

One Tactic of Successful Liars

Several excuses are always less convincing than one.

- Aldous Huxley, novelist (1894-1963)
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It's an odd characteristic of human nature that we tend to accept one excuse that someone gives for not doing something or for doing something incorrectly or late, but the more excuses that person offers the less likely we are to believe him.
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Mostly likely that tendency is based on our own experience. We have, in most cases, one reason for doing something. At any given moment, we may be able to think of one good reason why we didn't do what we promised to do or did incorrectly or late what we were supposed to do.
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Our experience tells us that some people have the ability to think up a steady stream of excuses just as a lawyer in court can think quickly on his feet. However, we may feel that a person with a string of excuses is simply fishing for one that will work, whereas a simple excuse, though lame, might be passable. We accept from others what we might give ourselves in similar circumstances.
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When someone offers us one excuse for doing something or for not doing something he should have done or for doing it incorrectly or late, we are quite capable of finding justification that will fit around that one excuse to make it plausible. At that point, though reluctant, we may be prepared to move on and forget or ignore the offence.
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The most effective excuse that someone convicted of murder has ever given to elicit sympathy and assistance from others on the "outside" to free him is "No matter what the evidence given in court says, I didn't do it." That one simple yet inadequate (for legal purposes) explanation tends to gather support from others who believe the legal system may have failed an innocent man.
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Give one excuse, stick with it and don't embellish.
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Turning It Around: Causes and Cures for Today's Epidemic Social Problems, striving to give a break to those who don't know how the system of human nature works.

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