

Mummy Guilt

Part One

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It's that time of year again!

School's back...



our children, and us, are back into new routines and rituals that will carry us through the weeks...and months... ahead.

And now, that thing called **Mummy Guilt** has resurfaced in my head and in conversations with other mummies (and daddies!).

But for some reason, this time, strangely, it's because I am **NOT** feeling it!

So, what's happened?

Well, my little one, let's call him Master 'B', started full-time compulsory schooling this year and for the first time I can actually say that my shoulders feel lighter as I now busy myself with other activities including work.

Don't get me wrong...

...the first week back at school was very strange, and the reality that there were going to be no more regular 'Mummy and B' days during the week, was a mixed bag of emotions.

It's tinged with both sadness and pride that our little fellow is growing up, and growing up fast!

Plus the excitement for him of the adventures and experiences that lie ahead. He was so excited about his new school playground and that he can now take part in the school sports carnival!

However, what I am not feeling is the Mummy Guilt that I've felt in the past about having to say "*goodbye, see you later*" when I leave him at his classroom in the morning.



... his being where he 'has to be' somehow alleviated me of my guilt!

Now, in the past, when I dropped him off at Day Care, or when he had quality time with Grandma while I fitted in some work, no matter how well I could

reason with myself
rationalise my thoughts
and talk-down my guilt

...I still had a *mummy heart*, and that Mummy Guilt!



This was particularly on days when I was feeling tired or sensitive.

Perhaps you can relate to some of my pep-talks I would give myself at those times:

- *It's good for his learning independence*
- *It gives him an opportunity to socialise with other children and make friends*
- *It will help prepare him (physically and emotionally) for school*
- *It's quality time not quantity time spent with him that matters...*

And no doubt all of these helped at various times and have also been very true to some extent.

Mummy Guilt is a very common experience...

and of course, it's something that dads and other caregivers also experience!

As parents / caregivers, we place enormous expectations upon ourselves...

Think about the total responsibility we feel for our children's:

safety,
success,
happiness
wellbeing



Now, while these things vital for our little ones, we can go over-board...and when this happens it very often results in some pretty unrealistic standards, and irrational and unhelpful thinking!

So what things do we perhaps feel 'guilty' about?



Well, it's virtually anything and sometimes everything!

from time spent with our children
time not spent with our children
what milk they had as infants – boob vs bottle
which nappies we put them in
how we spoke to them when we were cross, tired and exasperated
how we used the TV as an in-house babysitter
or fed them pizza twice in one week because we had a headache

The list is endless.

Yes, we can laugh about some of these – and it's important we can and do laugh sometimes, because if not, the overwhelming feelings associated with guilt, including feelings of inadequacy, stress and depression, are not healthy and may have serious implications for our mental health.

And if we don't manage these issues, then how can we continue to support and be there for our children in the future!?



Oh no...yet another reason to feel guilty!

In the next part of this series, Part Two, I will look at ways to reduce our Mummy Guilt

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