

Good riddance to guilt!

Wave goodbye to those 'it's all my fault' feelings and set sail to a slimmer, happier you...

WORDS: SALLY BROWN

Have you ever noticed how when you're feeling bad about something, sticking to your good intentions or finding time to get to group suddenly feels so much harder? Here are a few of the most common guilt trips, and how to stop them sabotaging your weight-loss success...

Guilt trip #1 'I should never have let myself get to this weight'

You've decided to make some positive changes to your lifestyle and, instead of feeling proud of yourself, you're feeling bad about having put on weight in the first place. Feeling guilty about the past really does damage your self-confidence, and you could end up believing there's no point even trying to make changes, says Slimming World's founder and chair Margaret Miles-Bramwell. It's also wasted energy – the past is gone and you can't change it, whereas you *can* take charge of your future, so focus your energy on what you want to achieve instead. 'How we shop, how we cook, how we set an example to our children – these are just some of the things that *are* within our control,' says Margaret.

Guilt trip #2 'I shouldn't put myself first'

There's no greater gift you can give yourself than changing your lifestyle – and when you're feeling your best, your nearest and dearest get the best from you, too. By losing weight you'll have more energy for family, friends and work life. If you know all that and you still feel guilty about abandoning a pile of ironing to go to group or do some Body Magic, it's time to look at your self-beliefs, says psychotherapist Susan Carrell, author of *Escaping Toxic Guilt* (McGraw-Hill, £10.99). 'If you don't believe deep down that you have a right to be happy or to have your needs met, you'll feel guilty every time you put yourself first,'

she says. In fact, believing that your needs are less important than others' is often what triggers an unbalanced relationship with food in the first place. So it's time to ditch the guilt and move *you* to the top of your to-do list!

Guilt trip #3 'I'm not a good enough friend/partner/mother'

At times, it feels like there aren't enough hours in the day to be there for everyone who needs you. 'Women are far more likely than men to feel guilty about not being "good enough", whether that's as a friend, partner, mother or employee,' says psychotherapist Rachel Shattock Dawson (www.therapyonthames.co.uk). It's important to remind yourself that you don't have to be responsible for other people's happiness. 'Relationship guilt can go hand-in-hand with people-pleasing and worrying a lot about what other people think of you,' says Rachel. So cut yourself some well-earned slack – doing your best is always good enough. And when you feel better about yourself, you'll find that losing weight is easier, too.

Guilt trip #4 'I can't say no'

Making a change happen, whether it's reaching your weight-loss target or any other goal, means making the time, space and energy – and that's not always simple! 'Prioritising your time will help,' says life coach Jessica Chivers (jessicachivers.com). 'And sometimes, that may mean thinking carefully about saying yes

when people ask for your time.' While adding something else to your already lengthy to-do list might stop you from feeling guilty, it could leave you with an equally unhelpful feeling of resentment instead. 'If you're worried about letting someone down, use what I call a "soft no" and say that, while you're sorry you can't help this time, you'd really love to in the future,' says Jessica.

Guilt trip #5 'I have to be perfect'

The problem with setting ourselves such high standards, feeling that only perfect is good enough, is that it's almost inevitable that we'll come off track – and pretty quickly, too, as anyone would! Then we feel bad with a capital B and become more likely to seek comfort or distraction in food. So getting back on plan becomes harder than ever. 'The truth is we're not robots, not angels, not saints – just human beings,' says Margaret Miles-Bramwell. 'Which means you're not expected to be perfect. On the contrary, you are perfectly imperfect – and that makes you just perfect!'

