

FALSE GUILT



SURVIVOR'S GUILT:

"I shouldn't have survived when others died."

"If I'd suffered more, others would have suffered less."

"I feel so ashamed about it, but I can't help thinking, 'I'm so glad I didn't get killed!'"



GUILT OVER FLIGHT/FIGHT/FREEZE RESPONSE:

"I always thought I was so brave, but I just froze in my tracks."

"Looking back I would have responded differently."



GUILT BY ASSOCIATION:

"I'm a soldier and sometimes soldiers commit atrocities; I am among the atrocity-committers."



COMPETENCY GUILT:

"If only I had acted more quickly, more skillfully, or smarter, people wouldn't have been injured or died."



CATCH-22 GUILT:

"I was forced to make a lose-lose choice. The woman looked like she had a bomb under her burqa. We kept yelling at her to stop, but she kept coming. If I didn't shoot her, she would have blown them up. So, I shot her, but then she didn't have a bomb. How am I supposed to live with that?"



HELPLESSNESS GUILT:

"I wanted so badly to get my buddy out of the line of fire, but they had him pinned down. If only I could have gotten to him, he'd be alive today."



ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY GUILT:

"It was my responsibility to keep my men safe. Some of them died or were injured, so I didn't do my job."

» SATAN IS YOUR ENEMY. HE SPEAKS ONLY LIES . . .

- **He is the accuser of the Christian person.**
(Revelation 12:10)
- **He is the father of lies.**
(John 8:44)
- **He is looking to devour you.**
(1 Peter 5:8).
- **He is looking for the perfect time to tempt you.**
(Luke 4:13)

THE TRUTH

»» SURVIVOR'S GUILT:

You can't blame yourself because you lived while others died – you had nothing to do with that. There's no way you could have controlled all the conditions surrounding your traumatic events. The conclusions drawn are illogical and inaccurate.

»» GUILT OVER FLIGHT/FIGHT/FREEZE RESPONSE:

The euphoria over your survival is an involuntary function of your lower brain, as was your fight/flight/freeze response – involuntary. As in: they were uncontrollable reflexes. They're not moral choices that you should be held accountable for.

»» GUILT BY ASSOCIATION:

Guilt by association? As long as you didn't participate in atrocities, it's a huge thinking-error for you to punish yourself for it. You didn't do the crime, so why do the time?

»» COMPETENCY, CATCH-22, AND HELPLESSNESS GUILT:

The "if onlys" of Competency, Catch-22 and Helplessness are irrelevant. In hindsight we may be able to see other options, but in the moment of crisis and the fog of war, you can't see them all. You did your best, and no one – at that moment under those conditions – should judge you for it. You wish that some magical solution would have presented itself at the last moment – but it didn't. That's reality – not your fault.

»» ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY GUILT:

Leaders simply can't protect all those under their command all the time – there's a war going on. The potential for disaster surrounds a combatant all the time. Multiply that by the number of troops you commanded. Are you God, that you could control all of those variables simultaneously? Why would anyone think they could?

Statements adapted from Chris Adsit, 2008, *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual: Christ Centered Solutions for Combat Trauma*, 80–81, Newport News, VA, Campus Crusade for Christ.

»» GOD IS YOUR ALLY. HE SPEAKS ONLY TRUTH . . .

- ***"I did not come to condemn you, but to save you."***
(John 12:47)
- ***"I am slow to anger, abounding in love and full of grace towards you."***
(Psalm 103:8-12)
- ***"There is no condemnation or punishment to serve if you are mine."***
(Romans 8:1-5)
- ***"I long to show you my grace and to have compassion on you."***
(Isaiah 30:18)