

Managing parental guilt

The California Partners Project is engaged in a listening tour with California caregivers to understand how parents are navigating the realities of parenting through a pandemic, and to share forward the lessons learned from a challenging year. A therapist in northern California shared that she notices in her clients who are mothers an “ongoing feeling of not being able to measure up or keep up with all the new demands.” A mom in northern California explained she feels “very overwhelmed and stressed out” by the realities of parenting during this time. Many mothers shared with us their feelings of guilt over the past year as they struggled to support their children during the disruptive, exhausting conditions of the pandemic.

Guilt can motivate us to work toward change, but shame can get us stuck comparing ourselves to others.

According to psychologist Lindsay Malloy, co-founder of [Pandemic Parenting](#), some guilt can help us reflect on our previous actions to make future positive change. However, shame can get in the way of our ability to adapt and improve. During a time of relentless parenting, it is important to stay focused on what you can improve, and what was and is necessary to get through difficult situations.

Parents, especially mothers, experienced more stress during the pandemic. A [Stress in America survey](#) by the American Psychological Association, showed that nearly half of mothers (47%) with children doing remote learning at home reported their mental health worsened. Family life changed in unimaginable ways.

Tips to manage parental guilt and let go of shame

TIP 1: Accept that you made the best choices available based on the individual circumstances of your own family.

Pediatrician and child health advocate [Dr. Jackie Douge](#) advises parents to recognize that they had to make tough choices to balance the needs of the entire family during a difficult time. Every family faced their own hardships and had to adjust based on those realities.

TIP 2: Acknowledge that some rules were suspended during a hard year.

[Vicki Harrison](#), MSW and Program Director at the Center for Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing at Stanford University School of Medicine, recommends parents recognize that the last year was difficult and some unintended habits that got us through won't continue as we recalibrate to a new and shifting reality.

TIP 3: Consider the ways in which you and your family have grown.

The experiences of the past year have changed everyone. Mindfully take the positive developments forward. Kids are resilient and we have all developed a set of skills that will serve us better for the next challenge we face.

TIP 4: Practice self-care that is meaningful to you.

Self-care can be as simple as a special, daily cup of coffee or an extra ten minutes you set aside to connect with a friend. Find specific, tangible ways to support yourself and alleviate burnout.

[Child Mind Institute](#)