

AI-01024 Compulsive Justification

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What the term for the “false belief that I have to explain everything I do to everyone or the world”

There isn't a single, universally recognized term for the specific belief that you have to explain everything you do to everyone. However, there are a couple of concepts that come close:

- **Compulsive justification:** This describes the urge to constantly justify or explain your actions, even when there's no need to do so. It can stem from a fear of being judged negatively or a need for external validation.
- **Over-accountability:** This refers to the tendency to hold yourself excessively responsible for your actions and feel the need to explain them to others, even for minor things.

These terms capture the essence of feeling obligated to explain everything you do.

Here are some other related concepts that might be relevant:

- **Social anxiety:** This is a more general term for anxiety in social situations. People with social anxiety might feel the need to explain their actions to avoid being judged or criticized.
- **Need for approval:** This describes a strong desire to be liked and accepted by others. This can lead to feeling the need to explain your actions to gain approval.

If this belief is causing you distress or impacting your daily life, it might be helpful to talk to a therapist. They can help you understand the underlying reasons for this

feeling and develop strategies to manage it.

List 20 examples

Here are 20 examples of situations where you might feel the urge to explain yourself, even though you don't necessarily need to:

1. **Taking a break at work:** You might feel the need to explain to your coworkers that you're taking a short break to grab a cup of coffee or go for a walk, even though everyone takes breaks throughout the day.
2. **Ordering something different at a restaurant:** You might feel obligated to explain to the waiter why you're not getting the same dish as everyone else at your table, especially if it's a healthier option or something they're not familiar with.
3. **Leaving a social event early:** You might feel the need to justify leaving a party or gathering early, even if you're tired or not feeling well.
4. **Wearing something comfortable:** You might feel the need to explain why you're wearing sweatpants or yoga pants when everyone else is dressed up, even though you're just running errands.
5. **Not drinking alcohol:** You might feel the need to explain why you're not drinking alcohol at a social event, even if you simply don't want to or don't feel like it.
6. **Spending money on yourself:** You might feel the need to justify buying yourself a nice coffee or a new outfit, even though it's your money and you can spend it however you like.
7. **Saying no to someone:** You might feel the need to explain yourself in great detail when you decline a request from a friend or colleague, even if a simple "no" is enough.
8. **Changing your mind:** You might feel the need to explain why you changed your mind about something, even if it's a minor decision and no one else really cares.
9. **Making a mistake:** You might feel compelled to apologize profusely and explain how you made a mistake, even if it's a small one and no one was really impacted by it.

10. **Having different interests:** You might feel the need to justify your hobbies or interests to others, even if they're not particularly interested and you don't need their approval.
11. **Taking a mental health day:** You might feel the need to explain to your boss why you're taking a day off for mental health reasons, even though you don't need to disclose private medical information.
12. **Not being productive all the time:** You might feel the need to explain why you're not constantly working or being productive, even though everyone needs downtime to relax and recharge.
13. **Setting boundaries:** You might feel the need to explain or apologize for setting boundaries with friends, family, or coworkers, even though healthy boundaries are essential for well-being.
14. **Eating slowly:** You might feel the need to explain why you're eating slowly at a restaurant, even though everyone eats at their own pace.
15. **Traveling solo:** You might feel the need to explain why you're traveling alone, even though solo travel can be a very rewarding experience.
16. **Taking a sick day:** You might feel the need to explain to your boss exactly why you're calling in sick, even though you don't need to go into unnecessary detail about your illness.
17. **Doing things differently:** You might feel the need to explain why you do things in a different way than others, even if your way is just as effective.
18. **Not being on social media:** You might feel the need to explain why you don't use social media, even though it's a perfectly valid personal choice.
19. **Ordering takeout for dinner:** You might feel the need to explain why you're ordering takeout for dinner instead of cooking, even though it's a convenient and sometimes necessary option.
20. **Staying in on a weekend:** You might feel the need to explain why you're staying in on a weekend night instead of going out, even though you just want to relax at home.

List 20 examples

1. Taking a break at work

2. Ordering something different at a restaurant
3. Leaving a social event early
4. Wearing something comfortable
5. Not drinking alcohol at a social event
6. Spending money on yourself
7. Saying no to someone
8. Changing your mind
9. Making a mistake
10. Having different interests
11. Taking a mental health day
12. Not being productive all the time
13. Setting boundaries
14. Eating slowly
15. Traveling solo
16. Taking a sick day
17. Doing things differently
18. Not being on social media
19. Ordering takeout for dinner
20. Staying in on a weekend

Is there really a need to explain?

No, in most of those situations there really isn't a need to explain yourself.

Our earlier point about compulsive justification or over-accountability applies here. Most people won't be surprised by your actions or care for an explanation. In fact, constantly explaining yourself can backfire and make you seem insecure or in need of validation.

There are of course exceptions. If your actions directly impact others, like leaving work early when you have a critical project due, then an explanation might be

necessary. But for the most part, trusting yourself and acting according to your needs is the best course of action.

Is the concept similar to "don't ask why?"

The concept is similar to "don't ask why" in some ways, but with a key difference:

- **"Don't ask why"** is a more dismissive and potentially rude statement. It shuts down the possibility of explanation or discussion altogether.
- The concept we discussed is more about recognizing the **internal pressure** to explain yourself, even when unnecessary. It's about understanding that explanations aren't always required and can sometimes be counterproductive.

Here's the breakdown:

- **Similarities:** Both discourage the need for constant explanation.
- **Differences:**
 - "Don't ask why" focuses on stopping external questions.
 - The concept we discussed focuses on recognizing the internal urge to explain and learning to manage it.

Here's an analogy:

Imagine you're wearing a bright green shirt because you like it. "Don't ask why" would be like telling someone who asks about the color, "don't ask why" and shutting down the conversation.

The concept we discussed is more like acknowledging that you might feel the need to explain your choice (maybe because it's different), but realizing that an explanation isn't necessary and you can simply say "I like it" or even nothing at all.