

The Guilt Box

***Aim :** This is an introduction to a presentation on guilt. The sketch shows the reactions to guilt that people may feel – the first person is accusative, the second apologetic, taking on the blame when it is evidently not their fault, the third person tries to lighten the mood by joking and the fourth is defensive. The sketch works best when performed without introduction and explained afterwards. The second part shows how the guilt and blame can be lifted with forgiveness and understanding.*

Characters :

4 people – any age, either gender

names should be changed for those people taking part

Props/Costumes :

A box clearly labeled with the word GUILT (if doing the second part)

***Notes :** The key to this piece is making the audience believe that it is a very serious piece that is going wrong to begin with. The tension of the first part is built up if the arguments between the actors is overlapped*

The second part of the script is optional, but does work in showing the change of atmosphere between the group members when they stop accusing each other. If performed it should be done at a later point in the presentation as it deals with a different aspect of the issue.

The Guilt Box: Part One

The actors come to the front. They stand in a line looking very serious – after all, guilt is a serious matter.

The first few speeches should be exclaimed clearly and with serious intent

- 1) Guilt.
- 2) It can take hold of you like a stronghold.
- 3) It can keep you in its grip
- 4) You can end up carrying it around.
- 1) Carrying it round like a box. A box of guilt.

Pause. They look at each other from the corner of their eyes. Person 1 clears their throat in annoyance and embarrassment. He tries again . . .

- 1) Like a box. A box of guilt.

One by one they look down the line. From persons 1 to 4

- 4) What?
- 1) *A box of guilt!*
- 4) Yeah, and?
- 1) And where is it?

Person 3 sings dramatic film music. They all look at him in annoyance.

- 1) The box?
- 4) Well, I don't know, do I? Why should I know?
- 1) Because you were at the meeting.
- 4) Well that doesn't mean I was meant to bring it, does it? I remember things like that. It's not my fault.
- 3) (*With mock drama*) Suspect one proclaims her innocence.
- 1) Will you just shut up a minute. You're not helping.
- 3) Well you've got to admit, it's quite funny.
- 1) It's not funny. It's totally embarrassing. There were three people at that meeting. You'd think one of us would have remembered the most vital prop.
- 2) Look it was probably my fault. I'm really sorry.
- 1) Sarah, you were the only one of us who *wasn't* at the meeting. How on earth can it be your fault?
- 2) Oh right. . . .Sorry.
- 4) So, you're still accusing me then?
- 1) I'm not accusing anyone.

3) Well you can't really can you? Since you were at the meeting as well.

1) I know that. I know it could be me as much as anyone

3) You say that, but you don't really think it. You think it's most likely to be me.

2) To be honest, I'm the most likely to have forgotten.

1) It could have been any one of us (*she looks pointedly at person 2*) at the meeting

2) I should have been at the meeting I feel terrible.

1) (*Looking disparagingly at person 2 and then turning back to address person 3*) It could have been you

3) I knew it, I knew you thought that . . .

1) It could have been John

4) And . . . ?

1) All right, yes, it could have been me. . . although I'm normally pretty good at remembering to bring things.

2) I'm not, I'm terrible.

4) Maybe it's your age that's making you forget things.

1) (*Seething with frustration by now*) If it was me, it was certainly not do with age. More likely to be because I've got so much on. You lot just expect me to hold it all together, you don't know what I have to do half the time, but you just think I'm going to sort it all out . .

3 starts miming and singing, playing the violin. The others pointedly ignore him

4) So now you're accusing me of not caring as well as not remembering

2) I know I should do more to help. I'm so sorry. I feel awful.

3) (*Voicing annoyance for person 2*) Can someone please wipe their feet on the doormat over there.

1) John!

4) John!

2) Sorry?

3) Joke!

1) Well this isn't a joke.

3) Yeah, but it's not the end of the world either

1) No but it's pretty much the end of the sketch

4) Oh right, so now it's my fault that the whole piece is ruined.

2) Oh I'm so sorry

1) I'm not accusing you of anything. . . .although you're very defensive for someone who claims to not be at fault.

4) I'm not defensive. I just don't like being accused of. . .

1) I am *not* accusing you. I haven't got time for arguments like these. I'm going to have to go and try and find something else to use instead. So now I've got even more to do than usual. But don't any of you worry about it, you just carry on in blissful ignorance.

4) Why do you always have to be such a martyr?

3) Right, ladies, I want a good clean fight.

1) (*To person 3*) Don't you push your luck.

2) I should have thought to bring a spare. I really should.

3) Right well if that's that. I'm off to get another drink. (*Leaving*)

4) I'm going to talk to someone who believes me when I tell them something (*Leaving*)

1) I'm off to sort this mess out. Even though it's not my fault. (*Leaving*)

All three have now walked off, leaving person 2 on the stage alone. She looks around and shrugs

2) Sorry.

She exits

The Guilt Box – Part Two

1,2&4 come back onto the stage. They address the audience apologetically.

1) Right, well, er. . this was the point where we were meant to show what it felt like to get rid of your guilt

4) Symbolized by the box of course

2) Oh, it just gets worse

1) And I still haven't managed to find it

4) I went and had a look round as well. Just to be sure.

2) I could have done more

3 enters, looking sheepish, holding the box behind his back

3) Er, guys. I. . .er. . .

3 produces the Guilt Box from behind his back

1) The box!

4) The prop!

2) Oh dear.

Silence

1) Oh well. Mystery over.

2) Sorry?

3) What? Is that it?

4) At least we know we're not losing our marbles. I knew I hadn't said I'd bring it.

1) And I was pretty sure that I wasn't meant to. But not a hundred per cent, I've got to admit.

3) I know, I know. You told me so. I should listen more carefully and so on and so on.

1) Well, yeah, maybe, for the future.

4) But we all make mistakes.

2) I know I do.

1) And me. Sometimes.

4) Still, it's a bit late to start the sketch now.

3) I've spoilt everything eh?

1) Well. . .to be honest, it wasn't that good anyway.

3) No?

4) No, pretty poor really. I'm quite glad we didn't have to do it.

2) Me too. (*Suddenly aware of person 1 glaring at her*) Oh, er, sorry.

1) No, you're right. Besides, I'm ready for another drink. Coming?

4) Great.

3) Great.

The three others go and leave 2 on stage, who looks round as before.

2) Great.

She exits