

# **It Wasn't My Fault**

## **New Study Looks At Why People Hate Admitting Mistakes**

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The dozen or so publishing companies who turned down J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series have probably kicked themselves quite a few times by now for not jumping on the opportunity. Same goes for NASA after taping over the original recording of the moon landing, as well as any former would-be conquerors who thought invading Russia during winter was a smart war tactic. Would anyone willingly take responsibility for these catastrophic boo-boos? Probably not. According to research from PsychTests, admitting mistakes isn't easy for a lot of people, and not just because they're afraid of the potential consequences.

Analyzing data from 4,727 people who took the [Self-Esteem Test](#), PsychTests' researchers compared two groups: Those who will acknowledge when they've messed up and those who will not. Here's how they compared:

### **People who are uncomfortable admitting mistakes hate to feel and look weak**

- 66% believe that talking about their faults will make them vulnerable to rejection or mockery from others (vs. 19% of people who admit their mistakes).
- 64% said that they feel "degraded" when someone points out their errors (vs. 33%).
- 65% said that criticism from others absolutely devastates them (vs. 16%).
- 58% feel insulted when their ideas are rejected (vs. 18%).
- 67% hate admitting when they're wrong (vs. 11%).

### **People who are uncomfortable admitting mistakes tend to have deep-seated insecurities**

- 55% believe they will lose other people's respect if they admit they've made a mistake (vs. 15%).
- 49% believe that they will never amount to anything (vs. 13%).
- 51% consider themselves a failure (vs. 13%).
- 50% do not reveal their true selves for fear that others will dislike them (vs. 12%).
- 49% admit that they dislike themselves (vs. 9%).

### **People who are uncomfortable admitting mistakes tend to have an extreme need for approval from others**

- 42% constantly need to be told that they are loved (vs. 18%), yet more than one third also believe that they don't deserve to be loved and respected.
- 65% indicated that their dream is to be successful and admired (vs. 23%).
- 53% seek approval from others before making decisions (vs. 38%).
- 68% have a deep fear of rejection (vs. 23%).

- 58% avoid arguments out of fear of being disliked (vs. 28%).
- 44% said that other people's opinion of them carries more weight than their own view of themselves (vs. 12%).
- 61% are not confident that they have done well on something unless they are praised for it (vs. 23%).
- 52% consider it very important to be liked by everyone they meet (vs. 26%), with another 54% of the group admitting that they would change their personality, opinions, or appearance in order to endear themselves to others.

#### **People who are uncomfortable admitting mistakes tend to be perfectionists**

- 61% admitted that they constantly fall short of their own expectations (vs. 23%).
- 62% believe that they will only be respected if they become successful (vs. 23%).
- 54% believe that if they don't perform a task as well as other people, it means that they are inferior (vs. 16%).
- 49% said that if they can't do a task perfectly, they would rather not do it at all (vs. 15%).
- 42% think that failing at anything makes them a failure as a person (vs. 12%).

#### **People who are uncomfortable admitting mistakes will go on the offensive if someone points out their errors**

- 33% will point out other people's mistakes in retaliation (vs. 16%).
- 30% will completely dismiss feedback or comments that they don't agree with (vs. 16%).
- Paradoxically, 33% assume that people who criticize them do so out of jealousy (vs. 17%).

"When a person makes a mistake, they may try to cover it up or place blame elsewhere - and while that seems quite underhanded and unfair, it is often motivated by fear and insecurity," explains Dr. Jerabek, president of PsychTests. "It could be a fear of the consequences, of getting into trouble, or of losing face. Mistakes are embarrassing reminders that we're not perfect, but they are also valuable learning opportunities. If you're willing to acknowledge your mistake, learn why it happened and how to fix it, you're less likely to commit the same error again. Moreover, admitting when you're wrong takes guts, and that's something to be admired. That is why people in our study who are comfortable showing this type of vulnerability also have high self-esteem. Our mistakes do not make us weak, they make us wiser and more resilient. Every mistake and every failure is a lesson to be learned. The best approach is to milk it for information, and then let it go."

How strong is your self-esteem? Check out <https://testyourself.psychtests.com/testid/3102>

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**About PsychTests AIM Inc.**

PsychTests AIM Inc. originally appeared on the internet scene in 1996. Since its inception, it has become a pre-eminent provider of psychological assessment products and services to human resource personnel, therapists, academics, researchers and a host of other professionals around the world. PsychTests AIM Inc. staff is comprised of a dedicated team of psychologists, test developers, researchers, statisticians, writers, and artificial intelligence experts (see [ARCHProfile.com](http://ARCHProfile.com)). The company's research division, Plumeus Inc., is supported in part by Research and Development Tax Credit awarded by Industry Canada.