

# Does This Excuse Make My *But* Look Big

By Tracey C. Jones



One day, during lunch break, a construction worker opened his lunchbox, pulled out two sandwiches, hoisted them aloft, and cried to the heavens in anguish, “Not peanut-butter sandwiches again!”

The next day, he opened his lunchbox, peered inside, and wailed in agony, “Not peanut butter sandwiches again!”

Day after day, the same scene played out: open lunch box, extract contents, “Not peanut-butter sandwiches again!”

Finally, after thirteen days of unchanging lunchtime drama, his coworker said, “Say, mister, if you don’t like peanut-butter sandwiches, why don’t you ask your wife to make you something else?”

“You leave my wife out of this,” he replied. “I MAKE MY OWN LUNCH!”

We all make our own sandwiches and too many of us make sandwiches that we don’t like to eat. Negative elements often take root in our lives because we allow ourselves to get caught up in an endless cycle of excuses instead of taking action. Here are a few ways to take control of what’s in your lunchbox.

**Prune the word *but* from your vocabulary:** It’s just as important to weed your mind as it is your physical surroundings, and the most powerful and effective way to accomplish this is to prune the word *but* from your vocabulary. Excuses are mental weeds that strangle any chance of new growth regardless of how many seeds you plant. Excuses are virulent vines that strangle everything in their vicinity. Excusatory words can be just as venomous as accusatory ones. Steer clear of both. They are two strains of the same weed.

When you expunge *but* from your vocabulary an amazing thing happens: where you used to see unfairness and lost chances you will find fortune and opportunity. What you say and what you think affects your circumstances in a very real way. Changing what comes out of your mouth—and what you say to yourself in your head—can give you a whole new outlook. You can create a life of possibility and potential by avoiding a simple three-letter word.

**Don’t be an excuse enabler:** Excuses come in two categories. The first derives from things we will not do despite the direct negative impact of inaction, such as developing a healthier lifestyle or pursuing a more fulfilling career. These *but*s are insidious and pervasive when you just don’t care enough about yourself to take action. If you want it bad enough you’ll find a way; if you don’t you’ll find an excuse. The second category derives from things we will not stop doing. It could be an addiction, or allowing negative people to stay in your life. This *but* thrives on the guilt-and-fear excuse and an enabling personality. As much as we like to blame others, the fact is that you are the master of what goes on in your own head. That’s right, YOU. It’s that simple, and it’s that difficult.

There is nothing positive or productive to be gained by making excuses or by repeating them. Repetition gives them credibility and allows them to continue to drain you and others. Let's face it; life is tough, even for the healthiest and wealthiest of us. Making excuses exiles you to a perpetual rut, while choosing to take responsibility for your happiness and your attitude frees you to move on to bigger and better things.

**Learn to recognize cognitive dissonance:** Oftentimes the only way to get off your but is when the results become so positive or so painful that you are forced to take action. Psychologists refer to this as the Cognitive Dissonance Theory: either something brings you so much joy or causes you so much pain and sorrow that you have no choice but to change your behavior. If you keep repeating the same excuses rather than taking action then you aren't at this point yet. It's that simple. Benjamin Franklin said, "He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else." And you definitely don't want Excuse Master on your headstone.

The endless cycle of repeating excuses could be described, in the words of Alan Watts, as "all retch and no vomit." How grossly appropriate! When we allow ourselves to associate with thankless, negative, or even unethical people we become poisoned by them. It's not their fault; it's ours. When we lack the discipline or self-esteem to break a negative habit, instead clinging to our big buts, we poison ourselves. Better to be silent than to regurgitate the same old thing over and over. Albert Einstein defined insanity as "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." This includes making excuses. For things to change, first you must change, so eliminate the three letter "b" word from your vocabulary because a big but doesn't look good on anybody.

About the Author:

**Tracey C. Jones** is a US Air Force veteran, entrepreneur, speaker, and publisher. She speaks to audiences across the nation on leadership, accountability, business success, and other topics. Her latest book is *"Beyond Tremendous: Raising the Bar on Life."* To learn more visit [www.TremendousTracey.com](http://www.TremendousTracey.com)