

Class 21 - Guilt

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Life is so full of meaning and purpose, so full of beauty - beneath its covering - that you will find earth but cloaks your heaven. - Giovanni Giocondo



Goals

In class 21 you will:

- Understand more about guilt and how to use it for yourself
- Learn about constructive and destructive negatives

Looking at the negatives!!

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us. - Oliver Wendell Holmes

In all the classes so far we have tried to focus on the positives in our lives. We have concentrated on where we are going not where we have been. This is a potent method of travelling the fastest in our spiritual lives, and should be the predominant manner in which we construct our day-to-day practise.

However, sometimes it is helpful to spend some time recognising possible anchors, possible negative thought patterns that weigh us down and create considerable drag in our spiritual journey. Occasionally these patterns are so ingrained that we do not even recognise them. They might be qualities that are entrenched in every one in our family and then, as a consequence, many of our friends (for we have attracted that type of person to us) and so it has become almost impossible to recognise in us. Many negative thought patterns are very, very normal but are in no way natural, let alone spiritual.

In the next few classes, we are going to talk about some of these, namely guilt, anger, fear, self-criticism and more. The one thing you will notice is that negative qualities are energy black-holes; they drain us very, very quickly by taxing our attention and focus and diverting us from the energy-giving divine within us all.

Imagine how much lighter your journey will be, how much freer and more focussed if you were able to rid yourself of some of these anchors in your life.



Guilt

Have you ever been on a diet? Perhaps you tried for a couple of weeks sticking religiously to your plan but then something happened, perhaps you were tired, or too busy, or just plain hungry, but for one reason or another you ate something outside of your diet.

Think about what happened next.

“I don't believe in guilt, I believe in living on impulse as long as you never intentionally hurt another person, and don't judge people in your life. I think you should live completely free.” - Angelina Jolie

You felt guilty, all of the impulses that you had been repressing for the weeks prior suddenly seemed to have gained their power back and you found yourself feeling a loser. And you punished yourself, perhaps by eating some more, maybe thinking something like 'I will never succeed at this', 'diets never work for me, only for other people'. You criticised yourself over and over again, until you convinced yourself that the diet would never work for you.

Can you stop and reflect for a moment on what was happening.

1. When we feel guilt we also feel we want to punish ourselves.
2. We criticise ourselves, lowering our self-esteem, making it more and more difficult to love ourselves and therefore anyone else.
3. Think about class 5 for a moment and notice also that our potential to make a change is decreased and therefore we will most likely find ourselves unable to perform another action (e.g. continue the diet) and therefore the result will be the change won't be affected.

Imagine if after breaking our diet we used some of the techniques we learned in Class 5 and instead of beating ourselves up, feeling guilty etc we just very quickly said to ourselves – “Well that was one little hiccup after 2 weeks of really, really good work – let me focus on how well I am doing, how well I am feeling, the weight I am losing and how great I am going to feel after reaching my goal-weight.” Do you see how we have actually increased our potential to perform another action?



“Guilt for being rich, and guilt thinking that perhaps love and peace isn't enough and you have to go and get shot or something.” - John Lennon

I would like to call this 'constructive guilt'. And you are going to find that every negative quality always has a constructive as well as a destructive dimension, otherwise they would serve absolutely no purpose. Guilt's highest purpose is to inspire us to the highest view of ourselves and it is up to us to make sure we perform the constructive action it is extolling us to take up.

So this is another important part of this process, it is not for us to repress anything including guilt. We need to find its message, find what we are feeling guilty about. Many times when we repress our guilt, swallow it down, it becomes a sort of inner sore, it literally makes us sick from the inside out and obviously in time will translate to a mental or physical sickness. This is especially true if we feel helpless to do anything about our guilt. We feel trapped and powerless to rid ourselves of its web. If this negative pattern has no vent or natural way of expression, then the consequences will be dire, perhaps depression or more serious sicknesses for that energy will be going round and round inside of us, depleting everything around it. (Remember it can be a black hole)

Alas! it is a fearful thing. To feel another's guilt! - Oscar Wilde

Let's make our guilt constructive, by naming it – “What am I feeling guilty about?” and then identifying its message.

"Thank you for reminding me, my guilt friend, that I am on a diet and this indulgence is not part of our plan for our highest self, I will act immediately and with decisiveness to choose to eat properly again!"

You see the amazing thing is that guilt is everywhere with most of it the 'destructive' rather than the 'constructive' kind. We feel guilty about the way we treat our parents or the way we treat our kids, or we feel guilty about not doing more for the homeless or the poor, or we feel guilty that we did not meditate properly this morning. The most profound for us as spiritual people is the guilt that we are not being all we can be. That we are not trying hard enough or 'living our dream'.

Conscious virtue is the only solid foundation of all happiness; for riches, power, rank, or whatever, in the common acceptance of the word, is supposed to constitute happiness, will never quiet, much less cure, the inward pangs of guilt. - Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl Chesterfield

But if we go through the process of naming it – "I often feel guilty because I feel I should be meditating more or reading more spiritual books, or going to the meditation course (e.g. meditation.org.au ?!)." Spend a moment identifying the message and then "Thank you my guilt friend for reminding me and trying to inspire me to the highest spiritual vision of myself, I am ready to change, I am ready to perform the action you are extolling me to. You can rest now, your work is done!"

In this way there is no place for destructive guilt rather we are using the energy that would normally be taken by the destructive guilt and redirecting to a constructive spiritual action. Do you see how powerful this is?

Please reflect upon the nature of the earth – it is a place for us to progress, a kind of spiritual school. So the very theme, the motto of the planet, is for us to change, to progress (remember that you can't progress without change). The natural flow is for us to continually change, to continually progress; guilt is just one of the earth's tools for inspiring us. But you must be aware that these 'negative' tools are one of the last resorts for our inner school. When we are not paying attention to our positives - the inner messages, our intuition, our dreams, synchronicity etc than the so-called 'negatives' must be used.



"Food, love, career, and mothers, the four major guilt groups." - Cathy Guisewite

Conquering destructive thought patterns can be done very powerfully with affirmations. They are a kind of a training drill that transforms destructive into constructive. For example, a really good affirmation for guilt might be something like –

"There is no place in my life for destructive guilt and the extra energy I get I am going to use to effortlessly, lovingly and joyously change and progress."

We'll try that in our meditation exercise, but you may want to compose your own. Try recording it for yourself and play it over and over again during the day, you'll be amazed at the effect it will have on your life.

Exercise 21

Affirmations -

transforming negatives

Prepare for your meditation as usual

This is an exercise using affirmations in a mantric manner to help us utilise constructive guilt.

I would like you to just try repeating the affirmation and after a time you will find that it will create a flow within you. If you can just begin to focus on that flow of positive energy, you might find that you no longer need to repeat the entire affirmation.

If or when you lose the flow just refocus again by repeating the affirmation. As you get more comfortable with it you may find that it will be easier to just repeat key words. Finally only a word or two will immediately capture the entire feeling of that flow of positive energy.

The affirmation we will try for this exercise is what we mentioned in the class.

“There is no place in my life for destructive guilt and the extra energy I get I am going to use to effortlessly, lovingly and joyously change and progress.”

To listen to this exercise click here (to save to your computer right click and select "save target as") [CD quality](#) [any problems click here](#)



Summary

During this 21st class you will have;

- discovered the importance of constructive and destructive guilt