

Dealing with Guilt



Guilt is normal and comes with the territory of being a parent. Here are some “guilt trips” common to most parents and some “guilt busters” to help you cope.

Guilt Trip: I don’t spend enough time with my child.

Guilt Busters

- Change what you can. Some things, like work schedules, may be hard to change. Make the most of the time you do have with your child.
- Schedule meal times, reading together and other important family times first. Other activities (sports, piano lessons, etc.) can be fit into the time that’s left.
- Limit use of TV, computers and video games at home.
- Taking time for yourself (exercising, going out with a friend, etc.) is important and helps you be a better parent.

Guilt Trip: I yell too much at my child.

Guilt Busters

- Make sure your expectations for your child are reasonable and age appropriate.
- Talk simply, calmly and firmly. Tell her what you want her to do instead of what she shouldn’t be doing.
- Make sure the time you spend with your child is more positive than negative. If you feel that you yell most of the time, find activities that you can do together that you both enjoy.
- If you feel yourself getting mad or upset, tell her that you need to take a break and walk away, take deep breaths and count until you are calm. By doing this, you are showing her how to act when she feels mad or upset.

Guilt Trip: I can’t give my child as much as other children have.

Guilt Busters

- What she needs most is your time. A child’s well being depends a great deal on relationships with important people such as family, close friends and teachers.
- Save time for family activities and time with friends to help support relationships. Time together will be more important than anything you could buy.

Guilt Trip: I worry about doing the wrong thing.

Guilt Busters

- Children need parents who try their best but that doesn’t mean you’ll always be successful and that’s OK. Good parents come in many forms and there is no “right” way to parent.
- Try not to worry about being a “super parent” or having a “super family.”
- Much of parenting is trying different approaches to determine what works best for you and your child. What works well for one child may not work for another child because children are unique. It also teaches children that when you try something that doesn’t work, you look for another solution.
- When you are struggling as a parent, it’s OK to talk to others such as a family member or close friend. You can also call your county health department to request to speak to a Child Guidance professional.

Sources: Illinois Early Learning Project 8/07
www.illinoisearlylearning.org “What to Do If You Feel Like a Guilty Parent,” Nancy Samalin



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