

## 1 21 10 Shame & Guilt: A Common Feeling in Grief

***The Taos News has committed to implement a weekly column to help educate our community about emotional healing through grief. You may write questions to Golden Willow Retreat and they will be answered privately to you and possibly as a future article for others. Please list a first name that grants permission for printing.***

Dear Ted,

Through the last year I have experienced some large changes in my life and as I try to heal I find myself full of guilt and shame to where I don't want to go out into the world. It is as if I am suffocating in my own bubble and I don't want anyone else to enter. Does any of this make sense and do other people feel this way?  
Thanks, Bob

Dear Bob,

It sounds like you are in the midst of a difficult time and I hope you receive the support you need to help in your healing from the changes in your life. With change and loss there is often a feeling of guilt of shame as you transition from the old to the new. Grief and loss can lead to a place of shame and guilt. When you are in transitions in your life it is normal to review the past and possibly wish your actions could have been different or had different outcomes. I call this the "should of – could" of phase; if I had only said this, if he/she had only done that and so on. There is an attempt to change the discomfort you are presently feeling by trying to change the past. Many people will consciously or unconsciously choose not to do the work to move through this phase and will stay in a place of guilt, shame and blame. This phase of healing is called bargaining, and the process needs room to be explored so that it can be brought to light and then released. Guilt is when there are actions that you regret, or feel you have done something wrong. Shame is when you feel you are a bad person. I believe all of us were meant to have happiness in our life. Forgiveness may be the first step to finding out that you are deserving of healing. Recognize that your judgment of today is due to the wisdom you hold from the experiences you had in your past. Giving yourself permission to appreciate that if you had the wisdom of today then, you might not have been in those situations at all. The key in working with loss and evaluating your past is the ability to be truthful and gentle with yourself, recognizing you were doing the best you could at the time and not judging it with the 20/20 hindsight of the present vantage point. Being willing to forgive yourself and move through resistance so that you are no longer confined and defined by your past has the ability to transform guilt and shame into passion, hope and happiness. Until next week, take care.

*Golden Willow Retreat is a nonprofit organization focused on emotional healing. Please direct questions to Ted Wiard, LPCC, CGC, founder of Golden Willow Retreat and clinical supervisor for Teambuilders Counseling at (575) 776-2024 or GWR@newmex.com.*