

## **Letting Go Of Guilt**

By Loretta M. Siani, Ph.D.

There is probably no greater spiritual malignancy than guilt. It is the primary obstacle to experiencing peace in our lives. Guilt is a vicious attack by the ego upon the integrity of the Self. Guilt engenders fear by creating an insidious sense of shame over past misdeeds. It convinces us that we are totally unworthy by holding the past against us and requiring us to continue to pay for it in the present moment. The truth is, no matter how terrible our past transgressions seem to us they are the crucible of our redemption. It isn't what we *did* that's important, but how what we did transformed us into a more forgiving and compassionate person in the present.

A Course In Miracles teaches us that it is our ego that despises our weaknesses not our higher selves. Yet, even though the ego despises weakness, it makes every effort to induce it and then turns around and uses it against us. This sinister thinking spreads through our mind like a tumor severing our spiritual lifeline to our higher self. The truth is, all of the wisdom we have ever gained in our lives comes from our imperfections and the so-called "failures" of our past. We must learn to be grateful for these things. As Mahatma Gandhi's said, *My imperfections and failures are as much a blessing from God as are my successes and talents and I lay them both at his feet.* The truth of the matter is, we are always doing the best that we can with the insight that is available to us at the moment.

A successful businessman traveled to India to spend a month working in one of Mother Teresa's shelters. He longed to meet the tiny nun, but Mother, Teresa was traveling, and it wasn't until the day before his departure that he received an audience.

When he was finally in her presence, much to his surprise, he burst into tears. All the times when he'd been self-centered, busy or focused on his own gain flashed before his eyes, and he felt an enormous guilt and sadness that he had missed so many opportunities in his life to give of himself and his resources.

Without a word, Mother Teresa walked over to where he was seated, put her hands on his shoulders, looked deeply into his eyes and said, "Don't you know that God knows you are doing the best that you can."

Continuing to attack ourselves for past mistakes squanders the present moment's opportunity to heal. Our guilt is healed in the present moment when we feel genuine remorse, forgive ourselves and take responsibility to make amends, period. Nothing else is required. We must not sentence ourselves to life long recrimination. We must be kind to ourselves. Love and forgiveness are always the answer.

This means that we must be kind to ourselves even in the midst of the lessons that we presently learning. For example, if we are overweight or addicted to alcohol we are not served by condemning ourselves. Remember, every thing in life happens for a reason.

Our shortcomings are not signs of our inferiority. They merely inform us of where we are wounded and what we need to do in order to rise to a higher level. Judging ourselves as guilty short-circuits our ability to heal. It has been said that love isn't love until it is unconditional. We must love ourselves unconditionally as we go through our lessons. As we experience the peace that comes from letting go of our guilt it becomes natural for us to share our forgiveness with others. Each time we do this we undo our own guilt a little more. Each time we extend love and forgiveness a light radiates from us that attracts others to us. When we let go of guilt through love and forgiveness we put ourselves in harmony with our higher mind and enter a world of where miracles can occur.