



Super Working Mum

Optimising relationships, resources and time

Dealing with Working Mum Guilt

Welcome to module 2. I hope by now you have completed module 1 as it is the foundation for all the other modules. As you progress in the modules you may end up going back to module 1 to change or add a few things to your vision.

In this module we are going to discuss what working mum guilt is, what causes it and how we can squash it out.

What is working mum guilt and why is it an issue?

It is the believe that when everything goes wrong it is our fault as mums. I think women generally and not just 'mums tend to have the guilt emotionally gene. How many times do you hear of “man guilt”, or “working dad guilt”. It’s like we women have taken it upon ourselves to feel bad for everything. We know how to throw a pity party easily.

Many mums who work outside the home or even at home sometimes feel because they are not always physically present with the kids 24 hours a day, she feels she is naturally to blame for whatever issues arises with her children.

Statistics show that the No. 1 emotion working mothers struggle with is guilt. We mums tend to feel if everything goes wrong it is our fault. This controversial issue even occurs in the church.

Some preachers bang on about how a mother’s place should be at home with her children. Some Christian circles strongly believe a working mum can't possibly be as good at parenting as her stay-at-home counterpart, and that her children can't become well-adjusted adults. The working mum is judged and is widely believed that she cannot have it all.

Even the mum who work from home gets judged (may be not as much as the mum who works outside the home). Society expects her to pour her whole live into her children and forget about developing herself.

It is indeed a controversial issue and there seems to be a lot of blame going round. Sadly the working mum bares the largest brunt of it.

I am here to tell you, you can have it all (whatever your all is) as a working mum and it is time to

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Optimising relationships, resources and time

ditch the guilt.

What causes working mum guilt?

Here are some reasons I found on why we tend to feel guilt.

1. A natural instinct of being a mum and the expectation of others of what a mum should be as discussed before.
2. Being too busy and not spending enough time with the children
3. Not making enough money to cater for the children's needs
4. Being impatient and tired
5. Something someone else said about your parenting style especially another mum
6. Trying to find the right balance between work and family

The daily mail also states the top 15 worries and the other worries we have as mothers. This list shows me there is a link between worry and guilt. And we sure know how we mums tend to worry A LOT.

TOP 15 SOURCES OF WORRY FOR MOTHERS

1. Being too busy to give my children more attention
2. Not being able to afford everything they want
3. Not going on more days out
4. Not having more patience
5. Relying on the TV to keep them entertained
6. Not earning enough money
7. Feeling too tired to give my kids the attention I think they need
8. Returning to work after my maternity leave
9. Working long hours
10. Working late
11. Telling my children off
12. Wanting to have time away from my children every now and then
13. Putting my child into nursery/childminder
14. Not having more money to spend on new clothes/toys for my children
15. Not being able to afford to go away on family holidays

SOURCES OF WORRY FOR MOTHERS NUMBERS 16-30

16. Wanting to go to work instead of being a stay-at-home mum
17. Not having enough time or money to provide freshly cooked and healthy meals
18. Arguing with partner in front of the children
19. Spending too much time on housework
20. Not going on holidays abroad
21. Not going to enough baby/toddler groups
22. Having to leave them with someone else to go to work during the school holidays
23. Not helping more with homework
24. Telling my children white lies to avoid having to answer difficult questions
25. Feeding a baby formula milk
26. Being a stay-at-home mum and not bringing in any money
27. Leaving my baby to cry and self-soothe
28. Sending my children off to school when they are poorly
29. Checking work emails/taking work-related phone calls when at home with my children
30. Not giving them a sibling



Super Working Mum

Optimising relationships, resources and time

source:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2266292/Majority-mothers-admit-feeling-guilty-balancing-work-home-life-constantly-question-good-parent.html>

If you observe this list very well, you will see that most of the items on the worry list is pressure we put on ourselves or pressure from others. Which one of these items do you identify with?

We will go on now to address how to deal with this deadly emotion guilt.

Steps to dealing with working mum guilt

1. Seek God's will

As christian mums our foundation is in God. Our very existence, our very being is in him. He knows everything about us. He created us! He knows what is best for us.

Therefore the wisest thing to do will be to ask God what he wants you to do with your life and then it won't matter what anyone else says. Write it down as a reminder when critics come your way telling you what they think you should be doing.

Once you know you are where God wants you, the issue of guilt shouldn't arise anymore. Sure, the devil will try and discourage you with negative thoughts, making you to second guess yourself. However, keep reminding yourself of what God wants of you and stick to it. Hard I know but isn't it better to be in God's will than to be on your own?

If you have any uncertainty at all about working outside the home, and you have never sought God's face on the matter, then do so and seek his will. He is your father. He will show you the way. Sometimes he will even push you out of your comfort zone if you are not listening.

Personally I work from home on my business now as I feel in my heart this is what God wants me to do. I was very good in my role as a business analyst but I was unfulfilled. It took me years to make the move, in fact, it was God WHO made the move when my contract got terminated early this year and I was about 3 months pregnant! I still went ahead to look for another contract but you know how hard it can be for a pregnant lady to get a job. So I gave up and ran back to

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Super Working Mum

Optimising relationships, resources and time

God. Now I am in His will for my life. Trust me there are days I second guess myself and wonder if I am doing the right, if I won't run back to my career but I remind myself of my vision and what God wants me to do. Also by telling you I am making myself accountable so you can remind me if one day I tell you I am going back to my career. lol

Does God want you to start a business from home? Does he want you to be more involved in your community or kingdom work? Only you can answer that question.

Also if God wants you to stay in your career then don't let anyone tell you otherwise. There is absolutely nothing wrong with a woman having a career. Or it could be that God wants you to have your career and run a business at the same time. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you as long as you are in God's will.

A sure sign of knowing if you are in God's will is the peace you will feel in your heart.

Task: Ask God today to show you where he wants you to be, what does he want you to do? Ask him for clear signs.

2. Remember your Vision

If you did module 1 correctly, you would have indicated how you wanted your family to remember you when you are no longer on planet earth. You also wrote out how you want your colleagues and business associates to remember you as well.

Having a vision keeps you on track and focused even when everything seems to be going wrong around you. Depending on what you wrote which should align with God's will for your life, stick with it.

Anytime you have to make a decision concerning your life, a career move, change in job, starting a business or anything pertaining to work. Ask yourself- Is this moving me closer to my vision or further away? Then you will know the right thing to do.

Task: Write down the summary of your vision as it pertains to work, number of hours you want to work, how you want to be remembered at work or in your business. Write out your work ethics.



Super Working Mum

Optimising relationships, resources and time

3. Find out the source of your guilt

There are two main types of working mum guilt. Referred guilt and self inflicted guilt.

Referred guilt is for instance when Mrs Green down the road does not understand why you are working instead of being at home with your children and voices this out in form of a comment.

You go home and start dwelling on what Mrs Green said. Or your colleagues give you strange looks when you pick up your bag at 5p.m and say you are going home but there is still work to be done. You go home replaying those deadly looks over and over again and you feel bad.

Some may appear real e.g you getting tied up in the office during your son's graduation ceremony programme. Or your child is sick and you have to work.

Please understand that guilt is a negative energy. Don't let what people say make you feel guilty. As long as you are doing your best, you get in your deliverables on time at work, you meet your clients'/ customers expectation everything else is secondary.

Someone said to me once guilt is the holy grail of motherhood. Mums everywhere are looking for the solution to not feeling guilty. This may be the case in the world but as daughters of God, we can unravel this mystery.

Remember there is now therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8.1-2. Jesus has set us free from the spirit of guilt. By dying we are free to live by the law of the Spirit. I don't want to go all spiritual on you but if you understand this simple fact that you are free, FREE to live the life God has called you to do. You are no longer condemned!

What is your internal dialogue with yourself. Are you depressing yourself with guilty thoughts. Why? Even when you make mistakes, like forgetting to pick up your child at nursery or something totally drastic, drowning in guilt will not solve the problem. Your motto should be learn from our mistakes for the days when you get it wrong. Ask yourself how can you improve the situation?

I remember this one time I got a live in help to look after my daughter while I went to work. She was really good at her job and I totally liked her. Some weeks later we found out the help was a smoker which was against our values. My husband actually caught her smoking at the back of the house and called to tell me at work.

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Optimising relationships, resources and time

There and then at work I began to wail...telling myself I had exposed my daughter to secondhand smoke. I felt so guilty. I continued with the negative talk, "if i was at home, this won't have happened, i wonder what has happened to my daughter's lungs now, I am a bad mum" and on and on I went until I called a friend of mine who helped me put things in perspective.

No it wasn't my fault that my live in help smoked and no I didn't expose my daughter to second hand smoking. If I had known the help was a smoker I won't have hired her in the first place. My friend encouraged me and told me to be thankful we found out when we did. To be honest the first thing I should have done was run crying to God and ask him to help me deal with the guilt but I believe he spoke to me through my friend to tell me it was ok. I wasn't a bad mum after all.

So anytime guilt comes knocking on your door, tell yourself you are no longer condemned because you are a child of God. Ask God to help you look at the good in the situation and be thankful. Ask him to help you be better.

Task: Ask yourself: Why do I feel guilty? Was it something someone said? Was it something I did? Write it down and tell yourself "I am no longer condemned". "I am a great mum" "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"

4. Check your attitude

Attitude is everything. Some mothers feel their children resent them for working outside of the home. However a researcher found that employment wasn't the issue. Instead, it was the attitude of the mother.

The study found that if mothers resented working out of the home, then their children will sense this and have problems with it, too. On the other hand, mothers who were more or less happy and contented with working had stronger relationships with their children.

Once you have figured out where God wants you to be, be happy and always keep a positive attitude. Of course, every day won't be all rosy and dandy and this is where your attitude determines a lot. Set your attitude every morning before you begin your day.

If you are in full time employment, be thankful and happy for your job. Stop grumbling and complaining about your job- (actually you grumbling could be a sign that you should be doing something else. So go back to step one and seek God's face)



Super Working Mum

Optimising relationships, resources and time

If you work from home or run a business, be grateful for the opportunity. Make the best use of it.

Whatever the case, have a winning attitude. When you are at work focus on work and do your best, everything will be fine with your children. You can only be in one place at any given point so focus on the now and what you are doing.

When you are at home focus on the enjoying your children, all with a great attitude.

Whatever your hands find to do, do it to the glory of God. Your children are also watching and you are sending across a message to them through your attitude. Let them see it is ok for mummy to work, it is ok for mummy to have a business. It is not all about them!

Task: What part of your attitude needs adjusting? Do you need to smile more? Complain less? Think of the area in your attitude towards your work or business that needs improving and write it down.

5. Self care

Motherhood involves trying to balance your children's needs and your needs. You will probably do a better job with parenting when your own needs are met, so don't neglect yourself.

Remember your vision. Put yourself first on the list. You are in a much better position to serve your family well if you. If you don't take care of you, you will be grumpy and may be resentful. Trust me no one will want to be around you.

Tell yourself by working you are developing yourself and helping your husband (if you are married) provide for the family. You are showing your children that it is ok for them to take care of themselves.

You are showing your children you are not a doormat and mummy is to be respected. Mummy has a life! Yes you do!!! When you begin to take time out for yourself even your husband and children will begin to respect that time.

Side note- This is part of the reason I have decided to start organising yearly retreats for working mums in the summer. A purposeful time for mummy to have some me time. Growing up my mum went on regular retreats and we all knew not to mess with that time. It was mummy's time.



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Optimising relationships, resources and time

Don't let guilt get in the way of you taking time out for yourself. It is not a selfish act but a necessary act to help you take care of your family. As part of your self care, remember to spend time with God as he is the source of your strength. Read books, go for a massage, go for a spa session, hang out with your friends, do what YOU LOVE!

Task- What activities can you do to take care of yourself? What weekly or monthly activities can you engage in?

6. Get rid of perfectionism

The reality is that you can never be perfect neither can anyone else. Perfectionism is simply a trap. The good news is that you do not have to be a perfect parent to be a great parent. Yes so the laundry is piling again, the ironing needs to be done, you picked up your daughter from nursery five minutes late. This is life! Stop beating yourself up. You can't get everything right. You can only do the best you can.

What you should aim for is excellence not perfection.

The most useful thing you can do if you get something wrong is to ask yourself how you can improve next time. Beating yourself up will only lead to feeling more guilt which you don't need.

Task- In what area of your life has perfectionism crippled you and is causing you to feel guilt? What can you do about it?

7. Be present

it is important to be intentional about being fully present with your children whenever you are with them by minimizing the multi-tasking as much as humanly possible. It is hard especially with technology right at our fingertips...i.e on our mobile phones.

I still find it hard I must confess but I keep reminding myself daily of my vision and goal to spend more intentional time with my children. Shut down the laptop, shut down the phone. Focus on your children.

To help you make a clear demarcation you can set a special time apart to spend quality undistracted time with your children. 30 mins, 1 hour, during dinner time. Start today. You may not get it right the first time but keep at it.



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Task- How can I be intentional about the time I spend with my children. What changes can I make today in order to spend quality time with my children and even my husband?

8. Stop comparing yourself with other mums

Ah! this is one thing I know many of us do. The bible says he who compares himself to another is not wise (2 Corinthians 10:12).

There is no one right way to raise children. God's vision for your family is different to that of your neighbours. His assignment for each one of us is different.

Our parenting styles and our type of work will differ so there is no point comparing yourself to your neighbour.

Your circumstances are different. It is possible that your neighbour's husband is wealthy enough to cover all the bills of the home so his wife doesn't have to work at all. Or your friend has decided to quit her job to run a business and can now attend all sort of school activities. Or the other mums in your children's school look at you funny as you only turn up on once every 6 months for PTA meetings.

See that's their issue not yours. You know what you are about. You have sought God's face and you are in his will doing what he has called you to do. Focus on that and not what other mums are doing. Your journeys are different.

If someone tells you how they feel you SHOULD be running your family or running your life, say thank you and keep it moving. Don't store that data in your mind. They can usually only advise you based on their own circumstances.

If you are not happy about your work situation then that's a different case so go back to point one, ask God what he wants you to do.

Task: In what ways do you compare yourself to other mums? How can you become confident in your decisions for yourself and family instead?



Super Working Mum

Optimising relationships, resources and time

9. Get support from other Christian working mums

Sometimes I think we mums set ourselves up nicely to fail which leads to guilt. We want to do EVERYTHING by ourselves. We sometimes feel we have super powers to save the day and when that doesn't happen we feel disappointed and guilty, saying to ourselves it is all my fault. No woman is an island.

I find strength when I have support from other working mums going through similar challenges. Let's not deceive ourselves. I can achieve much more when I have support and provide support.

We can't do it all...yes we can do all things through Christ but only those things he has called us to do. Not every single thing.

I remember when I just gave birth to my son, I knew I had to sort out school runs for his sister. I tried to juggle breastfeeding and taking the little madam to school but it was all just very much and overwhelming for me. My husband had to go to work early by train so he helping wasn't feasible.

My neighbour's (who is also my friend) son goes to the same school but i felt weird asking for help. When it got to a point that I knew I was going to break down I asked her if she could help with dropping off my daughter with her son. She was more than happy to help. That took a great weight off my shoulder. I didn't have to feel guilty about a crying baby who wanted his breast milk or a daughter who was running late to school.

Your hubby may not get it sometimes, he isn't a mum after all and men don't have guilt issues like we do so your best bet is developing relationships with other working mums.

Also remember to be ready to give help as well. Don't just keep asking and asking. Be ready to help others when they need your help. Offer to help without even being asked.

This is also largely what the inner circle is about- to give and get the support we need from other like minded mums ...when the days are hard and everything doesn't seem like it is working, the ladies in the inner circle can provide the objectivity required at that point.

Apart from getting support from other working mums, delegate and seek help where needed. Is your home always a mess, get a cleaner if you can afford it. Do you need live in help then get one. Do you need baby sitting? Ask a trusted friend to help or hire a babysitter. By simply asking for help you are helping yourself.

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Task- In what ways can I be of service to others? In what ways can I provide support for other working mums? In what ways can I get support from other working mums? What do I need help with right now, who can I ask for help?

In Conclusion

Lastly I want you to know that most times we are the ones that impose these guilt on ourselves. You don't have to feel guilty about anything. Stay connected to God and do what he has called you to do.

Read Proverbs 31 to know more about the virtuous woman. She worked, she provided for her family. She supported her husband. She was respected. She didn't feel guilty.