Stop Playing the Blame Game

What to Know

The blame game is a situation where different people or groups try to blame each other for a problem, failure, or something they've done wrong. There are no winners in the blame game.

Pointing fingers and blaming another person is easy. Taking responsibility can sometimes be really hard. Maybe you have found yourself stuck in the middle of a blame game, where neither you nor a friend or sibling wants to take responsibility. Maybe you're angry because you feel someone in your life never takes responsibility for the things they do wrong. But as soon as you start pointing fingers, everyone loses.

When you admit when you do something wrong (and take responsibility and apologize, if needed!), it shows the other person how they should behave, too. Sometimes, you just need to go first. It might not be much fun. So, what can you do?

1. Try to understand why you're blaming another person. You might blame someone else when you want to protect yourself or avoid getting into trouble. It's painful to realize something is your fault – especially if the outcome is bad. Instead of blaming someone else, ask yourself:

- Why am I so quick to blame someone else?
- What is stopping me from taking responsibility for what I did?
- What can I do to make this better and get out of the blame game?

2. Practice empathy. Everyone has a side, perspective, and feelings. Trying to understand someone else's point of view is one of the best things you can do.

3. Take responsibility. Before pointing fingers, ask yourself what you could have done differently. Where can you improve? What could you have done better? Usually, there's something! Because no one is perfect.

4. Problem-solve. Drop the "you-against-me" attitude and try to problem-solve together.

5. Take a break. It's okay to get upset. But it's how you manage your feelings that matters. If you find you're too upset to take responsibility and you start to point fingers, take a break to calm down. Get help from a trusted grownup if you need to talk about it.

6. Communicate your feelings instead of blaming. For example, you might say, "I feel _____ when _____." Try to avoid saying "you" because the other person might get defensive.

This worksheet will help you take responsibility for something you've done wrong and stop playing the blame game.

What to Do

Describe a time you played the blame game with another person. Who was involved? What happened?

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What could you have done differently? The other person? Be specific.

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Next, change the following statements from "blaming" statements to "taking responsibility" statements.

It's not my fault the lamp broke.
My brother was chasing me!

It hit her because she was teasing me.
It's her fault – she made me angry!

I didn't do my homework because my brother wanted me to play a game with him.

The next time you find yourself playing the blame game, go through the following steps.

1. Try to understand why you're blaming another person. Write down some ideas.

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Why are you so quick to blame someone else?

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What is stopping you from taking responsibility?

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What can you do to make this better and get out of the blame game?

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2. Practice Empathy. Everyone has a side, perspective, and feelings. Try to understand the other person's point of view. Write down your thoughts.

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3. Take responsibility. Before pointing fingers, ask yourself what you could have done differently. Where can you improve? What can you do better?

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4. Problem-solve. Drop the "you-against-me" attitude and try to problem-solve together. Brainstorm some ways you can solve this problem.

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5. Take a break. If you find you're too upset to take responsibility and you start to point fingers, take a break to calm down. Get help from a trusted grownup if you need to talk about it. Who can you talk to?

_____

6. Communicate your feelings instead of blaming. For example, you might say, "I feel _____ when _____." Write down what you might say.

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Did this activity help you help you take responsibility for something you've done wrong and stop playing the blame game? Why or why not?

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