

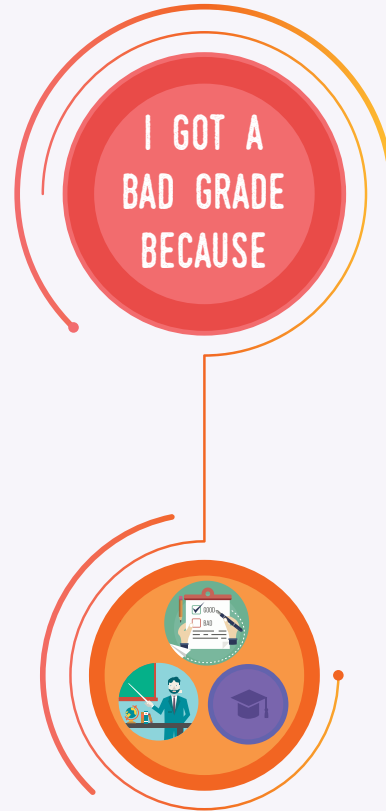
# ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT

Now that you know about attributions and our bias towards those that are self-serving, you can:

- ▶ Be honest with yourself about the factors that most likely contributed to the outcome
- ▶ Consider what you can change going forward to achieve your desired result
- ▶ Seek advice from your professor or TA about areas for improvement and effective learning strategies
- ▶ Listen to Michael Jackson's 'Man in the Mirror' and get it. I mean REALLY get it.



# STAY CONNECTED



To access other **Psychtools for School** resources please visit: <http://tinyurl.com/hbw7zff>

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## Attributions



## Attributions



## SITUATION

Rafik just got his first test back in cognitive psychology and he isn't happy. His grade is much lower than he expected and the initial feedback indicates that he isn't doing well in the course. He wants to improve so he began to identify things that contributed to his poor performance. So far he's got the professor's teaching style, the difficulty of the test, and that low pressure system that swept in suddenly last week. His elbow gets itchy when it rains and that can be very distracting.



## PSYCHOLOGY CAN EXPLAIN THAT

**Attributions** are the explanations that we tell ourselves about why something happened or why people act the way they do. Your dad probably called them excuses.

In this case, Rafik is attempting to make sense of his low grade but these attributions put him at risk of a **self-serving bias**. These biases are well documented and they show that we often take personal credit for our successes but blame others for our failures. In other words, some days you're a master pancake flipper and some days your ceilings are too low.

While these attributions may make us feel better, they won't help us prepare for that next test, assignment, or show-off our breakfast technique.



## CONSEQUENCES

Understanding attributions and the self-serving bias are important because:

- ▶ You may not be honest with yourself about the reasons for your academic setbacks.
- ▶ Attributing a poor grade to the test itself or a professor doesn't acknowledge the active role of the learner.
- ▶ Ignoring uncomfortable attributions (e.g., missing class, procrastinating, not testing your knowledge before a test) is a missed opportunity for growth
- ▶ The lawn isn't going to mow itself (or so says all of our dads)

“ATTRIBUTIONS ARE EXPLANATIONS THAT HELP US MAKE SENSE OF THE EVENTS AROUND US. BY AVOIDING THE TENDENCY TO ONLY BELIEVE SELF-SERVING ATTRIBUTIONS WE CAN IDENTIFY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND ACHIEVE OUR LEARNING GOALS.”