

Not my fault

By Ruth Ostrow

THE other morning I found red cordial spilled all over the couch. Shocked, I confronted the only person who could have done it. "I don't know how it got there," said my daughter with huge eyes. "Perhaps the cats knocked over a glass."

"How did the cats get cordial out of the fridge?" I countered, until finally there was an admission of guilt.

Yes, she had drunk cordial for breakfast despite being told not to, yes she had lied. "Well, I didn't want to get into trouble," she said. Which makes sense to anyone who's ever seen me in the morning before coffee.

It's been an interesting time for victims and blamers. Everyone is intent on pointing the finger: who is really to blame for Mark Latham's woes, the chaos in New Orleans, Telstra's balance sheet, the constant immigration stuff-ups?

Politicians try to shunt responsibility: "I didn't do it, Mummy . . . it was . . . him!" How much like children they look with their incredulous stares and red cordial stains all over their faces; how idiotic, as we hear endless references to the "others" - management, the police force, the opposition, party members, the media, weather. If polities could get away with it there'd be Martians and poltergeists: "Yes, that's right. Alien spacecrafts stopped us getting to New Orleans . . . sorry, a poltergeist made me say that."

Blaming is the way we're taught to survive in this world. It's become part of contemporary culture to be a wronged victim (without a modicum of self-reflection) and awarded profound sympathy. Which is fair enough for real victims, but a disempowering game for the rest.

There's something blamers don't understand. When we take responsibility it's the most exhilarating, liberating feeling on the planet. There is great power and courage in admission, and real solutions can be found. Suddenly we're in control, rather than hoping for a partner to come good or the weather to stop blowing up storms. We can choose how we react, which is so empowering.

Better still, taking responsibility looks sexy. Blamers don't do themselves any favours standing on television quivering, prevaricating, pontificating and skating a fine line between fact and fiction - just look at the dorky performances by our leaders and former leaders in the past few weeks.

There is no greater victimiser than a victim. So go get a tea-towel guys and start cleaning up your own messy cordial spills for a change.

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First published in The Weekend Australian Magazine October 01, 2005

