

Guilt as Disappointing Others

By its very nature, guilt implies a discrepancy between who we think we *should be* and who we actually are - the greater the discrepancy, the greater the guilt. Most of us would probably find self-imposed mommy guilt, even if we lived with our kids alone on a deserted island. But our interaction with others certainly helps to alleviate or exacerbate our mommy guilt. When we feel that we are disappointing others, it adds to our guilt.

EXERCISE

Make a list of the important people in your life. Your list should include people in both your personal and professional life. Below is a suggested list, but feel free to create your own.

1. Yourself
2. Your kids
3. Your spouse/significant other
4. Your parents
5. Your in-laws
6. Your siblings
7. Your friends
8. Your co-workers
9. Your clients
10. Your boss

Next to each name on your list:

- Mark a “D” if you feel like you are **disappointing** this person by being a working mom
- Mark an “S” if this person is generally **supportive** of you as a working mom.
- Mark an “N” if this person is generally **neutral** about you being a working mom.

QUESTIONS:

- a. Who are the people most supportive of your role as a working mom?
- b. Who are the people least supportive to you as a working mom?
- c. How do you know you are disappointing the people that you feel you are disappointing? Have they told you directly or do you infer it? Similarly, how do you know you are supported by the people you feel support you? Have they told you or do you infer it?

CHOOSING A SUPPORTIVE NETWORK

I realize I’m stating the obvious, but you should try to surround yourself with people who support you as a working mom. Spend as much time as you can with the supportive people. Supportive people energize you and