

The Magical Connection Between Responsibility, Happiness, and Success

by John Konstanturos

In our business culture and personal lives, the clever and devious actions we take to get off the hook—to avoid responsibility—are known by the initials CYA (a variant of “cover your posterior”). CYA has a perfectly rational purpose: to avoid being blamed, or losing respect. However, as a life strategy, it is disabling. It weakens our ability to achieve results that we want. And it causes others to lose respect for us ... **just the opposite of what we really wanted.**

There is a way of thinking which avoids the self-imposed penalty of making excuses. It's a method that empowers you, that makes you stronger and more effective. The approach is so novel that there is some danger that you will discount it or become otherwise defensive. But if you embrace it - - it will give you new strength and leverage. So stay with me for a moment. Your open-mindedness will be rewarded. The ego has a plan which is self-destructive. The ego's plan is to have us see error and separation from others. We do that by blaming. Blaming and excuses are bad habits. They tend to leave desired results abandoned. Like bad habits, they self-perpetuate until overcome. And like bad habits, they do damage in leaving problems unresolved. People intent on resolving differences by being right lose a lot more than respect.

Blaming is simply a way of placing responsibility somewhere else. It helps us “save face.” When you blame someone or something for causing a problem, you're making them or it responsible. If it's someone else's responsibility, then they are the ones who are at fault. If it's something else, then, hey, “It was out of my control.” Our perfection remains intact. Our ego stays whole. Its plan has worked . . . denying and avoiding responsibility places distance in our relationships with others involved.

Understanding why we blame is one step toward resolution. It also opens us for change—which is always difficult, because it is so much easier to put the onus on someone else. They are the ones who must change if anything is to be different.

Blaming is not only negative cop-out behavior, it is also counterproductive. It keeps us from resolving issues which damage our relationships. It keeps us from learning. It keeps us from solving problems. It keeps us from achieving. To make excuses, blame, rationalize, and justify is to put us dangerously close to the stall speed of indifference. When we blame others, we call forth our own weakness.

At heart is a practical, not a moral issue. For your own self-enlightened interest, it is unwise to give away your power and influence by blaming and justifying.

Personal ownership and responsibility are a strong alternatives to CYA,- and it will make a positive difference in your life. People who authentically take responsibility for their part and for their own reactions to a problem earn immediate respect AND, facilitate mutual resolution.

Try it – you will be amazed at the improvements in your relationships.

It is a concept elegant in its simplicity. Here it is: **Take 100 percent responsibility for your part in the problem and for how you reacted to the problem. The tough part is to leave the other person zero percent responsibility for your part and for your own negative reaction.** That gives them permission to do the same. Not 50% — 50%. Not even 100% — 100%. It is 100% — 0%, period.

If we could do a biopsy on problems in human relationships we would find there is always a precipitating event and the perpetuating behavior. **The worst part is always the way we react and continue to react to the original event.** That's why we usually look back on an argument and realize we over-reacted.

Our ego-mind will always avoid taking responsibility. Like it or not, we have some personal responsibility for most of the major events in our lives, and for ALL of our reactions to those events.

I must admit, at first I had a lot of resistance to the 100% — 0% concept. After all, you cannot control other people's behavior or unforeseen events or even acts of God. There are times when other people or events such as a recession contributed to or perhaps "caused" the problem. Accept that. But also accept that you have significant influence on the outcome. You create the results and solutions. By taking responsibility for your part, and for your reaction to the problem, your reward is the gift of power toward resolution. That may seem exaggerated and out of proportion. To the question, "Do I actually believe that I am 100% responsible and everyone else only 0% for all my results?" My most truthful answer is: not really. My ego will not allow that. However, I don't always like what is the best solution. It just happens to work.

When you focus on blaming, the stream of thought, talk, and energy is focused on perpetuating the problem. When you think the problem is out there with someone or something else . . . that very thought IS the problem.

When you focus on taking full responsibility or ownership for your part, you direct the energy and power of yourself and others toward resolution.

Being 100% responsible means that you act as if you alone are in control. You do not wait for your boss, your colleagues, subordinates, your spouse, or anyone else to assume responsibility for creating a result you want. You are accountable. If the desired results get created, you did it. If they do not, then you failed. In acting as if you are 100% responsible, there is no room for blaming or justifying. None whatsoever. There are no excuses, only results. You are the bottom line. The buck stops with your posterior. Ultimately you will learn that this works so well, that you will experience taking responsibility as empowering; and you will choose it naturally.

The payoff for taking this kind of risk is that you create what you want in your life. You become a more effective human being. When this occurs, the people around you will notice two benefits: One, they will like you and the results you create even more; and two, they will appreciate not being blamed for any shortfall.

“Now, wait a minute,” you might say. “I like the basic idea, but in order to get full benefit, do the percentages really have to be 100% or 0%? Why not 80% — 20%, or even 90% — 10%?” The answer is that anything other than genuine ownership leaves the door open for blaming, justifying, and perpetuating the problem.

Consider the personal relationship. If you ask most people, they will say that marriage is a 50% — 50% proposition. Each person pulls equal duty. On the surface, that sounds very reasonable. However, when something goes awry, the 50% — 50% view goes out the window. Our mind says it was mostly his (her) fault. While the 50 — 50 responsibility split sounds fair and logical - it doesn't work. It will result in our holding on to our resentment and blame. Perpetuating the problem.

Not convinced? OK, take the same crisis and assume a more liberal view that of each party being 100% responsible, so that the split is 100% — 100%. Then a problem arises. With the 100% — 100% view, the most likely response is that, I am responsible for what happened, but you are, too! Where is your ownership? Do you see the trap? The result is still blaming or justifying. Only now, it is shared or enlightened blaming.

Is it possible to take more than 100% responsibility? Absolutely! When that happens, you are taking responsibility for part or all of someone else's inappropriate behavior. If you take 150% responsibility as a rough example, then you are helping the other person avoid responsibility and accountability for their part and for their reaction. You are making yourself a victim or rescuer. That will also perpetuate the problem.

Taking 100 percent responsibility opens a broader range of options and opportunities. That's why it works. **The greatest value of the 100% — 0% concept is that it focuses people's energy on solutions rather than on problems and excuses.** The 100% — 0% concept turns things around. It actually frees us from carrying around a lot of excess baggage. If the other person does not do the same, it still works to your advantage to take ownership. That usually gives you the leverage in negotiating mutual resolution.

Ownership means holding yourself accountable for resolution of the problem!

On the other hand, blaming and excuses are guaranteed to perpetuate the problem. **When you blame others, you make yourself a prisoner. When you forgive them and take responsibility, you are free.** Forgiveness is not possible without first taking responsibility for your part of the problem, and for your reaction to the original problem or event. Forgiving others and ourselves while taking full responsibility for our feelings and our behavior in reacting to the problem frees the negative charge on the situation. And, it opens the door to mutual resolution.

It's an innovative approach that turns disabling behavior into enabling behavior. If you do that, watch what happens . . . the others involved usually do the same. It works like magic. **Successful people form the habit of doing things failures don't like to do . . . and they are much happier for it.** Try it. You'll like it!

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