

Part of Your

PE

Plan and
Performance
System

Personal Excellence

September 2009

The Magazine of Life Leadership

Failure Begets Blame

Remove blame from the game.

by Michael O'Brien

LET'S FACE IT, FAILURE IS PART OF life—life at work and life at home. There is so much to do, so many problems to solve and broken things to fix that you and I will certainly make a mistake or two today. So will your colleagues. And those mistakes will likely cost you something—money, credibility, efficiency, effectiveness, trust, or satisfaction.

But often we inadvertently compound our mistakes by falling into the automatic, reactionary habit of blaming. Designed by the mind of a child and perfected by you, the adult, it now awaits only the stimulus of a threat to your self-image.

Blaming is an easy habit to acquire and maintain because it is addictive. It gives you cheap thrills. Every time you make another wrong, you get to be right, and with your *rightness* comes the release of serotonin—the hormone associated with pleasure. The more you blame and get the quick hits of pleasure, the more you train yourself to do it again.

Stop the Train, I Want to Get Off

You can alter the *blame habit* in three ways:

1. Notice. Who do you frequently blame? Are there certain situations that trigger you to blame others? Notice that others do what they do and you automatically have a story in which they

are wrong. You. Your story. This is not to say the other is not accountable in some way for the outcomes that now displease you. It's just that in blaming them, you are likely to push them away, making it unlikely that you can have any positive effect upon them and the outcomes you desire.

2. Create a new story. After you've noticed your blaming story,



ask yourself any one of the following reframing questions: What must he be thinking and feeling such that that behavior made sense to him? What is life calling for here? What am I afraid of here? What do I want to have happen? These questions will generate new assess-

ments and potential pathways of action. They'll move you away from the cheap thrill of blame toward more satisfying leadership actions.

3. Take action. Try one or two pathways. Offer some leadership. Make some request of the other that if fulfilled could move performance to where you'd like it to be.

When you remove *blame* from the game, you can turn your mistakes and the mistakes of others into opportunities for leadership.**PE**



Dr. Michael O'Brien is Founder and President of the O'Brien Group. Email michael@obriengroup.us or call 513-821-9580.

ACTION: Remove blame from your life game.