal and external pressures. Perhaps you've set high expectations of what you want to achieve through parenting, based on your own experiences of childhood. Are the memories of your younger years so rose tinted that you simply can't live up to them? Or what if you're not enjoying parenting as much as you thought you would, but you feel bad even admitting it to yourself?

Sometimes unrealistic ideas of how you 'should' be feeling about parenting or how you 'should' be carrying out certain tasks can come from external sources like friends, family, and social media. It can be difficult not to compare our lives with how other parents are doing it with seemingly so much ease, when all we see are smiling pictures of happy families, out on yet another carefully orchestrated, fun but educational day trip. Of course, they're not going to publicize the tantrum that exploded 20 minutes earlier when the child was clipped into the car seat!



...Exactly how many superpowers am I supposed to have?

How does parent guilt affect us?

A big challenge when it comes to parenting guilt is getting mums and dads to admit to their feelings and get to the bottom of what's causing it. They may feel ashamed about feeling jealous or insecure, or just prefer to put on a brave face when people ask how they are. Left unchecked, parent guilt may spiral into anxiety. Mums experiencing prolonged baby blues may in turn feel guilty that they're not enjoying motherhood, creating a vicious circle. If you're worried about your mental health or need support or expert advice, talk to your healthcare professional.

In China, for example, over half of new mums surveyed (53%) agree they take on a lot of guilt. A similarly high number (48%) also say they experienced baby blues. In comparison, only 6% of new mums in Poland suffered from baby blues, but they are still affected by guilt, with 41% feeling the burden.

Dealing with parental guilt

All around the world, there's a huge pressure for parents to be perfect. But remember, there is no such thing as a perfect parent.

Sources

The Parenting Index, First Edition 2021, theparentingindex.com
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