

Excuse and Responsibility Psychology

What excuses do

- Shift causal attribution away from self (it is not my fault)
- Protect self-image (I am not the kind of person who would . . .)

Excuses that don't work (they make others feel angry and less respecting)

- Internal (I could not find it)
- Controllable (I ran out of time)
- Intentional (I did not feel like going)

Excuses that work (they make people feel like they want to give you a break)

- External (My mother wouldn't let me leave the house).
- Uncontrollable (an earthquake knocked out the power).
- Unintentional (I got on the wrong bus by mistake).

Why people are motivated to make excuses

- **Impression management**
 - Want to impress someone significant
 - Gap between real and ideal or imagined self
- **The situation calls for it**
 - The teacher/parent acts as the judge of good and bad excuses
 - An excuse could improve the outcome.
 - Self-image is put in jeopardy by threat

Fostering Responsibility to decrease excuse making

- Teach cause and effect - help students learn that actions have consequences and we can grow from our both successes and failures.
- Be consistent with your management and how you deliver consequences.
- Build-up self-esteem (competence, belonging, and especially internal LOC).
- Eliminate the need for students to make excuses - don't ask for them.
- Eliminate the use of all blame. Blame is external and past oriented. Responsibility is based on an internal LOC and future oriented.
- Do not accept any "victim language." Eliminate all learned helplessness.
- Do not be the judge of good or bad excuses.