

Manicures and Spas: Should I Feel Guilty

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | October 22, 2010



I know that we should wisely spend our money, but I have a question for you: Is it right to spend money on things for ourselves that we don't necessarily need?

Should we feel guilty when we want to treat ourselves with a manicure, a day in a spa, or whatever? I've been told that there is good guilt and bad guilt, how can I differentiate between them?

Thank you so much for your help.

Thanks for your question, so many people are consumed with guilt, and unresolved guilt is destructive, both psychologically and physically as it activates stress pathways leading to inflammation and health problems.

What is guilt? Here are three definitions:

- Feeling of regret for your real or imagined misdeeds, both past and present.

- Sense of remorse for thoughts, feelings, or attitudes that are negative, uncomplimentary, or unacceptable
- A feeling of conviction – of self-judgment mixed with fear of reprisal or punishment, insecurity, and self-recrimination.

Guilt can be broken down into two general categories – legitimate and illegitimate.

Legitimate Guilt

This occurs when we actually do something “wrong,” when we violate God’s law of love, when we exploit another, when we betray trusts. This would include robbery, murder, adultery, ruining someone’s reputation with lies (or even the truth), cheating on taxes, misrepresenting the condition of a car for sale, embezzlement, cheating on exams etc.

Guilt from wrong doing incites fear and insecurity and leads to unhealthy choices. When Adam sinned he ran and hid from God because he was afraid. His conscience convicted him of guilt and he felt unworthy, inadequate and feared God would treat him as his own guilty conscience felt, with condemnation. Likewise, today when we violate God’s law of love our consciences convict of guilt and we experience fear, insecurity, decreased confidence, and fear rejection by God and others.

Because of this increased fear and insecurity, we often, rather than owning our mistakes, confessing our wrongs, repenting before God and setting right what was wrong, instead, like Adam, make excuses and blame others. “It wasn’t me it was that woman you gave me!” We attempt to obfuscate, distort, deny, blame, project, make excuses in order to avoid the guilt and subsequent fear of rejection and punishment. But such actions actually damage the mind as one must learn to avoid truthfulness and live a life of self-deception.

The only solution to legitimate guilt is repentance and restoration. This includes more than simple confession. It includes an internal change of heart desire where one no longer even wants to do such behavior again, and restoration only when such reparation would add no further harm. Such repentance occurs only in relationship with God via the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. When genuine repentance occurs, guilt and shame are removed as the person experiences a new heart and right spirit. A repentant person realizes history cannot be changed, but through God’s grace, their heart can.

Illegitimate Guilt

But if one feels “guilt” it does not necessarily mean one has done wrong. The more difficult type of guilt to resolve is illegitimate guilt. Illegitimate guilt feels just like legitimate guilt, but occurs when we have not done anything wrong, have not violated God’s law, have not exploited, taken advantage or betrayed any trusts. Illegitimate guilt is always the result of, in some way, believing a lie.

Because illegitimate guilt feels just like legitimate guilt many people make the mistake of trying to resolve it by repentance and restoration. But this never works because there is nothing to repent or restore. Imagine your spouse planned a special getaway weekend to surprise you, but you, not knowing about the special plans, agreed to switch shifts with a coworker. When your spouse announces the special weekend and you tell of the work conflict, your spouse gets angry, upset and says, “See if I ever plan anything like this again. Every time I try to do something for us you somehow ruin it.”

You might be tempted to feel guilty, but such guilt would be illegitimate guilt. It would result because of

believing, falsely, that you were wrong for not being available for your spouse's surprise weekend. Ask the questions, "What is the truth? Did I do anything wrong, immoral, illegal, selfish? Did I betray a trust?" The truth is nothing wrong was done. Therefore, the guilt is illegitimate. Next, after recognizing the guilt is illegitimate, dig a little deeper and ask, "What is the truthful or accurate emotion to this circumstance?" Perhaps disappointment, regret, sadness and maybe a little frustration with a spouse who is so unkind, inconsiderate and so easily blames when no fault has occurred?

If one tries to resolve the situation with repentance and restoration, "I'm sorry. Let me make it up to you and plan next weekend for us." It only colludes with a lie that you did something wrong and your spouse's behavior is acceptable. Instead respond with the truth, "Oh, sweetheart, that is so wonderful of you to plan this for us. You are amazing. Oh, I wish I knew about it before I switched shifts. Can we do it a different weekend? I'm so disappointed. I know you must be also."

There are multiple types of illegitimate guilt and I encourage you to listen to my presentation on this topic. Find it under the "Preparing Your Mind to Meet Jesus" section as [**Resolving Legitimate And Illegitimate Guilt.**](#)

Regarding the specifics of your question, is it inappropriate to spend money on one's self for a manicure etc. It all depends on the circumstances. If you divert money away from your child's health, welfare, education in order to indulge yourself, then this would be selfish and all selfishness is unhealthy and wrong. If on the other hand one is fulfilling their responsibilities to God and others then spending money on such treatments is not condemned. Massage and spa treatments have health benefits and presenting oneself in a professional, neat and well groomed manner enhances one's effectiveness and likelihood of success. So one must examine the circumstance and motives as the activities you mentioned, in and of themselves, have no moral value.