

Coping *with* Guilt & Shame *workbook*

**Facilitator Reproducible
Guided Self-Exploration
Activities**

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Coping with Guilt & Shame Workbook

Facilitator Reproducible Guided Self-Exploration Activities

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Using This Book

A little bit of stress can be good for everyone's well-being. It stimulates people to meet their challenges and handle unexpected emergencies. Positive stress (eustress) has been proven to help people reach their full potential. However, too much stress (distress) can have the opposite effect and actually impede both physical and mental health and overall wellness.

Distress can manifest itself through early warning signs (distress symptoms). Research suggests that when people face constant stressors and unwanted changes, they become emotionally upset and experience a variety of negative feelings. With repeated exposure, people experience the chronic overload of emotional stress. Two of the most common distress emotions are guilt and shame. Guilt reminds us of the wrong deeds we've done, or perceived that we have done, and shame tells us that we feel embarrassed, remorseful, or even disgraced. All people feel guilt and shame in their life and both emotions can be difficult to cope with.

Guilt

Guilt, a very common type of emotional distress, can be described as a feeling that involves self-blame and a sense of responsibility for a regretted action or thought. People experience guilty feelings with regret and self-reproach over the belief that they have done, or will do, something wrong or inadequately. Guilt often results from the perception of falling short of self-expectations or the expectations of others. Like many feelings, guilt is often based on irrational thoughts, not facts.

- Feelings of guilt are usually associated with self-talk statements such as "I should have," "If I would have," and "I could have."
- Guilt can be a feeling people experience when they do something judged by their moral code to be wrong. This self-awareness is healthy and promotes self-reflection and positive growth. A person's moral code, the differentiation of intentions, decisions, and actions between those that are good (or right) and those that are bad (or wrong) is so strong that feelings of guilt can occur when the person has an urge or thinks about doing something against it.
- Guilt can be both healthy and unhealthy. Healthy guilt keeps people functioning in socially acceptable ways and is often associated with a conscience or moral code. Unhealthy guilt occurs when people establish unreasonably high standards for themselves and then feel guilty when they are unable to maintain these standards or when they persevere on little things that don't meet their personal standard.
- Two distinctive forms of guilt exist: perceived guilt and justified guilt. Perceived guilt is when a person feels guilty even though he/she had no or little control over something that happened, or when a person negatively interprets the consequences of his/her actions. On the other hand, justified guilt emerges when the facts of a situation justify the person's feelings of regret and guilt.

Coping with Guilt & Shame Introduction

Shame

Shame is a basic part of being human. Shame can be described as a sense of inadequacy about who you are, how you behave and what you value. It is a negative emotion that people experience when they are feeling embarrassed, humiliated or disgraced, especially in the eyes of important people in their life. Shame is based on an image that people internalize of what is expected of them by others, or of themselves, and then the perception that they have fallen short in another's, or their own, eyes. Shame can be incapacitating and injurious to people's physical and emotional health, self-esteem and well-being.

- People experiencing shame will tend to hide or avoid others in order to lessen the damage of their image in the eyes of other people.
- Shame tends to be born of fears and drives people to want to hide or protect themselves from feeling or appearing inadequate.
- When shamed, people feel alone and outside of the rest of society. If shame is acknowledged, accepted and dealt with, it can be overcome.
- Two distinct forms of shame are inadequacy and self-disapproval.

Shame can also be experienced when people feel embarrassed, inadequate, defective, contemptible or dishonorable. Self-disapproval shame occurs when people have painful feelings about themselves because of things they have thought or done.

Many people spend a great deal of their lives living with guilt and shame. It is important for them to deal with the emotions, thoughts and actions related to both guilt and shame in order to lead a more stress-free, calm and satisfying life. The Coping with Guilt and Shame Workbook provides assessments and self-guided activities to help participants learn useful skills for coping with various forms of guilt and shame. A variety of self-exploration activities are provided for participants to determine which best suit their unique needs.

Format of Book

The *Coping with Guilt and Shame Workbook* contains assessments and guided self-exploration activities that can be used with a variety of populations to help participants cope more effectively with the various aspects of guilt and shame. Each chapter of this workbook begins with an annotated Table of Contents with notes and examples for the facilitator. Each chapter contains two primary elements: 1) a set of assessments to help participants gather information about themselves in a focused situation, and 2) a set of guided self-exploration activities to help participants process information and learn ways of coping with guilt and shame.

Assessments

Each chapter begins with an assessment that provides participants with valuable information about themselves. These assessments help identify patterns of behavior and life skills which are productive and unproductive, and encourage development of an awareness of ways to interact with the world. Assessments provide a path to self-discovery through the participants' exploration of their own unique traits and behaviors. The purpose of these assessments is not to "pigeon-hole" people, but to allow them to explore various elements that are critical for coping with guilt and shame. This book contains *self-assessments* and not *tests*. Traditional tests measure knowledge or right or wrong responses. For the assessments provided in this book, remind participants that there are no right or wrong answers. These assessments ask only for opinions or attitudes about topics related to a variety of coping skills and abilities.

The assessments in this book are based on self-reported data. In other words, the accuracy and usefulness of the information is dependent on the information that participants honestly provide about themselves. All of the assessments in this workbook are designed to be administered, scored, and interpreted by the participants as a starting point for them to begin to learn more about themselves and their coping skills. Remind participants that the assessments are exploratory exercises and not a final determination of abilities. Lastly, the assessments are not a substitute for professional assistance. If you feel any of your participants need more assistance than you can provide, please refer them to an appropriate professional.

As your participants begin the assessments in this workbook give these instructions:

- Take your time. Because there is no time limit for completing the assessments, work at your own pace. Allow yourself time to reflect on your results and how they compare to what you already know about yourself.
- Do not answer the assessments as you think others would like you to answer them or how you think others see you. These assessments are for you to reflect on your life and explore some of the barriers that are keeping you from living a calmer, more rational and less anxious life.

(Continued on the next page)

Format of Book *(Continued)*

- Assessments are powerful tools if you are honest with yourself. Take your time and be truthful in your responses so that your results are an honest reflection of *you*. Your level of commitment in completing the assessments honestly will determine how much you learn about yourself.
- Before completing each assessment, be sure to read the instructions. The assessments have similar formats, but they have different scales, responses, scoring instructions and methods for interpretation.
- Finally, remember that learning about yourself should be a positive and motivating experience. Don't stress about taking the assessments or discovering your results. Just respond honestly and learn as much about yourself as you can.

Guided Self-Exploration Activities

Guided self-exploration activities are any exercises that assist participants in self-reflection and enhance self-knowledge, identify potential ineffective behaviors, and teach more effective ways of coping. Guided self-exploration is designed to help participants make a series of discoveries that lead to increased social and emotional competencies, as well as to serve as an energizing way to help participants grow personally and professionally. These brief, easy-to-use self-reflection tools are designed to promote insight and self-growth. Many different types of guided self-exploration activities are provided for you to pick and choose the activities most needed by your participants and/or will be most appealing to them. The unique features of self-guided exploration activities make them usable and appropriate for a variety of individual sessions and group sessions.

Features of Guided Self-Exploration Activities

- **Quick, easy and rewarding to use** — These guided self-exploration activities are designed to be an efficient, appealing method for motivating participants to explore information about themselves — including their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors — in a relatively short period of time.
- **Reproducible** – Because the guided self-exploration activities can be reproduced by the facilitator, no more than the one book needs to be purchased. You may photocopy as many items as you wish for your participants. If you want to add or delete words on a page, make one photocopy, white out and/or write your own words, and then make photocopies from your personalized master.
- **Participative** — These guided self-exploration activities help people to quickly focus their attention, aid them in the self-reflection process, and learn new and more effective ways of coping.

(Continued on the next page)

Format of Book *(Continued)*

- **Motivating to complete** — The guided self-exploration activities are designed to be an energizing way for participants to engage in self-reflection and learn about themselves. Various activities are included to enhance the learning process related to developing important social and emotional competency skills.
- **Low risk** — The guided self-exploration activities are designed to be less risky than formal assessments and structured exercises. They are user-friendly, and participants will generally feel rewarded and motivated after completing these activities.
- **Adaptable to a variety of populations** — The guided self-exploration activities can be used with many different populations and can be tailored to meet the needs of the specific population with whom you work.
- **Focused** — Each guided self-exploration activity is designed to focus on a single coping issue, thus enhancing the experience for participants.
- **Flexible** — The guided self-exploration activities are flexible and can be used independently or to supplement other types of interventions.

Chapter Elements

The *Coping with Guilt & Shame Workbook* is designed to be used either independently or as part of an integrated curriculum. You may administer any of the assessments and the guided self-exploration activities to an individual or a group with whom you are working, or you may administer any of the activities over one or more days. Feel free to pick and choose assessments and activities that best fit the outcomes you desire.

The first page of each chapter begins with an annotated Table of Contents with notes and examples for the facilitator.

Assessments — Assessments with scoring directions and interpretation materials begin each chapter. The authors recommend that you begin presentation of each topic by asking participants to complete the assessment. Facilitators can choose one or more, or all of the activities relevant to their participants' specific needs and concerns.

Guided Self-Exploration Activities — Practical questions and activities to prompt self-reflection and promote self-understanding are included after each of the assessments. These questions and activities foster introspection, promote pro-social behaviors, and build coping skills. Activities in this workbook are tied to the assessments so that you can identify and select activities quickly and easily.

Activities are divided into four chapters to help you identify and select assessments easily and quickly:

Chapter 1: Causes of Guilt –

This chapter helps participants identify the primary reasons they feel guilty.

Chapter 2: Coping with Guilt –

This chapter shows participants effective coping strategies.

Chapter 3: Feelings of Shame –

This chapter helps participants explore the intensity of their feelings of shame.

Chapter 4: Effects of Shame –

This chapter helps participants identify reasons for and effects of shame.

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Table of Contents

Causes of Guilt

Facilitator's Annotated Table of Contents	11–12
Causes of Guilt Introduction and Directions	13
Causes of Guilt Scale	14–15
Scoring Directions	16
Profile Interpretation	16
Things I Regret Saying	17
Things I Regret Doing	18
When I Feel Guilty	19
Letting Go and Moving On	20
Expressing Your Guilty Feelings	21
Communicating Your Feelings	22
ABCD's of Thinking Straight	23
Learning from Your Guilt	24
Changing Your Behavior	25
Repairing the Damage	26
Mistakes I've Made	27
Suppressing Feelings	28
How Guilt Affects My Life	29
Reinventing Yourself	30

Coping with Guilt

Facilitator's Annotated Table of Contents	31–32
Coping with Guilt Introduction and Directions	33
Coping with Guilt Scale	34
Scoring Directions	35
Profile Interpretation	35
Steps to Conquer Guilt	36
Your Thoughts Leading to Guilt	37
Types of Negative Self-Talk About Guilt	38
Types of Positive Self-Talk About Guilt	39
Talking About Your Guilty Feelings	40
Maintaining Your Self-Esteem	41
Is Your Guilt Justified	42
My Success Story	43
Should vs. Actual Doing	44
Should vs. Actual Control	45
Forgiving Yourself	46
20/20 Thinking	47
Why I Acted as I Did	48
What Now?	49
A Guilty Deed Quotation	50

Table of Contents *(continued)*

Feelings of Shame

Facilitator's Annotated Table of Contents	51-52
Feelings of Shame Introduction and Directions	53
Feelings of Shame Scale	54-55
Scoring Directions	56
Profile Interpretation	56
What are You Ashamed of?	57
Just for Me	58
Shame Poetry	59
A Dialogue with Myself	60
I Want to Make a Change	61
Making Changes	62
The "Shame" Serenity Prayer	63
Illustrating My Shame	64
Situations of Which I am Ashamed	65
Doodling or Writing about Shame	66
Letting Go of What I am Ashamed	67
How I Devalue Myself	68
My Inner Voice	69
Boosting My Self-Esteem	70

Effects of Shame

Facilitator's Annotated Table of Contents	71-72
Effects of Shame Introduction and Directions	73
Effects of Shame Scale	74-75
Scoring Directions	76
Profile Interpretation	76
Negative Ways People Cope with Shame	77
I am Ashamed of	78
Emotions Connected to My Shame - Word Search	79
Turn Shame into Your Own Movie	80
Animal Caricatures	81
Early Shame Memories	82
How Shame Manifests Itself	83
Stop Feeling Like a Victim	84
Shame Factors	85
Preparing to Face My Shame	86
I Feel Good About Me!	87
Shame and Social Fears	88
My "SHAME" Support System	89
My Pride Journal	90

Causes of Guilt

Table of Contents and Facilitator Notes

Causes of Guilt Scale Introduction and Directions13
Causes of Guilt Scale14–15
Scoring Directions & Profile Interpretation Interpretation . . .16
Things I Regret Saying17

Example:

What I said	To whom	What I wish I had said
<i>Ex: You worry too much!</i>	<i>My mother</i>	<i>Let's go to the doctor and check it out.</i>

Things I Regret Doing18

Example:

What I did	To whom	What I wish I had done
<i>Ex: I walked out of my job because I was angry.</i>	<i>My boss</i>	<i>I wish I had taken 5 or 10 minutes to calm down and collect my thoughts before I talked to her.</i>

When I Feel Guilty19

Example:

Who was involved?	What happened?	Why did you feel guilty?
<i>Ex: My friend Jane</i>	<i>I came to a meeting late. I was supposed to sit with her and support her because she is so shy and needy and she didn't want to be alone.</i>	<i>She was terribly upset. She left when I didn't show up when the meeting started.</i>

Letting Go and Moving On20

Prior to distributing the handouts, ask participants to state one thing about themselves that they like. Explain that this is not bragging; it is one step in letting go of guilt feelings and moving on.

Expressing Your Guilty Feelings21

Form a circle and ask each participant to read one sentence, and then the person to the left will read the next sentence and so on. Afterwards, take a hand count of how many people will try to do 1), 2) etc. They can respond to more than one.

Communicating Your Feelings22

Ask for pairs of volunteers who would be willing to role-play, using I-Statements.

Table of Contents and Facilitator Notes

ABCD’s of Thinking Straight23

Ask four people to each read one line of the example aloud. Ask a fifth person to say, “Which leads to.” after the first, second and third person read their sentence.

Learning from Your Guilt24

After the participants have completed the handout, ask for volunteers willing to share what they will do better in the future.

Changing Your Behavior25

Before distributing the handout, have a discussion with the group about whether they believe adults can change their behavior. Discuss it again after they complete the handout.

Repairing the Damage. 26

Ask the group if they can define the word ‘reparations.’ If you do not receive a satisfactory definition, tell them that reparations is “the making of amends for wrongs or injuries done.”

Mistakes I’ve Made27

Prior to distributing handouts, ask the group to put up their hands if they have ever made a mistake. The facilitator may also want to put up his/her hand to prove the point. State that EVERY ONE makes mistakes!

Suppressing Feelings. 28

After the participants have completed the handout, ask for a show of hands if their emotions bring on feelings of guilt based on: 1) Actions from the past 2) Feelings based on assumption or 3) Feelings of anticipation about the future. Discuss the results with the group.

How Guilt Affects My Life29

After the handouts are completed, write the topics in the circles across the board. Request five volunteers to come up front. Ask participants if they would like to share some of their responses. The five volunteers can write them under the topics. Evaluate with the group after the responses and if there were repeats.

Reinventing Yourself30

Discuss with the participants: “Values are the rules by which we make decisions about right and wrong, should and shouldn’t, good and bad. They also tell us which are more or less important, which is useful when we have to trade off meeting one value over another.” Ask for people to share their values.

Causes of Guilt Scale

Introduction & Directions

Guilt is an emotion that comes up from thoughts of the hurt and pain that one causes others and themselves. It can take its toll on you and eventually wear you down. It can be very draining and upsetting to live with constant feelings of guilt. Guilt can also keep you from engaging in certain activities and making wise decisions. It is important for you to identify the sources of guilt in your life.

For each of the items that follow, choose the response that best describes your reactions to guilty feelings. In the following example, the circled numbers indicate how much the statement is descriptive of the person completing the inventory.

3 = Very 2 = A Little 1 = Not At All

I. I feel guilty when I expect too much of myself

- | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|---|
| 1. I don't want people to get mad at me | (3) | 2 | 1 |
| 2. I don't want to let people down. | 3 | (2) | 1 |

This is not a test. Since there are no right or wrong answers, do not spend too much time thinking about your answers. Be sure to respond to every statement.

Turn to the next page and begin.

Causes of Guilt Scale

3 = Very 2 = A Little 1 = Not At All

I. I feel guilty when I expect too much of myself

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I don't want people to get mad at me | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. I don't want to let people down. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. I don't want people to be upset because of something I did | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. I think more about what other people want than what I want | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. I beat myself up mentally | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. I always feel as if I should have done more. | 3 | 2 | 1 |

I - TOTAL = _____

II. Others say things and then I feel guilty

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7. I have a lot of inner doubt. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. I allow myself to feel guilty about what others say to me | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. I react with guilty emotions very easily. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. I often react to another's words without thinking | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. I fail to meet my responsibility to others | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. I often go on a guilt trip in response to what others say | 3 | 2 | 1 |

II - TOTAL = _____

(Continued on the next page)

Causes of Guilt Scale *(Continued)*

3 = Very 2 = A Little 1 = Not At All

III. I feel guilty because of something I regret

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| 13. I did something I regret | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. I can't forgive myself | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. I made a mistake and can't let it go. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. I have a guilty conscience | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 17. I am ashamed of something I did in the past. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18. I often feel guilty for things I had little or no control over | 3 | 2 | 1 |

III - TOTAL = _____

IV. I feel guilty because I was unable to fulfill my personal responsibilities

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| 19. I often feel as if I have failed other people | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20. I have a sense that I owe others. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 21. I have failed to live up to my responsibilities. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 22. I never say no and then feel guilty when I don't have time
to get done what I promised I would do | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 23. I did not do enough or help enough | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 24. I was not skilled enough | 3 | 2 | 1 |

IV - TOTAL = _____

Go to the scoring directions on the next page.

Causes of Guilt Scale Scoring Directions

The Causes of Guilt Scale is designed to measure the sources of guilty feelings in your life. For each of the sections, count the scores you circled for each of the four sections. Put that total on the line marked "Total" at the end of each section.

Then, transfer your totals to the spaces below.

TOTALS

- I _____ = Self-Expectations (The expectations you place on yourself.)
- II _____ = Guilt Trip (Reacting emotionally to what others say.)
- III _____ = Regret (Those things you wish you had not done in the past.)
- IV _____ = Personal Responsibilities (Your sense of responsibility to other people.)

Profile Interpretation

Scores from 6 to 9 are low and mean that you do not feel very guilty in these categories.

Scores from 10 to 14 are average and mean that you sometimes feel guilty in these categories.

Scores from 15 to 18 are high and mean that you often feel guilty in these categories.

Things I Regret Saying

Think about some of the things you regret saying and complete the worksheet below.



What I said	To whom	What I wish I had said

What patterns do you see? _____
