

Guilt



JOE FERGUSON, PhD

PhD Clinical Psychology, Fielding University
MBA, Wharton School of Business

Guilt is anxiety about being cut out of the herd to die alone in the wilderness. Humans are intensely social creatures who define ourselves almost entirely by our membership in groups, and by our roles within them. Family is the most fundamental group from which it is possible to be expelled; although nations, clans, companies, clubs, cliques and cabals can all serve as surrogates. We feel that if we were expelled we would be utterly alone, and guilt is therefore a close cousin

to loneliness. Since guilt is the fear of exposure and expulsion, the loneliness it engenders can be sustained in the very midst of the group itself, which is confusing for everyone.

Guilt demonstrates that you have accepted the code of some group as valid and applicable to you, whether you agree with the code or not and even whether you have the vaguest idea what you have agreed to. You have accepted someone's version of what is appropriate and you expect to be held accountable to that standard. Does the word *inappropriate* irritate you? Do you feel that words like this are deployed to manipulate you? Guilt demonstrates loyalty and it is often extracted from its victims for that reason alone. Perhaps you have had parents, lovers or employers like this. If they can induce you to feel guilty they believe they will own you, especially if you don't know exactly what it is you feel guilty about. They are right. Guilt is an oppressive emotion and it is unnecessary in the presence of integrity. You don't need guilt. Trust me. Call me.

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