



# The Blame Game: How to Stop It

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled "All Psyched Up" for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of "Life is An Adventure...every step of the way" and "Open for Business Success" is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email [office@drlindahancock.com](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

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When things don't go the way that you expected or hoped for, one of the first things that you might want to do is find someone to blame. Is it your employer's fault that you got a poor performance review? Are your children driving you crazy? Do you think that what your parents said and did years ago is the reason that you don't reach your potential?

Today I was in the elevator with a young man who told me that he was moving a new resident into our condo building. He followed up by saying "I am actually a steam-fitter but there isn't any work because of the new government". We both burst out laughing! You see, our provincial and federal elections are barely over. During our brief encounter we recognized a shared understanding that people have a tendency to blame the government for their problems. The laugh came from the ridiculousness of assessing blame to innocent parties.

Before you start blaming others there are a few things to consider;

1. You choose your emotions - Other people cannot make you feel sad, guilty, upset or any other emotion. They can't even bring you happiness (sorry, Hallmark!). You are the one who gets to decide how to emotionally react to other people's behaviours.
2. You choose your behaviours - At any point, you can escalate or de-escalate a situation. A person, for example, who replies to an insult with another insult, is just asking for trouble! The "he made me do it" from our days of youthful naivety just shows up as immaturity when we are adults. It isn't anyone else's fault that you choose to act a certain way. No credit. No blame.
3. You don't have to be trapped - Many people tell me that they don't do things because they are afraid of what other people will think of them. Well, the truth is that most people don't really think about you all that much. We live in a very self-centered world where people are usually so busy thinking about themselves that they give you very little thought. Even when they offer advice, it isn't always wise or helpful. Consider it but make your own decisions.
4. You are responsible - If you think that others are going to come along and make your life wonderful, you are going to be disappointed a great deal of the time. People don't change because you love them. They only change if life isn't working for them - no matter how dysfunctional their life may appear to be from the outside. If you want things to change for you, first you have to change!
5. You are an example to others - If you are always looking for someone to blame, then the people around you will likely do the same or start avoiding you because you are a "downer"! Do you really want your children, partner, neighbours or co-workers to say that you are their role-model and then see them blame others for the things that they were responsible to do?

Oh, and when others start blaming you for things, make sure that you carefully examine the situation. Maybe it wasn't your fault and you are just being a scapegoat. Blaming yourself isn't usually very constructive either. Perhaps you have been beating yourself up so much for things that are long gone that you don't have the energy or the focus to make positive changes.

Sad part is that in the blame game you never win!