

# Relationship Advice: Are Guilty Pleasures Okay?



By Dr. Jane Greer

The pursuit of happiness is an inherent right, as stated in the Declaration of Independence. And yet, everyone grapples with pleasure in one way or another, encountering stumbling blocks along the way. Gina Rodriguez, star of the popular television show *Jane The Virgin*, recently admitted in [celebrity news](#) that she used to feel extremely guilty about masturbating. While masturbating is a natural and healthy activity, many people do experience guilt, especially if their religion indicates it is something to stay away from. They might also feel guilty if they are in a relationship, and worry it might be taking away from their being intimate with

their partner.

We all want pleasure, but so often feel we “shouldn’t” have it for one reason or another. Guilt and anxiety can become barriers that make finding it elusive, and that is true whether someone is thinking of masturbating, or indulging in a good meal or a favorite dessert, or even taking time away from work and family to go to the spa. Generally, people have a hard time giving themselves permission to participate in self-gratification.

**The question is, why does feeling good make so many people feel bad? And even more important, how can you handle the negative feelings so that they don’t spoil the positive ones? Here is some [relationship advice](#):**

Of all the pleasures people feel sheepish about, certainly masturbation is one that carries perceived taboos. By the time people have reached sexual maturity, most have explored and discovered what feels good. If they aren’t in a relationship, masturbation will give them the chance to satisfy their sexual desires. If they are, masturbating does not have to take away from the bond they have with their partner but can instead heighten their shared intimacy. But even with this in mind there is often a shameful element to it, as there is with other indulgences. There is this idea of what you should and should not be doing, when in fact, as long as you aren’t hurting another person, there is no reason to deny yourself happiness. In fact, it is important to revel in it. We all deal with so many responsibilities and tasks we have to do on

a daily basis, from paying the bills to feeding the family to going to work. With that in mind, it is all the more reason to seek out pockets of pleasure that can rejuvenate you and give you the stamina to tolerate all the rest. Here are a few tips for tackling the guilt that may be thwarting your joy.

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First of all, question the source of your guilt. Are you listening to someone else's voice in your head? Whether it be a parent or a religious figure or someone else, take time to figure out who is telling you that you shouldn't do whatever it is you want to do. Stop that voice in midsentence and replace it with your own beliefs and convictions. Speak up and out for what you deserve and want, as Gina is doing in challenging the social stigma by talking about masturbation.

Next, give yourself permission to find pleasure. Again, as long as you aren't completely shirking your responsibilities or causing harm to another, you have every right to pursue whatever healthy passion calls to you.

Finally, take responsibility for your well-being with the understanding that if you want to indulge it's helpful to set parameters so that you can feel in charge. Consider what you are hoping to do, and set a middle ground that will make you feel better. Meaning, if you engage in behavior that's triggering your guilt – a delicious dessert or masturbating – know that you will do these things and plan ahead so that you have intention, though you may not know when, you know that they will happen. In this way, rather than doing something impulsively where you feel controlled by it, you are making the decisions.

It isn't easy to tackle guilt, but it is possible. In the end, it is important to remember it is okay to feel good. Just as Gina is speaking out and moving beyond the taboos, you can

too. In the end though, keep in mind that treating yourself well will have a positive effect on everything you do, and will give you the energy and grounding you need to keep your life running and give back to others.

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