

The Guilt of Not Working More, When We're Done for the Day

At the end of a day of work, there can be a simple practice of wrapping things up and shutting down for the day.

But so many of us feel guilty at simply stopping, and this feeling that we should be doing more ... it drives some of us to keep going as long as we can.

This can lead to overwork, burnout, tiredness, and never letting ourselves enjoy a moment of rest.

Do you relate to this guilt of simply stopping and resting?

The thing about this guilt is that it doesn't have to be rational — it's simply fear, that we're not doing enough, that we're not on top of things, that we're not going to be OK if we don't get everything done.

I know this fear well. I still have it, on a daily basis. It's not rational, but then fear never is.

This fear will control us if we don't bring a kind awareness to it, and start to work with us. It will own us, and we'll always be checking our phones, replying to messages, stuck in perpetual motion. Rest becomes difficult, joy becomes mostly inaccessible.

Here's how I work with this guilt and fear:

1. **Recognize it when it's happening.** When it's late in the day, and we could be wrapping things up and closing our work day ... notice the urge to do more. Notice the guilt of stopping. Just bring awareness to the fear and guilt, without judging them or needing them to go away.
2. **Breathe, and feel it.** Pause, take a few deep breaths, and don't let yourself buy into the fear. Feel the physical sensation of the fear, but don't believe it. Give yourself some kindness.
3. **Remind yourself of a bigger truth.** The idea that you should be on top of everything and working harder and checking emails and messages ... it feels really true in the moment. But it is very rarely true. What's a bigger truth? That you need rest to be able to serve others. That you are allowed to do other things, to spend time with others, to take care of yourself, to feel joy at spaciousness in your life. And this is a model for how others might live too. Taking rest serves the world. Remind yourself of this truth.
4. **Then take the rest.** Feel in your heart how this is worthwhile. And let yourself enjoy the space. You don't need to fill every moment with more work, more messages, more email.

How would you like to practice with this for yourself?