

# Mommy guilt be gone!

## Woman, cut that balloon loose!

by *Becky Cox of Olympia*

One day this past month I was waiting to pick my son up at school. As I sat in my vehicle and watched the well-dressed and seemingly put together women walk by, I peered down and looked at myself. I was wearing worn sweats that double as PJ bottoms, a ragged sweatshirt and my hair up in a sloppy pony tail. I was not put together, at least

not on the outside. I began to mentally list my day's accomplishments to justify my appearance. I had completed my devotional, rotated the dishes, vacuumed, done several loads of laundry, taken my husband a lunch and played with my 4 year old son, Garrett. No, I didn't have time do my hair and makeup that day but I was pleased with what I did do. When I greeted my 7 year old

Wyatt looking all disheveled I was brought to tears as he approached me with open arms and a joy-filled smile. He didn't notice my looks at all. As I write this, I laugh and wonder if my husband had the same thoughts about my appearance when I brought him his lunch!

As is common for women, I have many roles in life. I am a wife, mother, counselor, friend, etc. I am constantly balancing my priorities while honoring my blessings. That particular day I omitted flat ironing my naturally curly hair and applying makeup. I also left out finding an outfit that looked decent as usually this takes quite some time for me. After embracing Wyatt and feeling his unconditional love I also was able to choose to not care what my appearance was compared to other women and to cut that invisible balloon loose of self-judgment. It is important to me that I weigh my priorities daily. When I awake, I evaluate what is important to me on that particular day and put those things at the top of the list.

I can assure you if it is a day that I am at my office or have a date night with my husband then my appearance is more of a priority.

I find with myself and the women I counsel, to be incredibly hard on ourselves when it comes to the things that are important to us. I want to be the "best" mom, wife, counselor, friend, etc. There was a season of my life when I would wake up in the morning and have the best intentions in all these areas but I continuously fell short of meeting the standard which I set. Throughout the day my thoughts about myself would go in the gutter and I would grow increasingly anxious and depressed because I wasn't managing all my roles perfectly.

Over time I began to realize that there is no perfect way to be, I just need to be the best person I can be. I began to look at the whole picture of who I was as a woman instead of what I did as a woman. This change occurred by balancing my thought life.

What happens between our ears is very powerful. If I think I have failed today because I did not do everything I should have been able to accomplish then that will lead to me sitting on the couch depressed because I have been defeated. I now evaluate my thoughts and decide whether or not it is fruitful or one I need to "cut loose." If it is a negative thought such as one like, "oh wow, you look awful in your sweats and messy pony tail, I bet these other women are thinking 'oh my gosh!'", then picture that thought on a balloon and take imaginary scissors and cut the string and watch it float up into space where it belongs.

When we cut the balloon loose we need to replace it with a more positive or constructive thought. Envision a split-screen before you of the negative thought on one side and the positive thought on the other. You must turn your focus to the positive or constructive thought every time the negative one resurfaces. After practicing this thinking style repeatedly your mind will become trained to think in a more positive way. For example, instead of being negative towards myself and highly critical of my appearance, I could choose to think this instead, "Becky, you have been able to spend time with your son today, take your husband lunch and complete many chores which were your priority, hair and makeup was not and that is ok, you are beautiful!".

