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Dealing With Separation Guilt

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Your marriage/cohabitation has ended or is about to end, and you may be filled with an array of emotions. You may experience feelings of failure, hopelessness and sadness. Perhaps your initial idea of marriage/cohabitation did not include separation, and even though you were the one to throw in the towel, you know feel disconcerted.

That's how separation guilt feels. However, even if you were the one to initiate the divorce, is it really a failure to end a bad marriage, where two people just made each other, as well as the children, unhappy?

Even though you may understand that you have made the right decision, feeling guilty after a separation is a normal reaction, along with some form of relief. You might feel like the most challenging part is over, once you have moved out of your mutual home and signed the divorce papers. However, you should be prepared that ending a relationship takes a while longer to feel good about.



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It Takes 2 to Tango

Cognitively speaking, it makes no sense for you to feel guilty. After all, it takes two to tango and if you and your partner can't find a way to resolve your issues and live in harmony, separation may have been your best solution. Of course, that doesn't mean that you'll spend the rest of your life alone. Feeling guilty is a form of self-punishment, which you probably don't

deserve.

But still, you'll feel some form of guilt. So, how can you identify it and overcome it?

What to Expect from My Guilty Conscience?

The feeling of guilt can manifest in different ways and so it is important for you to be able to recognize and acknowledge them. That is, if you'd like to move on from the fruitless experience of guilt, and on to a more positive, helpful behaviour.

Over-Compensation with Children

You don't want your children to be in pain, so you try to do everything in your power, and beyond, to make them happy. Buy them presents, do all the things they want, spend as much time with them as possible. Although it is a great idea to spend time with your children and discuss how they feel about the separation, and everything else in their lives, it is important not to overcompensate the change with material possessions. The latter can put a temporary bandage on the wound, but not heal your children.

Giving in to Demands and Blackmail

Your guilt may cause you to do things you don't agree with, just to ease your conscience when facing your ex. Don't indulge your ex by doing everything they want. It's not going to make them feel better, in fact it may just hurt both of you more.

Doubt

It's normal to ask yourself, "Am I doing the right thing?". However, living in a limbo of recurrent doubts helps nobody – not your children, not yourself, and not your ex. Once you have made the decision to get separated, you have probably thought about it and weight your options carefully enough. That's why you should avoid the destructive behaviour of going back and forth, after the decision has been made.

Thinking You Won't Be Happy Again

Just because your marriage didn't succeed, that doesn't mean you can't find happiness again with someone else. The same is true for your ex. Simply be open to the world and to making new acquaintances.

How to Shake the Guilt?

Now that we have focused on some of the guilt-related thoughts and emotions, people often have after initiating a separation, it is equally important to examine some of the well-used solutions. Guilt can be an all-consuming feeling, but that doesn't mean that it is unstoppable.

Create a List

Of all of the positives and negatives of your relationship. Do the bad things override the good things? Do you really want to get back to that kind of a living situation? If you were happier with your ex more often than not, then you would have probably never reached the decision for a dissolution. You both deserve to be happy and to realize that there are valid reasons for the separation.

Engage in New Routines

You may be experiencing a void in your life, which only enhances your separation guilt. Building a new identity and feeling good about being single is half the battle. You would probably have to adjust to completing, on your own, what you once used to do with your ex. Although it may seem daunting at first, remember that this is an excellent opportunity to create the routines that you and only you enjoy!

Spend Time with Your Children

Really spend time with them. Pampering them excessively to ease your sorrow won't work to anybody's long-term favour. However, enjoying true quality time together and really making an effort to listen to and understand your children's emotions, will help all of you forge a stronger bond.

Visualize Your Next Relationship

To help you do that, we'd suggest creating another list. When your needs and wants are written black on white, it is easier to focus on them and more difficult to ignore them. Imagining a different, yet realistic reality, can help you focus on the future and shed that guilt. This approach can also help you reimagine the kind of person you'd like to be, as well as the people you'd like to attract to your life.

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