

# Lesson 11 Guilt Hotspots



Guilt is common for women in general but women who were wounded in childhood may have specific patterns of guilt.

Some of us internalize things that happen around us, even things that may not have anything to do with us or are not ours to take on. Internalizing is a specific pattern of guilt I have noticed come up with women who were wounded as children. This month I'd like to talk about internalization and how it stems from feelings of

guilt from childhood. We will also cover some guilt hot spots we may still be experiencing as adults.

But before we begin, let's acknowledge the role of guilt in a healthy human being. It is there as a part of our conscience, it tells us when we have done something "wrong" and that feeling can act as a deterrent depending on the person and the situation. (Of course there are those who may not ever feel guilt at all or feel guilt and still repeatedly engage in the behavior they feel guilty about). Guilt can be healthy, but when it is prolonged, and used as reason to bash ourselves, to feel less than, to lower our own sense of self and personal power, it is time to take a good hard look at it.

## **Internalizing and Guilt From Childhood**

Internalization often begins in childhood when we begin to believe that what is happening around us, is because of us. It stems from a normal phase of development called egocentrism which we go through when we are very young. For those of us who were wounded as children, we may internalize the actions of

those who wounded us and see it as our fault, thereby feeling guilty about it as well as experience shame. As we grow older and mature we begin to understand that it was not our fault, but this pattern of internalization still may exist and we may take on the behavior of our partners, our bosses, our family members as meaning something about us. We may feel the feeling of guilt even if we ourselves have done nothing we wrong. We may feel as if we somehow contributed. It is usually not rational and when unpacked in therapy or when talking it out with someone close to us, we may be able to get a window into a different perspective and see that it is not ours to take on.

Internalizing is a pattern that needs to be broken. It causes suffering, it makes us unhappy, and it does not give us a real sense of what we need to take responsibility for and what is not ours to take responsibility for.

It occurs quite a bit in co-dependent relationships and can often leave us depleted in our relationships, feeling as if we can never do anything right.

## Ways to stop internalizing in the moment...



Pay attention to when you are internalizing. Realize you are in the pattern. Stop, take a step back...

Ask “is this mine to take on?”, “did I cause this in any way?”, if I did, can I make amends, or take an action to remedy the situation.

Ask what is NOT mine in this, write down the actions of the other person, system, etc. Write down exactly what you are feeling guilty about...read it to yourself a few times, question each one: Is this mine or someone else’s, what can I take responsibility for here?

Why do I feel guilty about this? In general it is important to

become self aware of how you engage in this pattern and what are your triggers. For example..one of my triggers is when my daughter is unhappy with me about something, it may be something I can control or not, but I often internalize it and feel guilty and have a whole list of negative thoughts I have about it. It is one of my hot spots. When I find myself in this hot spot, I can do the above steps to help me gain some clarity.

Before I realized this was a hot spot for me or that I was internalizing like when I was child, I would unconsciously fall into the trap, get very upset, feel helpless and hopeless, and feel like I could never be the mother she needed me to be. It was a helpless and painful place to be in. Growing my awareness and having something to do consciously when I felt myself spiraling into a guilt vortex helped me create enough distance to evaluate. After a while I didn't even need to do the above anymore because the hot spot wasn't so hot anymore. It wasn't a trap anymore. It was instead something I was ready for and very aware of and so it stopped hooking me in the same way anymore.

It is important that you be gentle and patient with yourself, you didn't develop this pattern over night and you won't stop doing it overnight.

## **Guilt from Childhood**

In the last lesson I talked about regret and I mentioned one of the key elements is seeing your own innocence. After doing some healing work, many of us are able to intellectually understand that what happened to us as children was not our fault.

Unfortunately we still have a wounded child in us who internalized what happened to her and so when you find yourself feeling guilty about things that happened to you in childhood, it is important to recognize this is your inner child. It is important to know you are operating from your wounded inner little girl and what she needs most is your attention, love and to be told that it is not her fault. It may seem a little silly to actually "talk to yourself" or "talk to your inner child" but this is the soothing acknowledgement you needed most as a child and it is never too late to give it to her/yourself.

Speaking your truth about childhood in the presence of someone safe (such as a therapist, that you trust) helps you to release the guilt and shame from childhood. Feelings of guilt and shame are often very hidden and secretive feelings, they don't have outward physical manifestations like sadness/crying, anger/gritting teeth, making a fists etc. The makeup of guilt and shame is that we keep it inward as we don't want anyone to know about it, and in so doing, we stay in our heads about it and never get a different perspective. The healing of guilt and shame is done through shedding light on that which is hidden. It is through telling, speaking, writing and expression that we heal guilt and shame.

## **Guilt Hot Spots**

Knowing your guilt hot spots is essential. "Guilt Hot Spots" are the things you feel guilty about often. You have a pattern of guilt with these particular topics or situations. For example every time you visit your mom and have to leave, she may say something that triggers guilt in you. Eating certain foods can be guilt hot spot for you. Arguments with loved ones can be a guilt hot spot

for you. Recognizing what your hot spots are helps to alert your mind to be on the lookout for them and to be a bit more proactive about them.

## *Healing Practices*

*Know your patterns of getting hooked into guilt, your hot spots*

*Be self forgiving when you find yourself caught in a guilt cycle*

*Recognize if there is anything to feel guilty about, perhaps amends need to be made, if so take responsibility. Learn how to evaluate a situation, what is yours, what is theirs? Own your actions, your motives and do not take on the actions of others.*

*Watch out for people who use guilt to manipulate you, pay attention and learn how to witness their behavior without "falling for it"*

**Want to see a sample of what the video package includes...here is the link to the video based on this topic.**

[HTTP://YOUTU.BE/4PA5sF8IULE](http://youtu.be/4PA5sF8IULE)