

# Let guilt go

On a recent, sunny Sunday, moms everywhere awoke to breakfast in bed, handmade cards, carefully chosen gifts and, for a few minutes at least, a chance to relax.

On Monday, for many, it was back to the rat race. Yanking on professional attire, inhaling coffee, getting the kids to school before sliding behind a desk or counter and becoming, or trying to become, collected.

Women have proven they can be great mothers *and* improve the bottom line. They excel at the office, and their businesses become successful, though they might have to work some evenings at the kitchen table as their youngsters figure math problems.

Yet many of these superbly capable women feel a niggling sense of guilt. Pressured to be Supermom, they beat themselves up for not appearing on the cover of *Forbes* and for screaming at little loonie at the end of a tough day.

"There's this feeling that they're not doing anything well," says Devin Lemoine, executive coach with Success Labs in Baton Rouge and a mother of 13-year-old triplets. "It's not that people who are doing both don't have great successes, but there is this prevailing sense that 'My life keeps me from being great, and keeps me mediocre at everything.'"

Lemoine advises her clients to give themselves a break. "There are many good ways to raise a child, and there are many good measures of success. Sometimes success is keeping all the plates spinning."

The recently published book *Mommy Guilt* offers the following seven principles that can help put things into perspective. These hints aren't just for moms. Lemoine says many of her clients are daddies who struggle with, that's right, Daddy Guilt.

"I work with more men who say they feel pressured and they feel stretched," Lemoine says. "It used to be very defined. 'I've got work, you've got home.' Now it's not as clear, and I think that's where men start feeling that guilt."

1. Let some things go. "It is perfectly fine for your house to look as though children live in it," write Julie Bort, Aviva Pllock and Devra Renner in *Mommy Guilt*.

2. Parenting is not a sport. Sure, Nancy in accounting manages to make homemade cookies every Tuesday night, Joe always leaves the office early

to drive carpool. Their kids learned to read at two. Though it might seem tempting to try, you don't have to beat



them at the parent game.

3. Remember the big picture. You want to raise quality people who are nice, bright and hardworking, right? "We do this by keeping those goals in front of us through years of parenting," the authors write. "By the same token, looking toward the future also includes you." You have a right to pursue goals that are meaningful to you, since your role as a parent will shift throughout your life.

4. Learn to live in the now. This might sound like it clashes with the third principle, but the authors write, "this is its complement. This is the concept of being able to put aside all those to-do lists, stop rushing about and just be with your children in the here and now."

5. Just say...yes. "We must learn to choose our battles carefully or we will spend the majority of our time fighting," the authors note. Mismatched socks aren't hazardous to your child's health. Let the little things go.

6. Laugh with your kids. Laughter can help you connect with your children and enjoy your time with them more. Just be sure you're not laughing at your little ones, who tend to have thinner skin than adults.

7. Set aside time to have fun as a family. "Life is busy these days, no matter who you are and what you do," the authors write. "We work longer hours than ever before. We have hundreds of choices of things to do with our so-called free time. If we don't plan family time together, chances are we won't get that time."

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