

## Decide to Accept Responsibility, *not* Blame Yourself

When I counsel parents whose children have disappointed them, they often blame themselves. They say, “If only I had paid more attention, or not allowed them to watch those movies, or not to hang out with their friends, or sent them to a better school, or....” On and on the laundry list goes of things that these parents believe they should or shouldn’t have done to avoid the current crisis.

My response to these parents is, “So then you were the *only* voice your child heard? You had total control over this person who is your child --over their environment, what they watched on TV, their peers, their involvement with movies and music and community? DNA plays no part? No one other than you left a mark on their minds and emotions? You and you alone have influenced them to be all they are? Wow!”

I ask them these rhetorical questions to move them away from being a God-player. They are not the substratum of every issue and action that occurs in their child’s world. Rather, I want to lead them to a healthier understanding, which is that they are a participatory part of the process but not the only contributing factor in the current dilemma.

It’s tempting to think that these self-blaming people are better parents than the ones who are negligent, absent, and unwilling to take any responsibility for their children. I have counseled with many of the latter as well. But both extremes—those parents who self-blame as well as those who take no responsibility—are focusing only on themselves, not the children. Good relationship decisions can come from neither end of the spectrum.

And it’s not only parents who respond in these extremes. Most people gravitate toward one polarity or the other when faced with the hard decisions of life. On one hand, we have the person who assumes responsibility for world peace, global warming, and the extinction of the blue-bellied whale. The other extreme are those who assume no responsibility for anything, perpetually victimized Pollyannas, always pointing their finger at someone else. Their usual sayings are, “It’s my parents’ fault.” “The devil made me do it.” “It’s the whites’ fault.” “It’s because of the blacks.” These people shovel off responsibility rather than raking in the tough reality that we *do* play some part in the state that we now find ourselves in.

### *Blaming Others*

*Blaming others for what’s not going right in our lives is often than looking in the mirror and taking responsibility for what we have done to contribute or not contribute to our circumstances. If you ever watch the Dr. Phil show on TV you know that he is always telling his guests that “you create your own experience.” If things are not going right for you, and you find yourself pointing the finger at others, turn that finger back at yourself, because that’s where you need to begin to make changes in your life. You and only you have the power to take charge of your circumstances and create the life you want. It may be true, your boss may be racists or sexist, your husband or wife might be liar and a cheater, your mother may have been a drug addict or an alcoholic, but, in light of those circumstances, you have to decide to assume your right to live the life that God intended for you.*

It's true that no one got here by themselves. It's also true that without you, you can do nothing. You can decide to blame others, outside factors, unfair conditions, circumstances, any number of valid reasons for your relationship issues. You can even blame yourself. But the truth is you can decide to do something. And before you do, you must let go all the blame.