

Guilt Is Not Very Useful or Meaningful

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Q: I have a problem with guilt. Can you offer any perspectives on guilt?

A: I suggest you notice the contraction you probably feel when you feel guilty. This contraction is telling you that it isn't very true that you are guilty. The truth is what opens your Heart and your sense of Being, so when something causes a contraction, that means it isn't very true.

Although there may be a little bit of truth to the experience of guilt, guilt is not usually a very useful or meaningful concept. And it especially doesn't lead to useful or meaningful action, which is one reason that guilt is not very true or important. Surprisingly, guilt doesn't even often lead to changing or correcting the behavior we feel guilty about. In fact, we often act less kindly and compassionately when we are feeling guilty because of the overall discomfort we feel when we feel guilty. This suggests a more practical definition of truth as that which is useful or leads to a desired outcome. If something doesn't lead to a desired outcome, then it isn't wrong or bad; it just isn't very true.

When you feel contracted because of guilt, just let that contraction be there and get curious about what else is true. If you've done something that triggers a sense of guilt, then there's a lot more to discover about that experience besides how guilty it makes you feel. What else is true about your actions? What were your intentions? How have you been conditioned to act in that situation? What other effects did your action have besides the ones you feel guilty about? Are you even sure that you hurt or harmed someone? What else did you do in the situation besides the actions you feel guilty about? What else do you feel besides guilty? What can you do now that will affect the situation? Is there something you can apologize for or do to make up for your unkindness to someone? How important is this experience in the overall context of your life? And finally, what else is going on in your life besides this particular situation? Guilt may be present, but a lot more is happening than that!

There are endless questions that can uncover more and more truth. Why settle for a not very useful or meaningful conclusion that you are guilty?