



INSTRUCTIONS: Are you getting in your own way? Are you making excuses for not taking action? It takes courage and honesty to admit you make excuses. While making excuses can be a good thing, it also undermines your confidence in yourself - and life itself. Remember awareness is power. Simply use the worksheet to identify excuses, understand the underlying fear/consequences, and commit to do things differently.

The purpose of this exercise is to raise your awareness around the excuses you commonly make, so that you can be more kind to yourself and make more conscious choices.

- **Start by writing out the goal or outcome you are looking for** in the space below, then complete the table for each excuse.
- **Next pick 3-5 excuses you make on a regular basis.** Put pen to paper and write - and **DO NOT JUDGE YOURSELF!** Whatever pops up, write it down.
*Eg. I'm too busy, It is too cold, I do not have *whatever*, I was too tired, etc.*

For each excuse, answer the following questions:

1. **What is the underlying thought or fear?** Take a deep breath, pause, and notice what thought or feeling pops up. Then write it in the space.
2. **What is the impact of this excuse?** How are your excuses affecting you? Your life? Your relationship with yourself and/or others? What opportunities have you missed?
3. **What could I say instead?** Think about the goal you want to achieve and why. One idea is to acknowledge your fears/feelings and then commit to take one step towards your goal, no matter how small.
4. **What will I do with this information?** With this knowledge, what steps will you take to address your fear(s), lack of resources, motivation, self-belief, etc.?

The goal/outcome I want is (list at least one goal/outcome-be specific):

I want this because (list at least 3 reasons and justify them):



List your excuses. What excuses are you making? Look for words like <i>cannot, do not have, did not, Sorry, but or because.</i>	What is the underlying thought or fear? What is really going on in your mind? Write the thought/feeling comes to mind.	What is the cost/impact of this excuse? How does this excuse affect you, your life, relationships, etc.? Be specific.	What could you say instead? What would you like to hear yourself say instead? How could you be kind to yourself and still move towards your goal?	What will I do with this information? What will you do to address your excuse making? Write at least one action.



Helpful Information About Excuse Making

Why We Make Excuses

- We make excuses when we are not motivated enough to get up and do something. We tend to be more motivated to avoid or move away from pain and discomfort than towards goals and pleasure.
- Making excuses is a self-protection mechanism - by making an excuse we protect ourselves from feelings of shame, guilt, anxiety, embarrassment, fear, and discomfort.
- Excuses help us shift the focus from something deeply personal, to something more general eg. It is easier to say, "I was too tired" or "I changed my mind" than acknowledge our deep fear of failure.

Some Common Reasons We Make Excuses

- **Fear** - of failure, success, embarrassment, ridicule, uncertainty, change, making a mistake, responsibility, upsetting others, disappointing others, or fear of the feelings evoked when we think about our goal!
- **Limiting beliefs** - a lack of belief in your ability to follow through or complete, that things will not or may not work out. Cognitive Distortions kick in and our mind starts telling us that we cannot change or do something.
- **Uncertainty** - a lack of clarity about the outcomes or what might be involved in making the change.
- **Lack of readiness** - we may lack information, time, energy, or some other resource to make the change.
- **It is not really our goal** - the goal may be a *should* or we are doing it to please someone else.
- **Avoiding discomfort** – our minds automatically try to avoid discomfort so we do not make change because it may be difficult or take our mind out of the comfort zone. We fear how others will react to what we want to do.
- **Complications** - we start the process and find it is harder or more involved than we first thought, and are now uncertain if we want to proceed.
- **Inertia** - It is much easier to stay where we are and not do something than take a risk and make the effort to change.

When Making Excuses is Helpful

- Excuses can be helpful when they
 - Preserve the original goal
 - Are made with compassion and understanding
- This kind of excuse making preserves self-esteem and helps us feel good about giving it another go.

The Impact of Excuse-Making

- When we regularly make excuses rather than take action towards our goals it damages our self-esteem.
 - We reinforce unchallenged fears and limiting beliefs, block our creativity and disappoint others - and ourselves.
- When we make excuses to others, we can damage how they perceive us.
- Ultimately, making habitual excuses can lead to a more negative view of life, carrying around regrets and generally leading a less satisfying life.

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The Answer to Excuse Making

- The answer is not to stop making excuses but to raise our awareness and be honest with ourselves.
 - It is essential to be kind to ourselves and to others.
 - If we are harsh with ourselves, it is not going to inspire us to make change and step outside our comfort zones.
- Instead we need to change what we say to ourselves/others and our actions/words when we feel the excuse coming on.

Making Change

- Research shows that while it can become a habit to make excuses
 - A short pause can be enough to catch ourselves, focus on the outcomes we want instead of avoiding our fears and discomfort.
- Changing our excuses can be challenging, as it involves facing our deepest selves.
 - Often when we look at the underlying reasons for our excuses, we judge ourselves. We know we could do something, we are *afraid* or *lazy* and do not want to face the discomfort.
 - Remember, our mind is pre-programmed to keep us away from harm so, discomfort goes against what our mind is trying to tell us.
- No-one performs well when the feeling judged and under scrutiny - this is why kindness is necessary.

It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare, it is because we do not dare that they are difficult. ~ Seneca