



NOT MY FAULT

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The assignment is missing because the printer was out of ink.

This is confusing for me. Why not put in a new ink cartridge or print the assignment in the computer lab or at the Library? Are those options old-fashioned? Too simple? Too easy or logical?

The answer is none of the above or perhaps all of the above. The rationale for not having the assignment is that replacing the ink wasn't on his job list. Not his responsibility. Absolutely not his fault.

The student was always late for class. When midterms came along and the lates added up to a problem, he was indignant. It wasn't, he explained, his fault. His mother kept forgetting to wake him or worse yet, she left for work without making sure that he was not only awake, but also up. Again, this causes some confusion for me. Who's responsible for waking an adult? Or why not buy an alarm clock? Is this also too simple or logical? This option of finding another system for getting up was not considered because the problem belonged to someone else: his mother. This was not a part of the student's responsibilities. Definitely not his fault.

The assignment wasn't completed. The reason was because a needed book couldn't be found. There were perhaps other books, but why look when the obvious solution is that the assignment can't be done plus there isn't any fault—at least on the student's part. The book is missing. Some one lost it. Some-

one else lost it. And that someone else needs to find it. Certainly not the student, because it is not his responsibility. Not his fault.

She was very late for class because the car ran out of gas. She did not run the car out of gas; the car ran out of gas. You don't expect her to put gas into the car hopefully. It isn't her job. Not her responsibility. Absolutely, not her fault.

Another missing assignment. This time the roommate was responsible. The roommate was using the computer. As usual, I have questions. I wonder if the roommate was asked to pause so that the assignment could be finished and printed. Or why the student didn't go to the computer lab in the dorm or even to the Library. But by now, I have learned that it isn't the student's job or responsibility to find solutions. The students have an assignment but if the parts needed to complete that assignment are not readily available, then they are off the hook. There is no need to do more. Anything else is not a part of the student's list of responsibility. It is never their job and therefore, not their fault. Not their responsibility. Certainly not their fault. Ever.

Students today! What a bunch!

On my way home, I stopped at the cleaners to pick up a sweater. The stain was still there. The cleaner explained that he was not responsible. He did not remove the stain because I did not tell him what it was. I remembered pointing out some stains and telling him what they might have been but it seems that it is my job to identify each and every mark if I want them to be removed. Cleaning isn't what it used to be. Now, it seems, customers have more responsibility. The lines of responsibility may be illusive to some but are crystal clear to others—it depends on fault.

That night, we went out for dinner. The hostess seated us and promised that the waitress would be along soon. Eventually, she appeared. The waitress explained the delay by noting that she had no idea we were there because the hostess didn't tell her. We didn't mention that she had walked by the table several times as we waited. The obvious chain of command or

responsibility seems to require the notification by the hostess of customers. It must be on her responsibility list. When the drinks arrived, the limes were missing. The waitress snorted her derision and announced that the bartender was totally useless. The question of whether she told the bartender was skipped over entirely—not her responsibility. The bartender should know what to put into drinks—it’s his responsibility. The bus boy came by with napkins and silverware moaning about the hostess and the waitress’s lack of consideration—they had just told him we were there. It seemed to me that he might have noticed us as he wandered about the tables but when it comes to job responsibilities, there are definite lines. You only do, when told to do it. There is a great advantage to this—you are never at fault as a result. Some one else is always responsible. Not you. It is never your fault.

After dinner, I stopped at a local hardware store for some paint. Several clerks nearby were chatting. After waiting a bit, I finally inquired if someone could help mix some paint. Not my job was the unanimous response. “I’m on my break.” “I’m new.” Not my responsibility. They wandered off and eventually, the skilled, non-break time, old employee whose job was to mix the paint arrived. Finally, someone with responsibility. As the paint shook, another customer arrived with a loud complaint. She had purchased some paint, brushes and assorted supplies but not a paint tray. She had had to make a special, second trip to the store for the tray. How could the store manage to sell supplies and not include the tray? How irresponsible. The clerk was non-plussed. He hadn’t been working that day and it wasn’t his job. Not his fault.

This time the “not my fault” line seemed reasonable. Why should the store be responsible for knowing the customer’s needs? Shouldn’t we all be responsible for ourselves? Things are changing.

I was at my mother’s retirement home, picking her up for the weekend. Knowing the rules, I had called 24 hours ahead so that her medications would be ready for me. However, the meds were not there nor could I find any of the nursing staff.

The manager explained that it was not her fault; one of the nursing staff had called in sick. When another nurse was finally found, she complained bitterly about my not notifying her 24 hours in advance. I mentioned that I had but the management explained that someone was sick, and the new nurse then began to moan about the management. There was no mention that maybe she could have checked the list of what needed to be done that morning. Someone should have told her. It was not her responsibility. Certainly not her fault. Just as the restaurant and the cleaners claimed, someone else should have done something. It was not their responsibility. It is never their fault.

We, as a society, seem to have changed our attitudes. We have limited or eliminated our responsibility everywhere. This is a new trend. Perhaps it is time that we embrace this and get organized. We already have a slogan: Not My Fault. We only need buttons in bright colors and bold print that read, NMF. Certainly, absolutely, Not My Fault.

This could be a wonderful way to live.

I went to my bridge club. Jane was late and rushed in saying how sorry she was for holding up the game. I explained that it wasn't her fault. Blame the lateness on traffic. Traffic is terrible. Or on construction which is everywhere or even the weather which only makes traffic and construction worse. Maybe all three are to blame. Why should the onus be on Jane? Can it be her responsibility to leave extra early? No. It is definitely not her fault. Remember Not My Fault—NMF.

We started to play and Sue, after bidding four spades, put her hand down with an apology. Oops. She had mixed a club with the spades. She started with a sorry but again I explained that it wasn't her fault. Absolutely not her fault. Those card manufacturers need to put bigger symbols on the cards. And why only red and black? Four colors would make much more sense and would be much more user friendly. Shame on those manufacturers! No shame on Sue. Not her responsibility. It is definitely not her fault.

We continued to play and at the end of a hand, Joan started to explain that she probably should have led a heart.

We all said: Stop. Not your fault. Not your responsibility. Not your job. Your partner gave you the wrong signal or failed to signal. What in the world was wrong with her? Not with you. Never forget, it's not your fault. Positively, never your fault. NMF.

As the afternoon went on, everyone really got into NMF. How liberating! How comforting! We never have to take any responsibility. No wonder the students have rallied so quickly around this new cry. Not My Fault is a new lifestyle for school, for work, for everything. There is no culpability, no liability. It is freeing! What a terrific way to live. I can go along doing whatever without any responsibility. If, surprisingly, my acts impact you negatively, then shame on you. You should have been looking up or out. You needed to be more aware or alert. Someone should have told you. You needed to do something. You. Not me. Whatever should have been done or needed to be done, at least I know that it didn't involve me. I was not responsible. It is definitely, positively, never my fault. Not My Fault. NMF.