

FORGIVENESS, GRIEF & GUILT

When someone who is close to us dies, especially if it was an unexpected death, it's not uncommon for us to experience a sense of guilt around that person's passing. We may think, "*If only I had done more for him,*" "*If only I had told her what I really felt,*" "*If only we could have resolved our differences,*" and so on.

Bereavement is often a time of intense emotions. Trying to block your honest feelings will interfere with the healing process. Feelings of guilt, anger, and regret seem to be a natural part of grieving and should not be ignored, covered up or repressed.

All of our feelings should be acknowledged as they arise. In fact, the healthiest thing we can do for our own healing in times of grief is to not only admit our feelings but to also talk about them with someone.

Sharing our feelings, especially those of guilt or regret with a bereavement coach, clergy person, counselor, or trusted friend can help us put things in perspective. That person can give us the support and vital sense of connection that will ease our passage through sorrow and confusion.

Opening our heart through sharing our grief-related thoughts and feelings can help us experience the healing, soothing grace of *self-forgiveness*.

Wherever we hold onto a sense of guilt we are also holding on to the past. In the Course In Miracles it says, "*Guilt feelings are the preservers of time. They induce fears of retaliation or abandonment....*" That is why the grieving process is often a life-changing passage where both forgiveness and release are needed.

To see where self-forgiveness might be needed in the midst of your grief, think about the following questions:

- *What is it that you think you did wrong or failed to do in regard to this person you have lost?*
- *What are you blaming yourself for?*
- *What do you feel the most guilty, regretful, or distressed about regarding this loss?*

Taking some time to answer these questions and to then write about them or share them with your trusted confidante or grief coach will allow you to move out of your pain and into healing peace.



*Leave a clean and open space within your mind
where Love can come.*

Letting Go of Guilt in Your Grief

Forgiveness is not about condoning your own or someone else's mistakes or insensitive behaviors. And it's not about avoiding responsibility for your hurtful and thoughtless words or actions.

If you're feeling guilty about something in your grief, you need to look honestly within yourself and see what, if anything, you can do now to make amends and bring closure around this painful memory. If this guilt relates to someone who has died, remember that you can still speak to them in Spirit to ask for their forgiveness.

Along with the making of amends, you will heal more deeply and quickly when you also surrender any sense of guilt to God's all-merciful love, allowing His grace to move into every corner of your mind and heart. This will bring you a deep sense of peace.

Peace and guilt are antithetical,
and God can be remembered only in peace.

Forgiveness is ultimately about letting go of the pain and mistakes of the past so you can move forward in your life. As you forgive and release yourself from the self-imposed prison of guilt, you will be free to grieve your loss fully and to walk unburdened into the light of each new day.

PLEASE NOTE:

- Guilt and other strong emotions can creep in and wash over us no matter what the cause of our grief may be, such as the loss of a job or a significant relationship, a falling out in a friendship, a dramatic, unexpected shift in our life circumstances, or anything that we perceive as a failure on our part.

- As with anger or sadness, unresolved guilt weakens a person's normal defenses and can even result in self-abusive behaviors. **Please seek immediate professional assistance if you notice a tendency to want to harm yourself in any way during your bereavement.**