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The “Guilts”

Part 1

Living with the “Guilts”

by Cathy Healy

I feel a case of the “guilts” coming on. I didn’t sit and read with my son this weekend. We spent a lot of time learning how to swallow pills. We experimented first with crushing them and hiding them in juice, then in chocolate milk, burying them deep in applesauce and finally chopping them into small bits and practicing swallowing them. We still have a distance to go. But what can you expect — we’ve only begun the lesson on swallowing pills.

Weekend Woes

This weekend we also cleaned house, got our weekly grocery shopping done, shopped for a new carpet for the basement rec room, bought birthday presents, cooked breakfasts, lunches, and dinners, finished a couple loads of laundry, paid the bills and balanced the checkbook. Yet as I write this, I feel the “guilts” as my friend Carole and I call it, because I didn’t take the time to read to my youngest.

Sharing the “Guilts”

Carole is a wife and mother of two, one with special needs. She was the caregiver for her mother who recently died and continues to be the caregiver for her ill elderly father. There has been much illness in her family but she still finds time to volunteer in the classroom, go on field trips, bake brownies, engage the

kids in activities and work at a job. We share the “guilts” from time to time, because as Carole says “It feels like I never do enough for either of the children.”

True Confessions

On the days that I feel the “guilts” coming on, I reflect on the words of a teacher and very close friend. In desperation, I finally confided in her that my son’s homework was too difficult for me to help him complete. As the single mother of four children I’m just not able to accomplish all the things that need doing in a single day, even with careful planning.



Doing More Or Just Doing

We talked about homework goals and came up with realistic assignments. At the close of the meeting I thanked the teacher profusely and said, “I know I should be doing more for him so I really appreciate your patience and your help.” She stopped me and she said, “Don’t do that to yourself. Think of all that you are doing for your son.” It wasn’t until I began

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working with other families that I knew what she meant. Many of the parents who call us suffer from the “guilts”. They say things like... “I feel so bad, I never knew I could ask for this,” or, “If I’d only known sooner about that.”

Parental Involvement

Federal special education law insists families be involved in the education of their children with disabilities. Research tells us children whose parents are actively involved in their education fare better in school. The responsibility clearly is ours. We must take part in our

children’s education. But the reality is that some days we can only do that which is humanly possible. My simple act of sharing what really was going on in my home with my son’s teacher helped us to re-order our priorities both in school and at home. My son, his teachers and I are all feeling a little bit more successful now. And though I still suffer now and again from the “guilts,” I remind myself of all I am doing for him.



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