

DEALING WITH PARENT GUILT AND REGRET

Have you ever said or done something to your kids in the moment and then hours later felt guilty for what you said, or what you did? What do we do when we have parent guilt or regret?

As parents, we are allowed to have bad days, but if we allow feelings of regret and guilt to live in our hearts, those feelings can haunt our thoughts and self-esteem. When these feelings emerge, the enemy is on full attack working to pull us away from leading our homes the way God has called us to lead.

Remember 1 Peter 5:8, “Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.” The enemy of God seeks to destroy us as parents. He will pour gasoline on our feelings of guilt and regret, with the intentions of consuming our hearts and minds. We must be on guard.

While guilt and regret have a lot of negative effects, I would argue that they can be used in ways that bring positive change. Here are two suggestions for parents who are struggling with parent guilt or regret.

1 **Be Honest With Yourself**

One of the hardest things for us as parents is to honestly step back and evaluate the situation. There are times when we must parent in a way that stops behavior immediately. For example, when your child is openly defiant and might be putting themselves in danger, we have to step in and correct them. However, we must be honest with ourselves and ask these questions:

Did my actions or words bring shame upon my child?

Did I label my child instead of their behavior? (e.g. saying, “You are mean” instead of “Your actions right now are mean.”)

Did my actions go too far?

Did I embarrass them?

If this happens again, what do I want to do differently next time?

If you can say yes to any of these questions with an honest heart, then you might need to develop some new skills. Guilt and regret can be beneficial indicators, motivating us to treat things differently through the development of additional parenting skills. Guilt and regret can inspire us to make the most of past mistakes by mastering new techniques. Be honest with yourself to help you get past feelings of guilt and regret by learning when you need to go back and apologize or when you need to remain firm in how you parented the situation.

2 Don't Let the Past Steal Your Future

Guilt and regret can play in your head on repeat if you let them. They keep you from being the parent your kids need today. We cannot change the past, but parents who allow God to bring healing from their parenting mistakes are able to parent differently and learn from those mistakes.

In Robin Grille's article "Parental Guilt: A Silent Epidemic," he writes, "When we remain stuck in our past mistakes as parents, we will only continue repeating those failures. Past mistakes should be used to support future wins with your kids. Breaking free from guilt and regret is key to parenting with the end in mind."

Parents, be kind to yourselves. It is hard to take care of others when we are not taking care of ourselves. When it comes to guilt and regret, let's use them for growth and restoration. Remember that the enemy wants to bring destruction. The best way for us to fight back is to grow, develop new skills, and lead our homes the way God has called us to lead.
