

Goodbye, Excuses

When things don't go our way, our subconscious minds offer up excuses. We try to pin our failures and bad habits on factors outside our control -- our genes... our upbringing... our busy schedules... our bad luck. We're never really to blame.

Escaping blame might make us feel better for a moment, but soon we start to accept our excuses as truths about who we are, what we are capable of and how the world works. Once this happens, excuses become mental viruses, limiting what we can accomplish.

Seven ways to eliminate excuses...

1. Remove all labels. When we define ourselves with a word or two, we place limits on what we can achieve. Labeling ourselves "fat" gives us an excuse for not losing weight... labeling ourselves "big spenders" gives us an excuse for not saving.

Stop accepting labels that you place on yourself and that are placed on you by others -- even if you have lived with these labels your whole life.

Strategy: When a label is placed on you -- by yourself or someone else -- repeat the affirmation "I am capable of accomplishing anything I place my attention upon."

Example: My daughter labeled herself "unathletic" when she was a child and used this as an excuse to avoid physical activities. Years later, she made a conscious decision to remove this label and now enjoys exercise.

2. Converse with your subconscious mind. Excuses such as "That's just the way I am" or "That's how I was raised" are rooted in the assumption that we cannot alter subconscious behaviors. But we *can* change subconscious behaviors -- if we become more conscious of them.

Strategy: Treat the part of you that encourages the behavior that you would like to change as if it were a separate entity. Imagine that it has a physical form. Have conversations with it. Explain to it that you know it's accustomed to being in control, but now you have taken charge.

Example: When the little creature inside me that loves sugar encourages me to drink soda or eat dessert, I tell it that I'm now in charge and that I've decided to reduce my sugar intake.

3. Practice mindfulness. I used to think I had a poor memory. I would forget everything from my appointments to where I left my car keys. Forgetfulness really was just an excuse I used to justify my not keeping track of my schedule and my possessions.

Strategy: Keep your conscious mind focused on where you are and what you're doing at this moment, and your forgetfulness will disappear.

Example: When I enter my house, I remind myself to notice my car keys in my hand. I feel the keys' shape in my palm and listen to the jingling sound they make. I pay attention as I place the keys in the spot that I have selected for them.

4. Commit to overcoming inertia. Our excuses tell us that it's okay if we fail to achieve what we set out to do today. We'll do it tomorrow... *maybe*. Our excuses tell us it's okay to

stay with what's safe. Trying something different could be difficult and risky. Left unchecked, these excuses will prevent us from ever reaching our goals.

Strategy: Have conversations with yourself about the person you intend to become and what you're willing to do to bring this about. Next, write out a contract with yourself summarizing what you've agreed to do and the schedule on which you've agreed to do it. Review this contract every day.

Example: Before I start writing a book, I write a contract with myself detailing how much work I'm going to do each day and when I'm going to do it. The written agreement helps me recollect that I am in the process of redefining myself.

5. Harness the power of affirmations. What we think helps shape what we become. When we think in excuses, we believe our excuses and stop believing that we can succeed. Use your thoughts to shape your life in more useful ways instead.

Strategy: When you catch yourself making an excuse, replace it with an affirmation -- a positive statement about what you are... what is available to you... or what you will become.

Affirmations include *Whatever I need is already here, and it is all for my highest good and I deserve health, happiness and success.*

Example: If you want more love in your life, cut yourself off when you start to think of excuses such as *I'm not attractive enough to find a partner* and replace them with affirmations such as *I deserve to find love.*

6. Live in a supportive universe. If you see the world as an unfriendly place, you will have a handy excuse for any failure -- something always will seem to stand in your way. Instead, view the universe as helpful.

Strategy: Remind yourself frequently that the universe is trying to help you achieve your goals. Soon people and events will stop conspiring against you and start conspiring to assist you.

Example: In an unfriendly universe, if your car breaks down, the 100 drivers who don't stop to help are proof that the world is out to get you. If your car breaks down in a supportive universe, the 101st driver who does stop is evidence that the universe is on your side. This attitude will keep you in a state of contentment and peace instead of anxiety. It also enables you to attract the right people into your life.

7. Don't complain, and don't explain. Complaints and explanations are key allies of excuse makers. When we complain, we place blame on someone or something else for our problems. When we explain ourselves, we often get drawn into arguments about our actions and beliefs, then use excuses to defend our positions.

Strategy: Explain your decisions only when they directly affect other people. Decisions about your own life are not anyone else's business. They need to be explained only to yourself.

Example: Some of my goals sound strange to others. In the past, I often found myself making excuses when I tried to explain them -- and those excuses affected how I viewed the goals. Now I share my goals with only a few people whom I trust deeply.

Bottom Line/Personal interviewed Wayne Dyer, PhD, an internationally renowned author and speaker in the field of self-development. Despite his childhood spent in orphanages and foster homes, Dyer has overcome many obstacles in pursuit of his goals. He is author of more than 30 books, including his most recent, *Excuses Begone! How to Change Lifelong, Self-Defeating Thinking Habits*. His first full-length film, *The Shift*, explores the spiritual journey from ambition to meaning (both from Hay House). He lives in Maui.

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