

## Effectively Engaging with the Guilt of Privilege OR 'What Do I Do With My Guilt?' using CBT, ACT, and DBT skills

All information provided are considered working/flexible definitions. Labeling and categorizing these constructs is intended to encourage open and supportive dialogue around complex and multifaceted categories. Examples of identities and the strategies suggested are by no means exhaustive and are included to provide a range of potential examples. If you have a strong response to any of these suggestions (e.g., feeling intensely validated or intensely invalidated) consider "where is this coming from?"

Key points: Guilt is an emotion that typically signals we want to act to correct a past mistake, a potential injustice, or a way in which we might not be living according to our values. It's not always easy to figure how to do this. As a result, we often end up ruminating because it makes us feel like we are doing *something*. It's normal and probably healthy to feel some degree of guilt related to aspects of our identity in which we experience privilege (i.e., advantages that others may not have that we earned simply by the lottery ticket of our birth in certain context). We can engage with the guilt of privilege in a way that helps motivate us toward anti-oppressive action, and doesn't reinforce other negative beliefs or feelings, or lead us to feel stuck, ashamed, or angry. Your guilt can be a catalyst for great things and you need to guide it.

### Reflection in Response to the Guilt of Privilege

On a scale of 1 to 10, how guilty do I feel about this?  
What part of this guilt is justified and could motivate me to action that is consistent with my values?

Is any part of this guilt leading me to ruminate over things I have no control over and/or won't help me or anyone else?

Am I engaged with my guilt as a way to feel like I'm doing something instead of acknowledging it and charting a path forward so my privileges do not continue to blindfold me?

DBT skills to try: (1) STOP; MoCE & MoCT, STUNwave; then (2) ACCEPTS

### Committed Action in Response to the Guilt of Privilege

What can I do to move toward my values? Can I learn more and seek more information? Can I volunteer, work, or donate to an organization or donate a resource? What would be a realistic step, in light of my current circumstances?

Can I seek to continue to enhance my cultural competency and cultural humility\*\*\*?

How can I continue to 'cash in' my unearned privilege and 'invest' against oppressive systems in my community and broader culture?

DBT skills to try: (1) STOP; MoCE & MoCT, STUNwave; then (2) ACCEPTS (focus on C = contribute)

\*\*\* *Cultural competency* can be thought of as foundational knowledge about specific social and cultural groups and most simply, 'what to do/say' as well as 'what not to do/say.' *Cultural humility* can be thought of as the other-oriented and empathic stance by which individuals continually self-reflect in an effort to enhance critical consciousness and anti-oppressive action. Combined together they are powerful tools for generating culturally responsive behavior (which often helps folks reduce ineffective guilt and channel it towards something helpful to others)!