

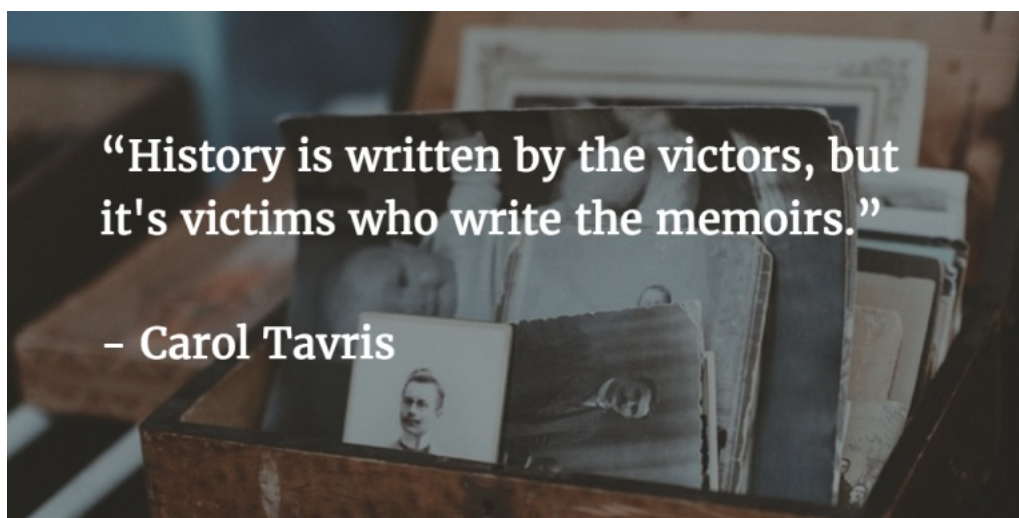
# Mistakes Were Made, But Not By Me Summary

 [fourminutebooks.com/mistakes-were-made-but-not-by-me-summary](https://fourminutebooks.com/mistakes-were-made-but-not-by-me-summary)

**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Mistakes Were Made, But Not By Me* takes you on a journey of famous examples and areas of life where mistakes are hushed up instead of admitted, showing you along the way how this hinders progress, why we do it in the first place, and what you can do to start honestly admitting your own.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



Everyone does it. You do it. I do it. Your doctor does it. Lawyers do it. Heck, even president's do it.

We keep our mistakes to ourselves. We hate to admit them. But why? And does that do us any good?

Carol Tavris, social psychologist and Elliot Aronson, one of the top 100 psychologists of the 20th century and inventor of the Jigsaw Classroom, teamed up in 2007 to give us answers to these questions in book form.

*Mistakes Were Made, But Not By Me* goes into the mechanisms in our brains, which prevent us from admitting our mistakes, shows how this causes damages in all areas of life, and provides valuable starting points to finally start manning up, and admitting them.

Here are 3 things to learn from the book:

1. You make up self-justifications to deal with the cognitive dissonance your mistakes create.
2. Confirmation bias can lead you to changing your entire morals.
3. Stop thinking you're stupid for making mistakes.

Ready to admit your mistakes? What's that? Not yet? Okay, we'll work it out!

## Lesson 1: You make up self-justifications to deal with the cognitive dissonance your mistakes create.

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Wow.

That was a mouthful. What does that even mean?

Let's break it down so it's more easy to stomach.

First of all, the **reason you hate admitting your mistakes is because they create something called cognitive dissonance**, which comes from having to deal with two conflicting ideas of who you are in your head.

For example, most smokers know that smoking is bad and often talk about the downsides, how they know they should quit and how you should "never pick up smoking" in the first place. Yet, they still smoke.

Instead of admitting that they're addicted to cigarettes though, they make up self-justifications, like "I don't smoke that much so it's probably not that bad."

These justifications sadly make us cling even more to our bad behavior, because **once we've made them up, we go looking for evidence**, even when there is none to be found.

This is called confirmation bias and it can lead you to not only believe in very shaky evidence, but even spin contradictory evidence, or the absence of evidence altogether, in your favor.

## Lesson 2: Confirmation bias can lead you to changing your entire morals.

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Confirmation bias goes in fact so far, that it can change your morals altogether, for example from someone who would never steal, to someone who thinks it's actually okay.

To illustrate this, Tavis and Aronson created a beautiful metaphor: **the pyramid of choice**.

Imagine 2 people with the same morals are given the chance to steal \$500 from the cash register at work. Before making their choice, they stand on top of a pyramid. They can see all the possible paths that lead down, all options and all consequences of their actions.

One decides to steal, the other decides not to.

Once they start descending on their different paths, they both lose their birds-eye view and can only see the narrow path they've chosen for themselves.

Because of self-justifications and the confirmation bias, each of them will become ever so surer that their path was the right one to take.

When they reach the bottom, they end up at totally different ends of the pyramid, with completely different views of morality – one thinks it's okay to steal, the other has become even more certain that stealing should never be done.

## Lesson 3: Stop thinking you're stupid, just because you make mistakes.

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So what can you do to stop this self-reinforcing cycle of not admitting mistakes, making up excuses and then confirming those excuses?

Simple: **Start admitting them.**

Yes, I know, it's hard.

But here's a good reason why you should do it anyway: Because your Asian friends, who are better at math than you, do too.

What?

In a study that compared US education to Chinese and Japanese schools, it was found that US students were embarrassed to make mistakes, so that they'd never tackle difficult math problems in front of the class.

In China and Japan, the kid who did the worst had to go up to the board and re-do the exercise until he got it right – with support from the class!

Asian cultures see mistakes for what they are: **part of life**. And instead of burying their heads in the sand, they proactively admit and deal with them.

Don't make mistakes a part of your identity, you aren't stupid, you just used the wrong approach. Focus on criticizing your and other people's behavior, not who you or they are, and you'll develop the growth mindset you need to deal with mistakes the right way.

## Mistakes Were Made, But Not By Me Review

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This is the first time I've re-written the lessons and changed them several times throughout writing. Really, really, really good summary with lots of new information on Blinkist there.

Almost impossible to pick just 3 things, and I'd have loved to share more, but that's how it goes

Many points of *Mistakes Were Made, But Not By Me* are tangentially related to other topics like memory or mental toughness, which makes you want to dive down the rabbit hole even further.

I peeked inside the book and the stories and examples seem fascinating, but to get a rough overview the summary on Blinkist is very good, it's quite comprehensive, so go for it!

[Read full summary on Blinkist](#)

[Get the book on Amazon](#)

[Learn more about the author](#)

## **What else can you learn from the blinks?**

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- How our memory tricks us and how this was confirmed with a study in the 1960's asking boys uncomfortable questions
- Why doctors now wash their hands before helping give birth
- How it stops science in its tracks if doctors don't admit their mistakes
- The percentage of prisoners who have confessed a crime they never committed (it's more than 1 in 10 – way more!)
- Which fighting ratio you still can get away with to make your relationship last
- The key distinction you have to make to deal better with mistakes
- Why governments are just stupid for hushing up their mistakes
- Which US president was the last to admit a mistake (hint: it was quite some time ago)

## **Who would I recommend the Mistakes Were Made, But Not By Me summary to?**

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The 13 year old student, who's afraid of looking stupid in front of the class for making a mistake, the 35 year old politician, who knows there's something he has to apologize about to his party, and anyone who smokes.