

A CULTURE VOID OF SELF-RESPONSIBILITY

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There is a hush among crowds when the word is mentioned. Sheepish grins spring up on the faces of onlookers. Blank stares appear when one tries to describe it. Most choose to run from it like it was the next case of *flesh eating virus*.

We are not talking about some dreaded bacteria or plague. We are not mentioning something that is the next medical pandemic to sweep the country, like *Mad-Cow Disease* or a mosquito born illness like *West Nile Virus*. This manifestation is more taboo than mentioning the “N” word or the “F” word. No, what is so dreaded in our culture is the lack of “**Self-Responsibility**”.

It would seem that beating your child was more popular in our culture than actually taking self-responsibility for your life. It is more common to get the measles than to accept responsibility. Self-responsibility is often as rare as a solar eclipse.

Everywhere you look we are being driven away from responsibility. If you burn yourself with hot coffee while visiting a fast food restaurant you are not at fault. There is often an ambitious lawyer waiting at a moments notice to cash in on your blunder. If you become obese from eating at these same fast food restaurants there is good news for you. Recent law suits filed by these same lawyers against the fast food industry claim that it is not your fault that you got fat. The fast food industry is to blame.

When you walk down the street you are no longer responsible for where you put your feet. If you slip on a banana peel or trip over a sprinkler head, or even a crack in the sidewalk, you are not responsible. It is the property owner's responsibility to make sure that you do not trip and fall. This is the reason you pay so dearly for insurance, because it is not your fault. Once again, those ambitious lawyers will be there to look after you.

Guard rails and hand rails are placed in key locations in public places because you are not responsible for looking out for yourself. Many other cultures who are not burdened by the "sue happy mentality" do not place so high a value on these incessant safety features. They allow their citizens to take responsibility for their lives.

Our government teaches us to throw away any sense of responsibility when they spend our hard earned money and go into debt that we cannot afford. They pass this debt on to future generations and politicians to deal with later. Members of the federal government would rather watch the decline of the social security system than have to actually face the reality of its demise and perhaps lose votes for dealing with real issues. Politicians hate raising taxes because it would mean that they would have to take responsibility for their out-of-control spending.

This very same government teaches us that we are the victims of "terrorists" and are not responsible for anything that we have done that might have in sighted them. We are taught that we are not responsible for our expansionistic foreign policy and our own acts of terrorism throughout the world. It is never our fault when it comes to worldly issues.

We have created a war machine that is void of personal responsibility. We can kill our potential enemies from a distance and once the bombs are dropped we do not take

responsibility for where they land. Collateral damage often kills innocent civilians, including women and children. We are not responsible; it must be the bombs fault.

We invest our money in the stock market and only care about the profits. We are not responsible once we hand this money over to our money managers. High profits reign out over what that money is actually doing. You may be investing in a pharmaceutical corporation that manipulates people's lives with one pill after another. You may be creating a world of greed and neglect because once that money leaves your hands you are no longer responsible for where it goes.

Our culture is void of self-responsibility. Everywhere you turn you are reminded of this ever-growing trend. It is common for people to walk around with their cell phones all day long and carry on conversations in the most bizarre locations. You are not responsible for how you might be disturbing others in line at the bank or waiting to make a purchase. You are not responsible for anything that ever happens to you.

You will never have to fix your own flat tire because the auto club is only minutes away with your cell phone. Any emergency or potentially harmful situation is not your fault. A doctor, ambulance, police officer, or Superman might be a beckon call away because you are not responsible for anything that happens to you any more. A whole fleet of providers are just waiting for you to make that call.

Religions often teach us that we are not responsible in any manner. The Hindu belief in Reincarnation stresses that your life is already pretermind and will take its own course. Reincarnation is a belief created by the higher caste to prevent the lower castes from rising up. Under this system everyone knows his place and does not have to take any self-responsibility for changing it.

Many Muslims carry this same belief about predetermination. Whatever happens to you is the result of Allah's will and you are not responsible. It is often believed that no matter how horrible a deed you might commit it is not your fault; Allah has commanded it. Many Catholics carry the belief that they are stained with original sin and there is nothing that they can do to change this. Self-responsibility is taken away from them at birth and replaced with shame and guilt.

We live in a culture where failing eyesight is normal and taking responsibility to heal the problem is out of the norm. It is much easier to adhere to the cultural belief that everyone's eyesight will fail and we are the victims of age. It is far more common to affix spectacles to your face for the rest of your life than to take responsibility for your own vision.

We are taught that we are the victims of age and that we should slow down and wither away. A hypothetical wheel chair or rocker is waiting for each and every person once we retire because we are taught that age will get us in the long run. A culture lacking in self-responsibility encourages us to fill our medicine cabinets with expensive pills because we are now the victims of the number of days that we have been alive.

Handicapped parking placards are handed out like candy because some people believe that they are not responsible for their pain and society owes them. The Western medical world helps to teach this belief that one is not responsible.

Western medicine instills in people the notion that we are the victims of our own body. Our body is being besieged by disease. It is not our fault. We are commonly told that our genes or our family history is at fault. "It is in your family and there is nothing

that you can do about it” is the common claim. We are taught how to “catch a cold” or to be “stricken with a disease” under this belief system.

We live in a culture where we are not taught to take absolute responsibility for our body and our health. We are led to believe that a doctor or a pill is responsible for making us healthy. When our back goes out a common belief among many is that they did nothing to help create this. It is believed to be a random act that has “afflicted them” and it is just their turn.

When our liver fails it is not our fault. Our gallbladder becomes infected but it must be somebody else’s fault because we are not responsible. We turn to our medical authorities to accept the blame. But it is not their fault either.

We are quick to prescribe to dozens of medications and pills because we errantly believe that our health is not our responsibility and a pill will be able to fix everything. Health Care that does not create a belief that the patient is responsible for the creation of most of his problems often leads one to blind faith medicine. Most medical doctors would rather cut out your infected gall bladder rather than take the time to learn how to prescribe a simple gall bladder cleanse. We often agree to this because we are not taught how to take responsibility for our health and many times agree to unnecessary procedures.

From cancer to indigestion it is seldom our fault that these incidences occur. We are reminded again how we are an unlucky statistic and it is just our time. We seldom are encouraged to take self-responsibility for anything that we might have done to help create our illnesses.

Addictions are not our fault either under this culturally defined belief in lack of self-responsibility. We are reminded by 12-Step groups like Alcoholics Anonymous and others that our disease is not our fault and it is the fault of our genes. We were born sick and we will always be sick is the credo that we are reminded of.

A recent lawsuit exemplifies this unwillingness to take self-responsibility. A woman is suing several Las Vegas casino operators claiming that they are responsible for her gambling addiction. She claims that it is the fault of these gambling institutions for allowing her into their establishments to gamble away her money. They should have known that she had no control over her gambling addiction.

We live in a culture that has mastered the art of Stress. But feeling stress is usually never our own fault. The dip in the stock market or that horrible traffic is always to blame for our stress. Rarely are we willing to accept responsibility for how we create stress in our own lives.

In fact, it is common to want to blame others for most of our feelings. Someone else made us mad or irritable. It is seldom our fault for the feelings that we have. We would much rather blame someone else for our unpleasant feelings than to actually take responsibility for them.

We build homes in flood planes and on slippery slopes. It is never our fault that these homes are destroyed by naturally occurring events. Mud slides and floods quickly destroy many homes that have come in the path of nature's fury. We seldom take the responsibility to look at where we choose to build our homes. God or Mother Nature must be to blame. If that excuse does not work then you can blame it on your insurance company.

Ecological disasters occur far too frequently but how many of us are willing to stand up and take responsibility for our actions. We help to deposit more and more greenhouse gases into the air to manifest global warming but it is not our fault. We have government officials who refuse to recognize blind government policies that encourage the destruction of our environment. There is seldom any responsibility exerted in the government. That is not their job. Their job is to keep winning re-election.

Children often grow up in homes where the parents are held hostage by their own off-spring. In these cases the child is not responsible for his actions and behavior. He is free to roam around with few rules and boundaries. A child who is not taught how to be responsible for his actions will carry this blaming behavior into adulthood.

From holes in the ozone to the melting of polar icecaps we are taught to believe that we are not responsible. In fact, the real disease of our time is not necessary cancer or AIDS, but lack of self-responsibility.

Without responsibility we cannot create dynamic change and action. A culture lacking in responsibility only breeds citizens who are led to believe that they are the victims of circumstance. With accepting responsibility for our actions we will always be pointing the finger at someone else.

Healing ourselves and our planet begins when we start accepting responsibility for the world that we have created. Accepting responsibility means that everyone must take an honest inventory about what he or she has created. This in turn is passed on to future generations.

While acceptance of self-responsibility is uncommon in our culture it does not take much to change this epidemic. What is required is that we all do our share and have

the courage to be honest with ourselves. When this happens the world will truly be a better place.

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