

GILT-EDGED OR GUILTY?

Finding love at work

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It's time for a new look at where we're going. For most of us, finding and living our soulful vocation is a constant quest. For many of my coaching clients the journey can be anxiety-provoking and even depressing. Yet this yearning to fulfil our soul's longing through work never relents and is often what drives women to seek further help.

We women know our work is important, even essential, to our overall well-being and sense of who we are as individuals. Work is more than a daily routine of service that brings in an income. It is an integral part of our wholeness.

So any wonder we expect so much from our occupation and juggle other aspects of our responsibilities and pleasures to give it its rightful place and attention.

While we are shaping that place I have found the desire to make work the guilt-edge on our lives actually elicits a deep sense of guilt. I meet women - whether they have children or not - who struggle with this guilt as if they are asking for something to which they should not be entitled. I've mostly seen this as a result of deep sexism in our society where men can't yet allow women their full expression, or women who can't embrace it for themselves. But I have a new view to add.

Over the summer break I came across a quote from Thomas Moore's quintessential book, 'Care of the Soul'. Moore talks about work as the 'opus' of our lives, where we get to work out the stuff of our souls in the material world. We inherently know our trade or profession is our artistry and our gift of beauty to humanity. It teaches us to individuate into our personal greatness.

Moore says about work, 'Work is a vocation; we are called to it. But we are also loved by our work. It can excite us, comfort us, and make us feel fulfilled, just as a lover can. Soul and the erotic are always together. If work doesn't have an erotic tone to it, then it probably lacks soul as well.'

Wow! Eros in the workplace. It's a fabulous notion. And is it perhaps why we do engender guilt around the desire to be at work, to be occupied and employed by work as a place where we discover the attractive power of who we are as women - to feel loved and in love?

Can we allow ourselves the deep and long-lasting pleasure that goes beyond the occasional failure or flash of success? I would like to think we can allow Eros as the god of love to impassion us to the point where we can complete our masterpiece with at least the same devotion and commitment we offer our partners, family, friends and community. In doing so we offer ourselves the love we truly need in return, one that brings self-respect and integrity.

While work is in progress on our path to individuation, we do need to ensure our well-being. We need balance, harmony and respite. It is our responsibility to look after body, emotions, mind *and* spirit. Again, this can be a source of guilt for women. We forge on like Amazon women, blazing trails until we drop from exhaustion.

We feel guilty when we give time to work, and when we don't, especially if working would help to add the guilt-edge to our home life. Where does this guilt come from? Do we feel guilty that we're finding love elsewhere, as if betraying our loyalties?

We urgently need to sort this out. Our time to be fulfilled through work has come. So many great opportunities are presenting. We must give ourselves deep permission to shine. Free of guilt we can focus on what it takes to listen to our soul's messages, trusting we will take right action at the right time. We are entitled to our own miracles in life and to see our work create them. So this year, commit to throwing out the guilt and allow the guilt edge of your own soul to emerge.

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