

English Class Topic
Online and in-person

American Values: #15
Taking (or passing)
the BLAME



Warm up: In your culture, what does it mean when someone points a finger at you? Is that gesture considered rude, offensive, etc.? Ask 2-3 students to answer. (Keep answers short)

Proverbs to avoid responsibility for bad behavior:

1. The devil made me do it. It's not my fault that I did it. I couldn't help it. Something caused me to act that way.
2. There are two sides to every story. Every situation includes both good things and bad things. What might seem to be the wrong thing to do could also be the right thing to do, when you consider it from a different perspective.

Proverbs to accept responsibility for bad behavior:

1. If the shoe fits, wear it. If you did something wrong, admit it. Don't deny it or try to blame somebody else.
2. You made your bed, now lie in it. You created a certain situation, so you are responsible to accept the consequences.

Vocabulary, phrases and idioms in the paragraph: [sth = something; sb = somebody]

take credit for sth/doing sth = accept praise for something good that happened

give sb credit for sth/doing sth = praise sb for something good that happened because of that person
to blame = to say or think that sb or sth is responsible for sth bad **"It's not my fault; blame Bill for this mess!"**

consequences = bad results; negative results

pass the blame (n) for sth = blame (v) somebody else for what you did wrong; pass the buck

opposite meaning: take or accept the blame (n) for sth = admit/agree that you did something wrong
face the music; answer for sth wrong; answer for doing sth wrong

pay for your crimes = be punished for something bad or illegal that you did

pay for your mistake; pay for your bad decision = be punished for your mistake or bad decision; pay for your mistake

forgive = to make the choice to stop blaming (& being angry with) sb, although they have done sth wrong

make him pay = force sb to be punished for the bad thing he did

to sue = file a legal claim against someone who harmed you; e.g., *to sue for divorce; to sue for damages*

If Americans succeed at something, they want to take credit for it. If they fail, sometimes they want to blame somebody else. Or they may jokingly say, "The devil made me do it." This is an excuse used by people who know they have done something wrong but want to avoid the consequences. It doesn't mean they

really believe a devil exists or that the devil has any influence on their choices. Americans might try to pass the blame or give an excuse in order to protect their self-esteem. However, many proverbs show that Americans believe they are responsible for their own actions. For example, “You made your bed, now lie in it.” Justice means that a person must pay for his crimes. Nobody can escape this responsibility before the law, regardless of personal status, wealth, or power. If somebody’s action hurts people in any way, Christians believe they should forgive the offense, but most people want to make him pay. Some Americans even sue over issues that might be considered ridiculous in other countries.

Questions: *(Try to use a term from this lesson in your answers)*

1. Name one thing that you are normally willing to “take the blame” for, or one situation in which you normally “pass the blame.” (Explain if you wish.)
2. Share and explain one proverb in your own country that is about avoiding responsibility or taking responsibility for bad behavior.
3. Besides protecting their self-esteem, what are 1-2 other reasons people might want to pass the blame or make excuses for their own mistake? Explain.
4. When somebody deeply hurts his/her spouse, what are 1-2 ways that the hurt spouse can make the other spouse pay? Give an example. Also, share a possible positive result and negative result of making that spouse pay.
5. In 1992, Stella Liebeck ordered a cup of coffee at the drive-through window of a McDonald’s. In her car, she put the coffee cup between her knees and pulled the lid off. In the process, she spilled the cup of coffee on her lap and got third-degree burns. She spent 8 days in a hospital getting skin grafts, so she wanted McDonald’s to give her \$20,000 to cover her medical expenses. But McDonald’s refused, so Stella sued McDonald’s. The jury decided McDonald’s was 80% responsible and Stella was 20% responsible. The jury thought the warning on the coffee cup was not large enough. The jury awarded Stella US\$160,000 in compensatory damages (her medical expenses, lost salary, etc.) and \$480,000 in punitive damages (punishment to McDonald’s), for a total of \$640,000.
 - a. Do you think McDonald’s was responsible for Stella’s burns? Why or why not?
 - b. Do you think the jury was right to make McDonald’s pay Stella \$640,000? Why or why not?
 - c. What do you think would have been the best result for Stella’s lawsuit against McDonald’s? Explain.

Exercise: *Each student should pick one expression or vocabulary term from today’s lesson, and create a sentence with it.*

If you have more time, read and discuss this warning from the Bible: ~ “Keep awake! Watch! Your enemy the devil is walking around like a growling lion. He is looking for someone to catch.” (1 Peter 5:8 WE) Do you think unseen evil forces exist (e.g., a devil)? Why or why not? If you don’t think humans have an unseen enemy, where do you think “evil” comes from? (Similarly, where does “good/generosity” come from? We don’t see this in nature.)

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These lessons were created or adapted by the staff of International Friendship Ministries, P.O. Box 12504, Columbia SC 29211; ifmusa.org; info@ifmusa.org. IFM is grateful to Kathy Williams for most of the original work. Some lessons were adapted from EFLsuccess.com (with permission). IFM makes these lessons available to our participants, but this does not imply our consent for others to publish these lessons online or in print without permission.

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Sep 9, 2022 ~ American Values #15: Taking (or passing) the Blame

(Lesson c53ez)

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consequences = bad results; negative results

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opposite meaning: take or accept the blame (n) for sth = admit/agree that you did something wrong

You made your bed, now lie in it. You created a certain situation, so you are responsible to accept the consequences.

pay for your crimes = be punished for something bad or illegal that you did; do something generous to balance your mistake

forgive = to make the choice to stop blaming (& being angry with) sb, although they have done sth wrong

make him pay = force sb to be punished for the bad thing he did

to sue = file a legal claim against someone who harmed you; e.g., *to sue for divorce; to sue for damages*

If Americans succeed at something, they want to take credit for it. If they fail, sometimes they want to blame somebody else. They may jokingly say, “The devil made me do it” (even if they don’t believe ‘devils’ really affect their choices). They know they did something wrong but they want to avoid the consequences. Americans might try to pass the blame or give an excuse in order to protect their self-esteem. However, many proverbs show that Americans believe they are responsible for their own actions. For example, “You made your bed, now lie in it.” Justice means that a person must pay for his crimes, regardless of personal status, wealth, or power. If somebody’s action hurts people, Christians believe they should forgive the offense, but most people want to make him pay. Some Americans even sue over issues that might be considered ridiculous in other countries.

Questions: (Try to use a term from this lesson in your answers)

1. **Content questions:** (find the answer in the paragraph)
 - a. According to the paragraph, what do Americans like to take credit for?
 - b. After people know they did something wrong, they make excuses to avoid what?
 - c. One proverb says, “You made your bed, now _____.”
 - d. If someone hurts you, Christians believe they should _____ (do what?).
2. Name one thing that you are normally willing to “take the blame” for, or one situation in which you normally “pass the blame.” (Explain if you wish.)
3. Share and explain one proverb in your own country that is about avoiding responsibility or taking responsibility for bad behavior.
4. Besides protecting their self-esteem, what are 1-2 other reasons people might want to pass the blame or make excuses for their own mistake? Explain.
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