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Guilt

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Welcome to Lesson No. 17. Here we go. We are starting on a new topic, guilt. And I am excited to be sharing with you some information and to really shed some love on guilt because I see so many people really fretting about the guilt that comes up for them and, in turn, who they are as a person. And guilt from the ego level is about making you feel bad about who you are as a person. There's just no other way around it. And, of course, this is not at all and never will be the intention of your essence. And so you can be really clear about that, that you are never supposed to feel weighed down from your guilt and buy into those messages that put down your essence rather than guide or uplift or give you insight that you need which is always what your essence is supporting you to do.

So guilt from a spiritual perspective is about checking in with yourself so that you can better ascertain who you truly, truly are from the most loving place within you. Guilt is present so that you can learn how good you authentically are and that you can live your life in alignment with your authentic goodness. So you can tell this is exactly opposite of what guilt from the ego level completely does. So it's important that you recognize that downward pull of guilt that's your ego. And the reason why you are feeling that weight or that downward pull where you start spiraling into those negative messages, it's because a part of you is buying into the ego message that says you should be doing more or you're not enough.

So a part of you is buying into that. And so for guilt to work it means a part of you believes that it's true, a part of you believes that guilt message that says you're not enough or you're not doing enough, you're not good. And your essence wants to heal this once and for all, and it's going to do this by supporting you to find what is true and right for you and knowing, not believing, not thinking, but knowing that who your essence is, your truth is more than enough. Your essence is working hard through your guilt to support you to examine your life. That's really what it's about. It's like, let's check this out, let's examine, let's see the facts, and then look at what your ideal life looks like and if you are living that way. The vast majority of the time your essence is guiding you to step out of defining yourself based on ego standards.

So if you think about it, the ego, when it comes to guilt, is very judgmental. It's saying how you don't measure up in some way or you're just not being a good person. You're not doing what you should to live up to this ego standard. And that always puts you in a position of lack and where you question your worthiness and you question who you are. And so that if you define yourself in that way, you aren't going to know your core self which is always good and gives out of your goodness authentically, easily when things are in alignment and when you are living in alignment.

So let me explain. Guilt can become the biggest weight that we carry because it's often about your roles, and you and all of us tend to get tied to our roles because your ego wants you to form your identity based on your role rather than your truth. The best way for me to describe this to you is to think about all the different roles that you have in your life. You have a role as a child to your parents. You're your parents' child and there's a role that goes along with that.

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You have your work role, what you do for a living. Your role as a friend, a sibling, if you have any, or any other member in your family, there's some sort of role. And your role as a parent if you have kids. And so the list can go on and on, the different roles that you might have, a student, a mentor, so many different aspects to where we could take having these different roles. And you will see that how you define this role is often unique to some degree while at the same time it has some common thread that carries societal expectations and rules. And in these roles, your personality forms which is how you begin to identify yourself in many ways.

Now, you really are advanced when you can recognize how you have used these roles to define you rather than authentically know your essence. So what I mean is, are you able to describe yourself without roles, because doing so is challenging, especially if you think about how we typically describe ourselves to others. It's based on these roles. It's our way of an initial and basic introduction, but the identity component is all on the external versus our essence.

So let's say, for instance, if I was going to describe myself in the typical way. Hi, I'm Michelle Bersell. I am a psychotherapist and author. I'm also a wife and mom to three kids. And that sums me up, right? That's how I would -- that's what is expected in society, how you describe yourself. But that's absolutely not me. My authentic identity is more like I enjoy deeply loving, both sharing love and experiencing that love. My being enjoys discovering all that I am and experiencing the deep love and insight available to me just through being in my essence and paying attention to my essence. So you can see a big difference between calling myself -- identifying myself based on my job and role in my family versus my authentic identity.

So even though I am definitely tapped into and aware of my authentic identity, of course these roles still tie into how I view myself. And that's where we have to keep watch because when we buy into those external roles, and to some degree we just do, that's where there is opportunity to see if there's ways that we are buying in that aren't in alignment with our essence. Because if you're just paying attention to your internal and to your essence, you're going to be in alignment. But being in our society, being in reality and living a more typical life where you have a job and have societal or family obligations, these roles are going to come into play. And so how much you buy into them, especially aspects of the role that don't fit you that aren't in alignment with your truth, that's where guilt can actually be an excellent tool to help you become aware and to help you make adjustments in those roles so that it is in more alignment with who you are and so that it brings you joy rather than weight, discomfort, or pain.

So guilt is about us negotiating between our ego identity and the identity of the essence to support you to authentically live in a way that feels good and right to you. What comes with the ego identity, what is the biggest, biggest giveaway is the shoulds. And I tell my clients all the time that they are going to should themselves to death when they are getting caught up in their guilt, because it's all I hear is, I should do this and I really ought to have done that and, gosh, am I a bad person that I didn't try this and do this for somebody, and there's just a lot of

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shoulds. So listen up for those shoulds and what they're telling you when you are feeling guilty because that's going to actually support you to get to the heart of the matter.

So, for instance, I had a client who felt bad because he wasn't volunteering for his son's coaching for his baseball team. And he worked out of town and works really long hours, and so he had to make a decision because he wanted to spend quality time with his son and his son was -- he participated in baseball. I wouldn't say he was head over heels in love with baseball. And so he really had to look at if he should do this volunteer position. And he's like, I really should, someone needs to do this, and it'd be good to spend time with my son in this way. But there was something holding him back. And the main component was, was that he was exhausted and, second, he knew, he felt more of a guidance to be there for his wife, be there for his other kids, and allow his son to kind of have this part of his day, his weekend that was exciting to him and certainly be there for his games, but that there needed to be some boundaries for him to reclaim time for the family overall, his role with the family, things that he had to take care of around the house as well as himself. But he really felt weighed down by this because I think a part of the image that he had as a dad was someone who could do those things, who was super-involved.

And so I asked him, I said, John, I understand that this is a part of this standard that you believe you as a dad should be able to do, you should make time for your kids and be able to do this. But let's be clear. Are you still making time for your kids? And overwhelmingly, he was. Even when he came home from work, he would be exhausted and he knew he'd only have a half hour before the kids went to bed and he all-out gave it to them. And, of course, during the weekends, that's where his main focus was.

And I also had to challenge him between the ego standard which starts to get idealized that that's the type of dad he should be. I said, well, when you picture that, being that type of dad, did you see yourself working that many hours too? And did you see the gift that you provided in being able to provide for your family financially by doing the work that you do and the fulfillment that you get from your work? And so, no. In his idea of what that ideal would be, it didn't -- it was more for a 9-to-5 type job and then, of course, there would be more energy to put towards these things. And he knew that this work schedule that he had was temporary, it was not a long-term thing, and he knew it would, in the long run, benefit his family overall.

And so by going through this -- and we got into more detail. I won't go into all the details in this point right here. We had to look at what the falseness was and what the truth was. Another part of his falseness was, well, what if no one else volunteers? And we can begin to be the people that put the whole world's weight on our shoulders. And it's true, we do have to take responsibility for our community, we do have to take responsibility for our world, but can you trust your essence to guide you as to which really are for your highest good and the highest good of others as well as where your energy and passions match. Because if you start to give yourself in these ways that you're kind of like, I don't really feel it, but I should, it'd be the good

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thing to do or the nice thing to do, and you put all your energy there, I guarantee you, you won't have the energy to give towards those big aspects of life that you're being called to give towards.

So we listed out these false beliefs, I'm a bad dad, I'm a bad community guy, I'm not tied into my community, I am selfish, all of these lies. But to get there -- because intellectually we get that we're not a bad person. He knew he wasn't a bad dad, but to get to the point of listing out proof to kind of -- and your essence from getting beaten up and bruised by your ego, and you have to come up with this proof to say, it's just not true and I'm not going to give my energy away to the ego anymore and I'm going to feel good and right about making a decision that ultimately is not just for my highest good but those around me. And your essence wants you to live that way. And you can do this with every aspect of your life because if you just think for a minute all the shoulds that could come up or that do come up for you along with the roles that are a part of your identity, you would see how easily your ego could take control and put you in a whirlwind of guilt, and that's not going to serve you or anyone.

So just think for a minute how you identify yourself with your work and your role in that as a worker or in your career, what are the responsibilities that go along with that, what's the responsibilities that you feel as a child to your parents, what's the role and responsibilities that you see as yourself as a friend to others, your role and responsibilities to your spouse or an intimate partner, your role and responsibilities as a parent to your children. So seriously, I mean, and the list can go on and on and on and on. And I've not met a person yet where there is at least one role that gets out of whack and then you have these expectations on yourself that's just simply exhausting. And so your guilt is going to come in to support you to shift this, to support you to come in from a spiritual level to say this madness needs to stop.

So each time you feel guilt it's an opportunity to examine what am I buying into about myself regarding these thoughts of who I think I should be. So you are buying into something about yourself, buying into something regarding your thoughts of who you believe you should be and you're not, and that just reiterates that message that you're not enough. Guilt from the ego will tell you that you aren't meeting that expectation and you better get back in line, you better keep working at it, you better keep trying to be a better person. And if you don't, you're going to get tormented by the guilt.

Now, see, what really is happening is this: All healthy people want to feel and know that they're good. You want to believe you're a good person, and there's good reason for this, because your essence absolutely knows that you're a good person. Your ego, on the other hand, wants you to doubt that that's true in order to keep you in that role, because the more you stay in that role, the more the ego is doing it's job of protecting you from knowing your true self until you are ready to own your power. For this reason, guilt can be really tricky because your ego is going to reiterate to you over and over that you're a bad person if you go against this role, this standard, and who the heck wants to be a bad person, especially when

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you are consciously evolving and growing. You're like, I don't want to be a bad person. But according to whose standards? So the ego is going to trick you into believing that when the truth can be anything further from that.

So you have to know within yourself that you are a good person despite what the ego is saying to you and, most importantly, despite your mistakes, because I get this all the time. When people are listening to their guilt, they're like, but it is true, it is true, I am a bad person, I am selfish because one time I took the bigger piece of pizza. And I'm like, are you kidding me, you know, to judge ourselves based on these little things or to judge ourselves from childhood when you did make mistakes or even as an adult when you make mistakes. That's the big thing that I love about the Feel Every Emotion as Love concept is that there's room for mistakes and actually through your mistakes you learn more about yourself. And so there's no reason to feel shame or hide these vulnerable sides to yourself. And so are you going to look at your mistakes with the harshness of the ego and then label yourself, and then based on that label any little thing that could indicate that you are that thing that you wish you weren't is going to trigger that.

And this can even run culturally. There can be so many messages that have us tap into this notion. It runs so deep and it's the opportunity to shift this. It makes me think of culture because I had someone I was working with and she was feeling guilty because she was feeling like -- she was questioning if she was being stingy. And so what happens is this person happened to be just such a generous-hearted person, someone who invited people over. She would make gourmet meals for them and just treat them with such nurturance. And what happened was, is that she was going out to lunch with a friend and it came time for the bill and they were just going to split it. And this other person that she was with started making her feel guilty that she wasn't treating her to a meal.

So the person I was working with, her name is Diane. So Diane's friend was making her feel guilty that she wasn't being -- that Diane wasn't treating her friend to the meal because her friend was giving her haircuts. And so her friend brought this up, and she came to me, she's like, am I really being stingy? She made me feel so guilty, but I just always felt like there was an equal balance in our relationship. I often invited her over for dinners at our house and that's something where I feel like economically I can do and it feels good and right to me, but I just didn't have that expectation going out to lunch and we mutually agreed to go out to lunch. It wasn't me inviting her.

And it was just really interesting because it brought up all this stuff, a lot of stuff from her childhood, a lot of stuff that she carried, being Jewish and stigma and false stereotypes that went along with that. And we had to work that through to see where this button even came from for her and why she was buying into it and why she was questioning herself in this way. And then we had to put all these false ideas from her heritage, from her parents, as well as herself against the truth which by far stacked up to be complete evidence that she was such a

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generous person, an overwhelmingly generous person and that it is okay, in fact, to have boundaries and boundaries around money. So we'll get into that more when I go into more of our in-depth lessons about this. But I thought that was interesting, how far back these messages about guilt can run.

So how guilt will keep you trapped is that when guilt emerges it is pressing some button and you are believing this based on ways that you believe you screwed up in the past, or as an example, you took as a child your parents screwing up. I mean, it can really go back. But most of the time it is something where we're identifying with ourselves. And Diane had an instance where maybe when she was a child she was being stingy, but I mean, come one, what kid hasn't gone through being stingy at one point. I mean, we all go through that to realize what feels good and right to us and what doesn't. But the fact was, was that she learned her lesson about that and became a beautifully generous person. But she also was learning that with her generosity there needed to be boundaries.

And so we continue with these lessons, and the key is, are you going to let the past learning components of your life be aspects of yourself that you judge or tools to make you better and tools to support you to see yourself in more of your truth. And when you move past your ego, you know that despite the ways you've messed up in the past, despite the ways you had made mistakes, you are an incredibly lovable and loving being. And you know with all your heart that at every moment you are attempting to go about life in the best way you know how to now and you were doing that even when you made those mistakes in the past. You were doing the best that you knew.

So people who have that perfectionistic tendency are the ones that I see really struggling with this and are going to be the ones who suffer the most with this because part of the reason that there is this need to be perfect is to prove your worth. So if it's you or someone you know that has this perfectionistic thing going on, it's because you or that person that you know does not fully know their worth and wants to show it and demonstrate it in these ways that seem tangible rather than seeing it from within, seeing it within your internal being. So when you are proving your worth, you don't know your worth, and the ego will be there all the time to trip you up with guilt to keep you glued to that notion that perfection will support you to finally become that good person you are trying to be. And the whispers of your essence will be for you to find your truth in the matter and to redefine your life accordingly.

Now, I know this whole perfectionistic bit. I lived that for many years and it's kept me stuck in so many ways in my notion of self, who I am and what I should be as well as myself in relationships. And you will see that in yourself because you will be faced with, quite frankly, self-hatred if it was to the degree where I was at, but also just overall judgment. And I really think they're the same thing when you are being that critical of yourself. So if you see critical tendencies, and it might not be towards your whole life or your whole sense of self but in

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certain areas, use that as your key to see where those shoulds are coming in and listen to what your essence is guiding you to know about yourself instead.

Now, I would say that most people have this going on to some degree in one area. They're trying to overcome their guilt with overdoing it or being perfect. And one way to look at this is, is if you feel that need wasn't met for you in your life and you try to overcompensate with that, then that's an indicator of what's going on. I see this all the time with parents who try to be overly -- I mean, overly anything. Overly nurturing, overly playful, overly generous, overly strict, overly disciplined, overly organized. So it's not just with these positive things like overly loving. It could be overly strict or disciplined if you didn't feel like you got enough of that as a child and that harmed you in some way.

And so this will play out with guilt because whenever we go overboard, even if you are being overly strict and you feel guilty about that or you are overly nurturing and that ends up playing out where you feel guilty that you're not able to follow your kid to school and stick up for them on the playground, that there needs to be looking back at where you feel that need wasn't presented for you so that you can begin to redefine your role in a healthy way.

So what happens for parents is that if that need wasn't met for them as a child, they almost define themselves as opposite as their parent. This can also happen with relationships where if you viewed your mom or dad not being a good wife or husband, then you will do the opposite and it becomes this exaggerated form, and even in that exaggerated form, even if there's good intentions, it's going to be out of balance and it's going to create guilt in one way or another. And that guilt is there to say there's something not right with this role, with this notion that you have of what you ought to be that is driving you crazy, that is overly taxing, that is set up in a way that even though it seems like it's good and it's coming from a good place, it's really about filling a fear, and it's not going to support you or others involved.

And so your essence wants you to feel that balance and feel the goodness again, just who you are, just who you are is capable of being that ideal to yourself and to others and supporting you to create boundaries that when you aren't enough to somebody else, then there's another issue going on, maybe around boundaries, maybe there's not a good match there, that there's something that needs to be tweaked in the overall relationship rather than just with you.

So, again, I will get into that in more detail when we talk about relationships. So I just want to give you an idea of all the different ways that this can come out in our lives.

Now, the message of your spirit during all of this guilt is to support you to question if you living your life in alignment with your authentic and highest self is worth it to you. Can you identify yourself on that more than the external. So being human, we confuse the ego expectations or roles with our highest good. And these can be very, very far apart from one another. At some point, you have to decide which is more important to you.

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So maybe, like in John's case, maybe some people did judge him that he didn't coach baseball. I don't know, but let's say they did. And is that John's issue? It's not. But it would be if he gave more energy and emphasis based on what others thought of him versus what he knows and feels within his heart. So even if someone were to say, ah, he's so selfish, all he does is think about himself and his career, that's their own stuff going on, and if you put your energy into that, if John were to put his energy into that, he would forever be at the whim of the ego's expectations and everybody else's expectations. And if you do that, you will never fulfill your life's work because you have become a slave to your ego and to other people's expectations and that is not how your essence wants you to live.

So your ego's expectations are always too narrowly defined, whereas your spirit's guidance will allow you to experience the goodness within your heart, at your core. And you can trust that. And that's what, in fact, you are meant to do, is trust that and build that relationship with your essence where you see its goodness and you see its support for you always.

When you see where you have lost your identity, you can reclaim your truth and make life a greater representation of your essence. What your essence wants you to know is that when you do not follow your truth, you will cause yourself greater pain and struggle. So it's important for you to get clear about what your truth is and who you really are. A lot of pieces of our identity tend to get handed down, like I was saying in Diane's case. And we take in these notions about ourselves when we are young, and so as you mature, you have to decipher what is your truth. And since no one else can do this for you but you, guilt is present to support you to get there.

So there comes a time when those messages that you were told when you were young and you were so vulnerable and you were so really open to hearing them even when they were negative perhaps because they were coming from someone you loved or admired, you have to reach a point to say is that me and can I let go of other people's definition and my ego's definition enough to really find myself. And so some of the time it may be that you're not clear about who you are, but you definitely know it's not that, it's not that negativity, that slight, that judgment on yourself that has been thrown at you.

And I think especially my generation there's a lot of people that had this happen, because I think, I'll speak for my parents, I think they were aware of physical abuse and how physical abuse is wrong, but they grew up where times were tougher and you had to stick up for yourselves, and so like name-calling and being kind of rough psychologically speaking, emotionally, mentally hurting people was part of the gamut of life. And so that got -- you may have experienced that as a child, or if you were also physically abused in some way, you took in those messages about yourself. So it doesn't have to be words. There's so many different ways that you can take in these messages. And then you feel not enough and that's going to play out in different aspects of your life.

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So if you were told you aren't good enough, if you were told that you're no good, it's not that you're going to feel guilty thinking, like, that I'm no good. What you will feel guilty about is that you won't be good enough, so you'll always be trying to prove that you are good enough and there will be some crazy high standard of what that looks like in your eyes and you will never get there to prove. It's like the ego's way of proving that message that your parent or loved one or someone that you respected shared with you was right. And you will stay stuck there and fighting that internal battle until you see that, again, that goodness, that light, that beauty coming through your essence instead and give that more credibility than your ego.

And this has to go beyond an intellectual level because I hear it all the time, I heard it today: Of course, intellectually I know I'm good enough, of course, intellectually I think I'm worthy, but at your heart, at your core, what are some of the past experiences that contradict that to you, that a part of your -- there's an energy stream that leaks and is still -- that is leaking energy towards that and it's still buying into that message that you're not enough, that you're not worthy. That's where you really have to pay attention to, and your guilt will show you how to get there, and your essence wants you to see the truth to yourself and see that goodness and that worthiness and experience it because knowing it isn't enough and we have to bring it to our heart, to our core to really get there.

Now, some people get worried about if listening to their essence is -- could it be selfish, could it be self-centered, and then they start thinking about, well, my essence really wants me to go away on a deserted island. I'm like, first of all -- and then they'll say, but I'd feel guilty because I'd leave my kids. I'm like, first of all, do you really want to go to a deserted island? No. It sounds like your essence needs some time to itself, and is that okay for your kids to experience or is that okay for your boss to experience? Absolutely. And so your essence is saying don't get so caught up in your role as parent or as worker or as what a successful person would be and don't blow it out of proportion. What your essence really wants, get to the truth. And from that it's never going to be selfish or self-centered. It's going to be appropriate for what is good and right for you.

Now, we've always seen people that are selfish, that are self-centered, but I guarantee you, that is occurring because they aren't listening to their essence. So there's some hurt, there's some pain that's exaggerating something within themselves that's making them try to have their needs met in a way that's out of alignment with their essence. And being in touch with yourself and with these ego messages, you're not going to go there. These people are the ones that are seriously so out of touch and they're in so much pain that it causes that reaction with them because they don't even have the slightest clue as to how to truly nurture themselves, and so it comes out in these wacky and distorted ways.

So with listening to your essence and with understanding your truth, your needs, in actuality it's going to make you less self-centered, less selfish because you are attending to your needs and

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you're not unconsciously looking for them to be met through someone else or through something else. You're not looking to the external to fill your needs. You're providing for them internally, and so your guilt can guide you to either buy into messages that will make you feel good temporarily, in the short term make you feel like a good person, but if your needs, internal needs aren't being met, unconsciously you are going to set up situations to have those needs met in which you are unconsciously being manipulative. I get into this more in my book, *Emotional Abundance: Become Empowered*. So if you're interested in that concept, I would encourage you to buy the book because I really get into detail about this.

But anyway, guilt can support you to see this and to get really clear about what your truth is and what you can begin to identify within yourself so that you don't become out of whack and don't unconsciously try to get your needs met through approval, through meeting others' expectations.

So when you go about this from a Feel Every Emotion as Love aspect, you don't have to worry about your essence guiding you in the wrong direction. It's going to allow you to see you. And you will know this because -- you know, I'm not telling you to blow off your ego. So the people that buy into that "guilt is good because it makes me a better person," that tends to come up from religious backgrounds. Again, we need to look at where these things come from. You got to look at is it making you a better person or is it making you more aligned with some ideal of what is being dictated to you of what you should be to be a good person versus knowing you're a good person and you can trust that. But in order to trust that, what I want you to do is not blow off your ego. Again, listen to what those messages are, and I guarantee you, ninety percent of the time it's your ego trying to keep you under control. Ten percent of the time there may be a sliver of information that you can gain from the guilt that your essence wants you to know about.

Now, the key in understanding your guilt from this perspective is that there is no weight, meaning that if there is a sliver of information that you can gain from the guilt, there isn't going to be meanness. It will never be mean-spirited. If there's information you need to take in, you just take it in and that's it. There may be a hint of something with guilt that you need to pay attention to.

So, for instance, if you are feeling guilty because in the last week you have come into work late and your statements to yourself from your ego look like this: I'm a bad person, I'm not being honest, I'm a bad worker, I feel disorganized and out of sorts. So we list them. Let's say those are the indicators of your ego. And then we look at the message of love, we look at the message of your essence. Are you a bad person? No. Are you being dishonest? No, not as long as you tell someone that you've been late and why or as long as that's allowed in your work. But is there a hint of truth that you're feeling disorganized and out of sorts from coming in late? That may be true. That may be the piece that your essence is saying, hey, this isn't you. This isn't worth it to you and your overall good to come into work late because it throws

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you off and you feel scattered rather than ready to start your day. So, yeah, your essence wants you to feel good, feel prepared, feel right about your day, and if this throws you off to this degree, then it's not worth it. So does this make you a disorganized person? No. But is this something that you should look at? Yes. So again, there's the hint. There's the tweaking that your essence is saying, you know, this is going to do you better. Is it laden with all this judgment and overall big judgments against yourself? Absolutely not.

Again, largely guilt is going to be ego-based in the sense where it is telling you that you are a bad friend, parent, worker, business owner, money manager, person, etc., that it isn't true and your essence wants you to know the real truth. So if there are areas that need to be tweaked, you can look for it in guilt and it will support your ego to let go of that tight grip that it has on you.

So the love message your essence wants you to gain from this is to support you to own more of your truth and more of your innate goodness. You are so good. And for those of you that are spiritual, it goes with those beliefs and that knowing this, that whatever that higher power is and however you define it, that you are made in that likeness of goodness and of love, and you came here to Earth to experience that. You came to have this experience as a human to know that despite any mistakes, even huge mistakes, that that goodness is within you. And guilt will actually help you to get more of your truth and understand what needs to be tweaked in order for you to see the goodness, the worthiness, all that needs to be honored and respected and loved within you.

I thank you for going with me on this last part of our journey of going through guilt, which can be often tricky but still comes in the form of love, and you will know that by the energetic weight and you will see it as opportunity to see more of your true beauty and gifts within.

So thank you for taking this journey with me and I look forward to sharing more details, more exercises, more guided journaling that you can do to support you to make the shift to feeling your guilt as love and shedding love on your guilt.

Okay, I look forward to next week. Take care and blessings to you always.