You are totally responsible for your life. This is the foundation principle you must embrace if you plan for happiness and success in life and work. I coach a young woman currently, a manager in a small company. I am struck, every time we meet, by her failure to take responsibility for what is happening in her work and life. Everything is someone else’s fault. Every problem is explained away with reasons about why she can’t affect the situation or the outcome.

**Blame and Excuses Are the Hallmarks of an Unsuccessful Life**

On television, I briefly watched three jailed individuals who are seeking parole from the Parole Board, talk about themselves. I noticed the same pattern in their reasoning and approach to life. Nothing was their fault including the incidents that landed each of them in jail. I suspect that if I interviewed more incarcerated individuals, I would find a pattern of “not my fault.” That is why taking responsibility for choices, actions, and direction is so powerfully important. Without taking responsibility, you’ll likely look at your life as a failure because you allowed yourself to be blown hither and yon, by any passing wind. And, you blamed the wind for how things turned out.

People who take complete responsibility for their lives experience joy and control of circumstances. They are able to make choices because they understand that they are responsible for their choices. Indeed, even when events that are not under your control, go awry, you can, at least, determine how you will react to the event. You can make an event a disaster or you can use it as an opportunity to learn, to grow, to cherish your faith, to hold loved ones close.

**How to Take Responsibility for Your Life**

The most important aspect of taking responsibility for your life is to acknowledge that your life is your responsibility. No one can live your life for you. You are in charge. No matter how hard you try to blame others for the events of your life, each event is the result of choices you made and are making. Listen to the little voice in your head. And, observe yourself talking with coworkers, family members, and friends. Do you hear yourself taking responsibility or placing blame?

* Listen to the voice in your head. Eliminate blame; eliminate excuses. If the blame track or the excuse track plays repeatedly in your mind, you are shifting responsibility for your decisions and life to others.
* Second, listen to yourself when you speak. In your conversation, do you hear yourself blame others for things that don’t go exactly as you want? Do you find yourself pointing fingers at your coworkers or your upbringing, your parent’s influence, the amount of money that you make, or your spouse? Are you making excuses for goals unmet or tasks that missed their deadlines? If you can hear your blaming patterns, you can stop them.
* Third, if an individual you respect supplies feedback that you make excuses and blame others for your woes, take the feedback seriously. Control your defensive reaction and explore examples and deepen your understanding with the coworker or friend. People who responsibly consider feedback attract much more feedback.