

EXPLANATIONS? . . . OR EXCUSES?

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Which of the following "explanations" have you heard (or used!) in the past few weeks?

- * I need to reward myself for being so good.
- * The boss hates me.
- * It's been too hot (too cold, too rainy) to exercise
- * Of course I have problems. I'm a middle child.
- * It was the alcohol talking.

It's pretty obvious that the above "explanations" are basically excuses for avoiding responsibility. Your "inner brat" uses such excuses to justify overeating, underachievement and saying hurtful things.

Next look at the following. They almost seem like plausible explanations:

- * Sorry I'm late again. There was a lot of traffic.
- * I haven't had a chance to call her back. It's been crazy around here.

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* I never went to college because my parents didn't encourage me.

* I didn't want to hurt your feelings.

* I can't seem to get things done because of my ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder).

But these, too, are still excuses, not explanations. If you examine the above statements more closely, you will find that they are not entirely explanatory, and are easily challenged. For example:

* Being chronically late is not caused by traffic; it's caused by not leaving enough time for travel.

* If a phone call is important enough, a person will almost always find the time.

* Lack of parental encouragement may have some influence on one's life, but eventually we all have choices to make about investing our time and energy.

* Most of the time people avoid confrontation not to protect someone else's feelings, but to protect their own.

* People with ADHD need to work harder to stay focused but this does not mean they cannot complete their tasks.

A true explanation shows a cause-and-effect relationship: Situation X caused Consequence Y. Excuses masquerade as explanations, but are really distortions of the truth. Excuses include following elements:

1. They usually blame other people or external circumstances — e.g., "I hit him because he made me mad," or "You're too sensitive," or "It was just my bad luck."

2. When they blame oneself, they usually invoke a personal trait or limitation — e.g., "I'm not good at keeping track of bills," or "You KNOW I never remember details," or "I have no self-discipline."

3. They minimize the impact of insults, breaches of trust, and harm to others — e.g., "Everybody does it." or "Why are you so upset? It's no big deal"

4. They attempt to absolve the excuse-maker of personal responsibility.

5. They seem to make more sense after the fact, than they would have beforehand — e.g., you might rationalize, "I deserved that pound of Godiva chocolates because I worked hard all day." But would it really make sense to say, "If I work hard today the best reward for my efforts is a pound of Godivas?"

It's very tempting to make excuses. In fact it is one of your inner brat's favorite strategies. Excuses serve to protect you from facing your own shortcomings. They also try to keep other people from noticing your limitations. Excuses are a way of saying, "I'm really a good person, but . . ."

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At the same time, however, excuses are only a temporary, quick fix. You may feel better for the moment, but in the long run you are dissatisfied with yourself.

No one has ever felt uplifted by making an excuse. Facing the truth is sometimes difficult, but it gives you the opportunity to take charge, to make positive decisions and to gradually eliminate the need for excuses.

Here are some tips:

1. Face the fact that you screwed up. For minor transgressions, it's not the end of the world. For major problems, your excuse isn't going to reverse the situation anyway. Things are what they are, and you can only move forward from there.
2. Apologize. Acknowledge that it was your own fault. Keep it simple; e.g., "I'm sorry I'm late. I didn't allow enough time for traffic problems." Notice how this example starts with the word "I" in the explanation.
3. Offer to make amends; e.g., "I won't let it happen again," or "Is there some way I can make this up to you?"
4. Learn from the experience. Make a decision about how you will handle this or similar situations in the future.
5. Write down your decision and treat it as a promise to yourself. This is especially useful for excuses you make to yourself, such as when you rationalize procrastination or abandoning your exercise program.

Pauline Wallin, Ph.D. is a psychologist and life coach in Camp Hill, PA, and author of "Taming Your Inner Brat: A Guide for Transforming Self-defeating Behavior" (Wildcat Canyon Press, 2004) Visit <http://www.innerbrat.com> for more information, and subscribe to her free, monthly Inner Brat Newsletter.

Make Up Excuses Why You Can

By Rachelle Disbennett-Lee

We all have excuses as to why we can't do something. Ask anyone and they can give you a million excuses why it can't be done, why they haven't moved forward on their goals, and on and on. Making up excuses takes a lot of energy and time. So since, as humans, we seem to enjoy making up excuses, I have a great idea. Lets make up excuses why we can.

Since we all are experts in making up excuses, we won't need much training in this area, just a shift of focus. Instead of focusing on what we can't do, lets focus on what we can do. Instead of coming up with all kinds of excuses why it won't work, lets focus on why it can work. Get the idea?

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Instead of focusing energy on excuses that don't serve you in moving forward, make up excuses that inspire and enthruse you to do what you want to do. Excuses like "there is no time like the present, I am old enough, I am just the person to do the job, I know all the ways it can work." Actually, there are an unlimited number of excuses as to why you can. Be creative and think of as many as you like.

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Making Excuses

So What's Your Excuse?

Online Business And The Solution Driven Mindset

Face To Face With God

How To FINALLY Stop Smoking...Once and For All!

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