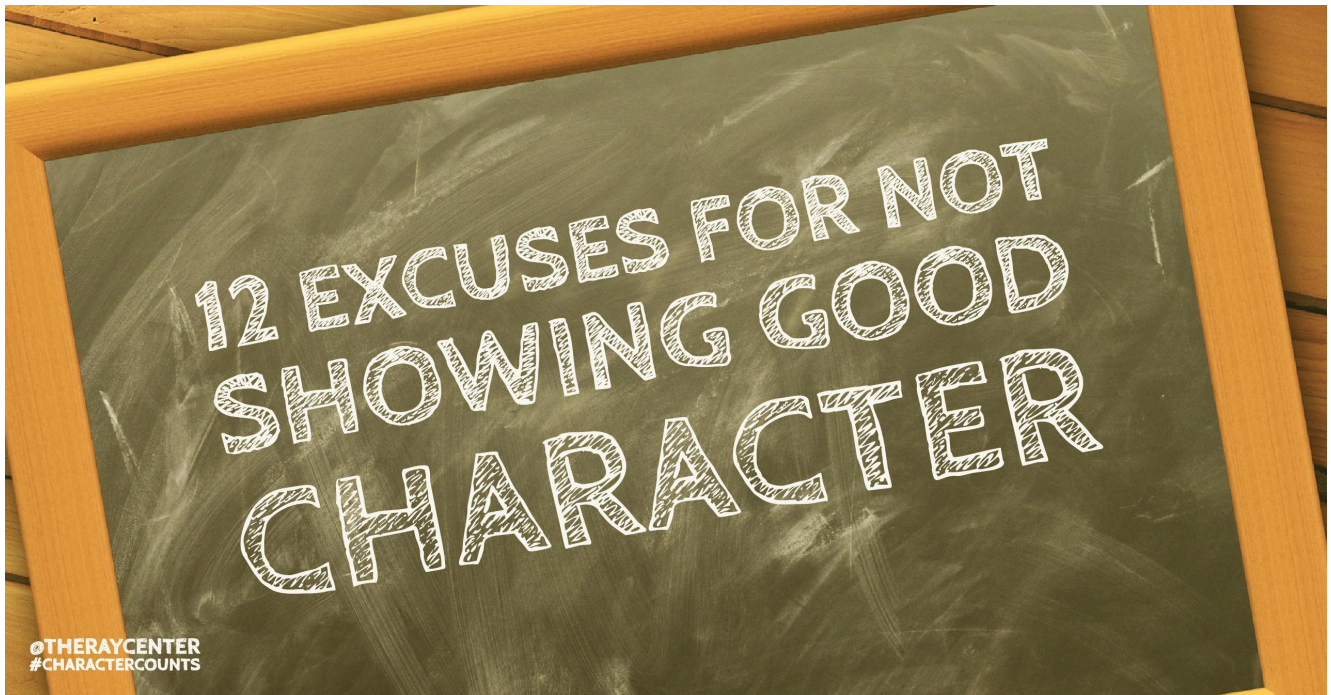


Watch out for these 12 excuses



Be careful of making excuses for not showing good character. Excuses like:

1. *It's for your own good (like "white lies").* Look at the lie from the perspective of the person lied to. Upon discovering the lie, would the person feel betrayed or thank you for caring?
2. *Everybody does it. We've always done it this way.* Ethics is about the way things ought to be not about the way things are.
3. *Who am I to judge?* If there is no moral judgment there is no moral difference between Mother Teresa and Adolph Hitler. You must judge when the conduct violates a fundamental ethical value. Make sure to judge cautiously and without self-righteousness.
4. *You're a bigger one. I'm not so bad so long as others are worse.* Simply because others may be worse does not justify

unethical behavior. If you lie to a liar, you're still a liar. Two wrongs don't make a right.

5. *It's not my job.* Yes it is. All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing. If not you, who?

6. *Nobody is hurt.* Who are you kidding? The people who play by the rules are always hurt and disadvantaged by those who don't. Besides, you are always hurt when you sacrifice your integrity and character.

7. *It's too important. It's necessary.* If the stakes are that high, then your character is truly being tested. If you can't be trusted to do the right thing when it will cost more than you want to pay, you can't really be trusted at all. Besides, it is hardly ever really necessary or a question of real survival. What "if" you couldn't do what you want to do?

8. *It's not important.* Then why in the world would you give up your claim to character and virtue? Remember kids see whatever you do. So do subordinates and colleagues. Do you want your character judged by petty acts of dishonesty, maliciousness or irresponsibility?

9. *The end justifies the means.* Maybe, but that's what they all say. Is it really best in the long run? If everyone did it would it be a good thing? Have you thought about who will be impacted?

10. *I'm only human. I'm not perfect. I'm basically honest. I hardly ever lie. Just this once.* So how many times do you get to lie before you are a liar? You are accountable for every choice you make. Remember we tend to judge ourselves by our best intentions and most virtuous acts but we will be judged by our last worst act.

11. *It's a stupid rule.* Maybe, but a lot of people think that about rules that don't let them do what they want to do or cost them time or money. Are you willing to let everyone

decide for themselves what rules to follow and what rules to break? (Your children, your employees, the police, politicians, manufacturers of food products?) Fairness and citizenship require us to follow rules or change them.

12. Ethics is a luxury I can't afford right now. It doesn't ever get any easier. The ethical problems change but they get bigger as the stakes get higher. If you don't demand the best from yourself now you never will. Being ethical is a matter of habit and conditioning, its not a light switch you can turn on and off at your convenience.

Adapted from the Josephson Institute.