

THE LANGUAGE OF RESPONSIBILITY



**Student Focus:
ACCEPT PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR EDUCATION.
FATE AND LUCK HAVE VERY LITTLE EFFECT ON YOUR
ACADEMIC SUCCESS.**

Prepared by
Carla Rogers, Counselor for Adult Learners
Windward Community College
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The theme of students accepting personal responsibility is central to the curriculum covered in the IS103 Introduction to College course which is a component of the First Year Experience at Windward Community College.

LANGUAGE OF RESPONSIBILITY

“I accept responsibility for creating my life as I want it.”

The essence of personal responsibility is responding wisely to life’s opportunities and challenges, rather than waiting passively for luck or other people to make the choices for us.

A student might have a sincere desire to reach a goal – get in to Nursing school let’s say – but have no clue as to the steps necessary to get there. Ultimately, they might not “get in to Nursing school” without realizing that it was due to their personal decisions and choices along the way.

It would be helpful for students to learn more about being a creator of their future rather than a victim of circumstance, i.e. “teachers are preventing me from being a nurse because their classes are too hard.”

VICTIMS AND CREATORS

When people keep doing what they’ve been doing even when it doesn’t work, they are acting as **victims**. When people change their beliefs and behaviors to create the best results they can, they are acting as **creators**. Translating victim statements into the responsible language of creators moves the student from stagnant judgments to dynamic actions.

In this chart, the left-hand column presents the victim thoughts of a student who is taking a challenging college course. As she changes her inner conversation, as shown in the right-hand column; she’ll also change her behaviors. She can learn more in the course and increase her likelihood of passing. She will be counteracting thoughts of judgment and self-sabotage.

Notice these translations characterize creator language by accepting responsibility for their situation and take action to improve their situation. The key words here are to **take ownership** of the situation and to have an **action plan!**

When victims complain, blame, and make excuses, they have little energy left over to solve their problems – then they get stuck. I see this every day in the classroom. Creators use their words and thoughts to improve the situation by accepting responsibility for creating their present outcomes and experiences. They plan and take positive actions to improve their lives. This is energizing and exciting – especially when results become evident!

Victims focus on their weaknesses:

I'm terrible in this subject.

Victims make excuses: The instructor is so boring he puts me to sleep.

Victims complain: This course is a stupid requirement.

Victims compare themselves unfavorably to others: I'll never do as well as John.

Victims blame: The tests are ridiculous. The professor gave me an "F" on the first one.

Victims try: I'll try to do better.

Victims predict defeat and give up: I'll probably fail. There's nothing I can do. I can't...I have to...I should...I quit.

Creators focus on how to improve: I find this course challenging, so I'll start a study group and ask more questions in class.

Creators seek solutions: I'm having difficulty staying awake in this class, so I'll ask permission to record the lectures and listen to them later when I can take better notes.

Creators turn complaints into requests: I don't understand why this course is required, so I'll ask my instructor to help me see how it will benefit me.

Creators seek help from those more skilled: I need help in this course, so I'm going to ask John if he'll help me study for the exams.

Creators accept responsibility: I got an "F" on the first test because I didn't read the assignments thoroughly. From now on I'll take detailed notes on everything I read.

Creators do: To do better, I'll do the following: Attend class regularly, take good notes, ask questions in classes, and make an appointment to see the teacher.

Creators think positively and look for a better choice: I'll find a way. There's always something I can do. I can...I choose...I will...I'll keep going.

TAKING PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

In this activity you will practice the language of personal responsibility. By learning to translate **Victim** statements into **Creator** statements, you will master the language of successful people.

On the right side of the line, translate the victim statement into the words of a creator. The two keys to creator language are taking **ownership** of the problem and **taking positive actions** to solve it. When you respond as if you are responsible for a bad situation, then you are empowered to do something about it (unlike victims, who must wait for someone else to solve their problems).

VICTIM LANGUAGE

1. If they'd do something about the parking on campus, I wouldn't be late so often.
2. I'm failing my online class because the site is impossible to navigate.
3. I'm too shy to ask questions in class even when I'm confused.
4. I failed the first test because she's a lousy instructor.
5. I hate group projects because people are lazy and I always end up doing most of the work.
6. I wish I could write better, but I just can't.
7. My friend got me so angry that I can't even study for the exam.

CREATOR LANGUAGE

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

VICTIM LANGUAGE

8. I'll try to do my best this semester.

9. The financial aid form is too complicated to fill out.

10. I work nights so I didn't have time to do the assignment.

CREATOR LANGUAGE

- 8.

- 9.

- 10.

32 – DAY COMMITMENT

As we make and keep commitments, even small commitments, we begin to establish an inner integrity that gives us the awareness of self-control and the courage and strength to accept more of the responsibility for our own lives. By making and keeping promises to ourselves and others, little by little, our honor becomes greater than our moods. –Stephen Covey

Because I believe the following commitment will help me achieve more of my desired outcomes and experiences, I promise myself that every day for the next 32 days I will take the following action: I will be more conscious of my words and chose to take responsibility for my actions rather than blaming others and giving up.

Day 1	✓	Day 17
Day 2		Day 18
Day 3		Day 19
Day 4		Day 20
Day 5		Day 21
Day 6		Day 22
Day 17		Day 23
Day 18		Day 24
Day 19		Day 25
Day 10		Day 26
Day 11		Day 27
Day 12		Day 28
Day 13		Day 29
Day 14		Day 30
Day 15		Day 31
Day 16		Day 32

Thirty-two days is the length of time thought by some behavioral psychologists to be necessary for creating a new habit or extinguishing an old one. Therefore, if you miss a day, start your commitment again from Day 1.