

An exhausting job, being a Christian is. I sound like Yoda, I know. But seriously, believe me when I tell you I couldn't mean it more. I love being Christian, feeling Christian, and I wear my faith on my sleeve, but I confess to you that sometimes I can't seem to catch my breath being one. Phew!

Let's face it, typically when you say Christian, people's expectations of you immediately go up a notch or two to that level where acts such as humility, sincerity, integrity, compassion, forgiveness, and above all love are practiced, or should be practiced. Mind you, I'm not talking about perfection, just mere Christianity. And I gotta say that walking *that* talk is not an easy undertaking by any measure. Living according to biblical standards can be quite a task. One that requires our minds and our hearts to be fully in it in order to stay true to the religion. Nothing worse than going through life in fake Christian mode. But our minds and our hearts are not always in sync. Their contradiction causes something in us to get all rattled up and go pointing to our errors — That's right, Conscience. It can be such a pest! A pest I happen to be addicted to however. Tell me, is there a patch out there I can stick on my arm for this? Is there a Conscienceholics Anonymous group I can attend? They say conscience is God's presence in man. I personally agree with that. And I have learned to appreciate it, as it keeps me honest, really. But sometimes I swear I wish I could – – no offense Lord – – tell it to Shut Up!
The very day I became aware of Conscience, I was introduced to Guilt — the culprit of our self ass-kickings — and that's when the inner battle began. Don't get me wrong, I think guilt serves its purpose in redemption. But I'm not even talking about guilting over any 7 deadly sins here; I'm talking about guilting practically over everything under the sun. Whoever defined the term "Jewish guilt" didn't know I'd be around. Yes, I am a guiltaholic as well. Is there a patch I can wear for this one, is there a Guiltaholics Anonymous group I can attend? Something to ease the struggle inside?Admittedly, most of the time this inner conflict stems from my assumption that God is like a person I have to constantly impress in order to be accepted. And for all I know, He's up there laughing, shaking His head, and saying, "Oish! This woman really needs to chillax." In the role of Christian, ironically, I am seldom quick to forgive myself. I think maybe, for me, that is what brings the "exhausting" into the "Christian" the most. This is especially true for stage-four people pleasers like myself, who rush to scream "*mea culpa*" at the first thought of possible disappointment to others.

Occasionally though I have one of my "*epishowers*" (you know an epiphany while in the shower), as was the case recently, and my light bulb goes on. I realize there is a fine line between justified and unjustified guilt and that this line can be blurred by our thinking that in certain circumstances God wants us to do *only* what is good for others, instead of *also* what is good for us; and blurred as well by our failure to realize

when it’s time to take names and kick butt, and recognize that it is God Himself who’s facilitating the list.

So therein lies the trick I gather, in being able to distinguish and put into focus this fine line. Once I do, I suppose Conscience will shut up. At least for a while. And Guilt will take a back seat. So is the hope of this addict.

“Conscience is the voice of the soul, as the passions are the voice
of the body. No wonder they often contradict each other.”
– *Rousseau*

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