



MASTERMIND

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Blame

“In any human endeavor, when something goes wrong, it is only natural to think immediately of who made it go wrong. *Who is to blame?* Most often this makes the problem worse. The person blamed, in order to exonerate himself or herself, promptly finds someone else to lay the blame on or with whom to share the responsibility for failure.” – Bryan Bell

Our first response, when things go wrong is to blame it on some outside circumstance beyond our control. In fact, if you listen to a majority of conversations that occur between people, in the media, on the talk shows and in our own heads, they involve *blame*. For example, when we don't accomplish something, it is blamed on a *“lack of time”*. This author tends to blame others when things don't go his way. Swearing at some “they” or some “thing” for circumstances when he feels pushed into a corner and “there is no way out.” In my anger, I denounce the government, the big businesses, the monopolies that have “caused” my plight. When all else fails, we blame our parents for putting us here in the first place. *Our task as leaders is to get away as much as we can from the habit of blaming first and finding the real cause later.*

A huge part of humanity's psychic energy and time is spent on placing and expressing blame. We are a society obsessed with trying to find the causes of everything, looking at things in terms of good and evil. The media, in particular, is hyperactive to find out “why?” To blame is to get away from the fact that things sometimes just happen and it is no one's or no circumstance's fault. It is very hard for us to accept that some things just happen – some things just are. Our challenge is to release ourselves from our natural tendency to blame others for our problems. This is coming down to earth. Becoming an adult. Becoming united with the common grief of the earth. Becoming grounded.

To blame is to be an eternal adolescent. Some people seem to be in a constant state of blaming others and circumstances. We have tremendous energy for blame. *It is much easier to do so than to look at our own faults.* Choices exist, yet blame seems to be a more seductive target to place our energy on. Billions of our tax dollars are spent yearly attempting to correct things we feel are to blame. Social Work, psychology and liberal or conservative parties tends to blame what is happening on some cause or evil person or group. Blame becomes a self-fulfilling policy. For example, I found in retrospect, that I became an activist when I lived in Ann Arbor as a teenager because it was a good excuse to blame “the system” for my unhappiness. It makes us feel better to point the mirror away from ourselves. To blame is to not go down.

Are there times when blame is appropriate? Yes. The incompetent surgery unit at a hospital that takes out your kidney instead of giving you a hernia operation. A drunk driver receiving 3 years probation for his drinking “accident” that caused the death of your daughter. Are lawsuits which place the blame on this or that person, company or organization correct and right? Sometimes, yes.

Yet is **everything** unhealthy or bad the responsibility of the person or company offering it? Will we soon sue our mothers for what happened to us in the 9 months before we were born? You get the feeling that we wish to be protected from the womb to the tomb from all possible dangers before and after our death (*then our loved ones can sue for pain and suffering*). *This ignores a reality that we are in a dangerous world in which we, by choice, jump into a vast majority of the dangers.* We tend to blame our addictions on what we are addicted to. Yes, driving in a car is dangerous – but we choose to get in that car, to light up that cigarette, to use electricity created by a Nuclear Power Plant. *No one is innocent though we all wish to be babes in the woods.*

The blame game keeps us from the fact that, no matter how hard we try, we cannot protect ourselves from our own darkness: Like attracts to like. Whatever we call for tends to happen. As the great Jungian Philosopher *Marian Woodman* says, we must “Learn to love or own crooked neighbor with our own crooked heart.” The more we stop blaming outside circumstances or people for our problems, the more we take charge of our own destiny. This eliminates a large part of the blame game and frees us to live our own lives.

As leaders, our challenge is to understand this tendency to blame.

What situations trigger your tendency to blame others or circumstances?

What do you tend to blame these things that happened on?

The next challenge is to utilize this process in working with your team, group, or department. For example, as we get into group problem solving, you will witness most problems that are identified tend to be blamed on circumstances beyond the groups control:

What are examples of areas that team members in our department will tend to blame that are outside our control?

- 1.
- 2.
3. Other departments or shifts?

How can we help team members to focus on areas that are more in their control?

- 1.
- 2.
3. “There are things that are *in our control* and *outside our control*. What would you say are solutions that are inside our control?”