



CENTERSTONE
Wellness Program

Shrink Your Stress to Shrink Your Dress: How to get rid of guilt and move toward a healthier you!

We all know how the guilt we carry in our lives can feel like a weight around our neck, slowing us down and keeping us from moving forward. It can also manifest like a weight around your tummy, and thighs, and arms and everywhere else. Guilt causes stress and stress causes all kinds of physical illness, including weight gain.

Imagine a gift that can increase self esteem, reduce stress and can be given to anybody. Imagine a gift that can lift spirits, enliven inspiration and even ignite passions. This ideal gift is not found by shopping online, or at the mall, or within the catalogues mounting in your mailbox. It is not something that fits into a bag or in a box, and it provides a feeling of warmth more fitting than a personalized pair of sox.

What is this perfect gift? It is a gift you give yourself – the gift of Forgiveness. By being forgiving of yourself, you can then accept yourself and be more responsible for your life choices. Self-forgiveness is the willingness to believe that you are worthy of love, respect, and great successes. There are dangers when we fail to forgive – dangers that have the potential to limit our relationships with others and ourselves. A failure to forgive yourself has the same consequences as a failure to forgive others. It can result in emotional bondage, uneasiness in your spirit, and a cloud of uncertainty about all your relationships.

6 signs you are stuck in a rut of guilt and regret:

- **Feeling unworthy**
When you feel unworthy, it affects your self-esteem and self worth. You may find yourself lacking any self-love, instead becoming caught up in unresolved self-anger, self-hatred and self-blaming.
- **Being paralyzed by the past**
When you cannot let go of your guilt and regrets, there might as well be a chain connecting you to them.
- **Having unresolved issues**
Until you resolve the issues that are weighting you down, you will likely experience feelings of helplessness and even depression.
- **Being unable to forgive yourself**
When you are unable to forgive yourself, you might become self-destructive, punishing yourself and showing indifference to your own needs.
- **Acting defensive and distant**
Your guilt may create a barrier between you and others.
- **Feeling afraid of trying again**

Your fear of failure, due to constantly reliving the past, may cripple any attempts to move on from the event and forgive yourself.

The act of self-forgiveness changes the energy and the physical structure of your cells, and of your DNA. Guilt is a very powerful and deadening emotion. Guilt can close down the energy systems of your body, and thereby lessen the flow of healing energy and love for our self and for others. The lack of forgiveness is emotionally and physically damaging.

Sometimes the most difficult person to forgive is the one you face in the mirror. Some common situations that challenge self-forgiveness include: overwhelming guilt from a failed marriage, parenting errors, family and relationship mistakes, and poor financial decisions.

7 Tips to shrink your stress by forgiving yourself

Let go of self-anger

The effort it takes to maintain total disdain for yourself drains your time and energy, and it limits how you receive care from others.

Accept yourself as human

Acknowledge you are not an all knowing and all powerful super person. Everyone has slips in their reactions and actions.

View your mistake as a learning opportunity

Own your mistake. Understand the lesson. Learn from it.

Let go of fear of the future

Be willing to take risks. You now know differently, so you can choose differently.

Trust in yourself and your goodness

You are not a bad person, but one that simply made a faulty or hasty decision. The good is still in you. You have value to contribute to others.

Admit that hiding doesn't heal the hurt

Trying to block the burden of shame and guilt only keeps it just under the surface. Hiding the hurt placed of yourself and others keeps you chained to the past.

Imagine the gains of moving forward

Picture yourself free from the guilt, regret and self- condemnation. Live in the moment. Be intentional in new and improved decisions that open up opportunities for freedom and success.

If you are tired of limits your self-condemnation places on you, you can do something about it. The past cannot be changed, and the future depends on the decisions you make today. Below are seven tips to replace those self-defeating thoughts.

If you are holding to a grudge toward yourself, I challenge and encourage you to let go. Contact Centerstone at (615) 460-4357 to schedule an appointment for individual counseling services, which can assist in freeing you from the bondage of your protecting guilt - for any past regrets. Give yourself that gift today! Or, to invite Susan Gillpatrick to speak with your group or organization, she can be reached at (615) 460-4445.

“By far the strongest poison to the human spirit is the inability to forgive oneself or another person.”
-Caroline Myss

Centerstone (615) 460-HELP (4357)

About Centerstone

Centerstone, a not-for-profit organization, has provided a wide range of mental health and addiction services to people of all ages for more than 50 years. Through more than 60 facilities and 170 partnership locations across Middle Tennessee, Centerstone serves more than 50,000 children, adolescents, adults and seniors each year. Centerstone is accredited by The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). For more information about Centerstone, please call 888-291-4357 or visit www.centerstone.org.

About Susan Gillpatrick, MEd, LPC, CTS

Susan Gillpatrick, Centerstone Crisis Management Specialist, primarily works in the field with clients in critical incident response situations, and in Centerstone's wellness trainings and presentations. She is also responsible for planning and implementing marketing and growth strategies for Centerstone's Crisis Management Strategies.

Ms. Gillpatrick is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Trauma Specialist, Certified Workplace Conflict Mediator, and Mental Health Service Provider in the state of Tennessee and a National Certified Counselor. She is also a member the American Counseling Association, the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, the Tennessee Mental Health Counseling Association, and the Middle Tennessee Employee Assistance Professionals Association. She is a frequent presenter at local and national conferences, and has had numerous articles published. She received her Master of Education degree in Human Development Counseling from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University.