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# Why you should stop giving excuses

## EVE FISHER

IT'S hard to tell sometimes if a behaviour begins through discovering it intellectually and then implementing it, or simply because it arrived in your brain and seemed like a good idea at the time.

I think it was the latter for me when I decided to quit a habit that I wouldn't say plagued me, but had certainly irritated me enough in other people that it warranted closer inspection for myself.

Basically, I've given up ... giving excuses.

If I can help it, I give them to no one. Irrespective of whether or not they are a friend, or an associate, I avoid giving reasons for cancelling appointments, missing meetings or changing plans.

It's possible the seed for this was planted way back when I was studying in Canada and found myself in a class on rhetoric, learning "the art of persuasion".

We were taught that in order to persuade effectively, one's position must be firm and resolute. And not piled upon with other ideas.

Obviously I'm not talking about debating where we build on our arguments in response to the opposition views.

Say your kid asks for a chocolate bar before dinner. You tell them no and when they whine

“WHEN YOU'RE CHANGING PLANS OR CANCELLING, SPARE ME THE DETAILS. YOU OWE ME ABSOLUTELY NOTHING AND I DON'T WANT YOU TO FEEL ANY SORT OF PRESSURE TO EXPLAIN YOURSELF.”

“whyyyyyyy?” you say it's because it will ruin their dinner.

Then before you know it, you're saying they don't need chocolate before proper food.

Finally you cap it off by saying they didn't eat their treats at school.

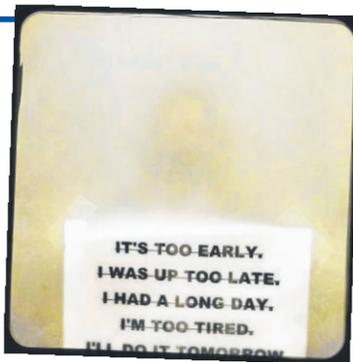
BOOM it's over. You've just shown your kid you don't actually have an argument, you simply don't want them to eat the chocolate.

You've destroyed your own argument by trying to make your point further. You've diluted it, if you will.

While you think you're simply listing reasons, your kid just thinks you're full of rubbish.

Which comes right back to giving excuses.

When you're changing plans or



cancelling, spare me the details. You owe me absolutely nothing and I don't want you to feel any sort of pressure to explain yourself.

Unless you're letting me down, then you owe an explanation. Or if you feel it's important I know. Sometimes they're warranted.

If it's a simple cancellation, however, and you're regaling me with the inner workings of your life, then you should know I'm largely disinterested.

And I figure everyone else is too.

Excuses are, by and large, boring. They're repetitive.

They take time to explain. Why are we bothering?

Of course, we then get the more sinister multi-pronged excuses which take us back to my rhetoric argument (badda-boom).

The more excuses you pile on, the more diluted it becomes.

When you say you can't make it

because your car is in bad shape, plus you've been feeling unwell and you really don't have the money, I immediately assume you simply don't want to come.

I'm not saying you're lying about those reasons, I'm just saying that you've just turned them into excuses to justify your impending absence, rather than simply saying you can't make it.

A couple of my mates are subscribing to this new regime too.

One told me she and her work colleagues had just banished excuses from the online chat about shifts and availability.

Every time a random shift was offered the excuses flooded in as the staff tried to justify their apparent refusal to jump at the opportunity to work.

It was as though they felt obligated to prove that they were keen and able except for this darn ol' pesky reason.

Finally someone mentioned it. Finally someone pointed out that they didn't need to justify themselves.

Now they just decline. And my mate said it was refreshing.

Which is exactly what I've found in my life.

Of course I still give an excuse if it's interesting. Or funny.

But if it's mundane, irrelevant or uninspiring, it shall remain unspoken and excused.

## LETTERS & TEXTS

### CHECK OUT TIMES MEAN TOURISTS STOP SPENDING

AS a frequent visitor to the Surf Coast and other regional Victorian locations I am often confronted by the need to exit our chosen holiday accommodation by 10am. I understand that it takes time to turnaround rooms or holiday homes for guests that may be arriving the same day but often times (eg at the end of a long weekend) there are no new guests arriving that day yet the 10am departure remains.

The morning departure often results in traffic jams as tourists all leave at the same time, but more importantly results in the loss of trade for local businesses. Cafes and restaurants miss out on the lunch trade and other shops miss out on pedestrian traffic in their boutiques, galleries and gift shops. While staff and business owners can catch their breath after a hopefully hectic few days, the loss in revenue and wages contributes to trader malaise and the loss of general economic activity.

Several cafes in Lorne last weekend reported a bumper breakfast on Monday but closed for lunch as the small numbers of

remnant visitors and penalty rates for staff made their opening economically unviable.

Tourism has been severely impacted by COVID restrictions and many small businesses have suffered considerably. Whilst many guests may have the potential to request a late check out, accommodation providers could be more proactive in offering later departures — breeding good will and return customers but also making a contribution to the vibrancy of their local tourist hot spot.

**Peter Hansford, Ripponlea**

### GEELONG WELL PLACED TO JOIN CLEAN ENERGY MOVE

AS the energy market moves on,

Geelong needs to be forward-looking, too.

I think Dale Jennings is right to acknowledge the economic contribution of the Viva-operated Shell refinery, (GA 2/3). It seems undeniable though that, whilst it was a worthwhile investment in its time, this won't continue indefinitely.

I see that the Australian Energy Market Operator has abandoned plans to model a 'gas-led recovery' after key energy market stakeholders panned it as unrealistic. The energy industry itself is moving on, and Geelong is well placed to move forward with it.

With countries all over the world signing up to zero-emissions

targets, the challenge now is to get on board to service this growing clean-energy market and plan a timely and just transition for workers into new, future-proofed jobs in clean-energy industries.

**Full name supplied, North Geelong**

### TOP COP CLIP OF LAX PARENTS DIVIDES READERS

THE kids need to be taken back to the police station and parents/carers called in to explain why their children/charge is roaming about.

I know teenagers can be defiant and if they really want to do something they will, but you have to start somewhere.

**Dale**

KIDS do sneak out of homes at night. What are parents supposed to do, stay awake at night to make sure this doesn't happen? It's not easy having a teenager.

**Stewart**

### BUSINESS LAUDED OVER PURCHASE OF SALTWORKS

A real goer! Sees value where others don't.

**JP**

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## Geelong Advertiser

### ACTION NOT PROMISES

THERE seems to have developed a weary acceptance that we should question major government announcements with a healthy dose of cynicism.

Gone are the days when we take political promises simply at their word. Years of delays and disappointment have meant that when major funding announcements are made, residents have become increasingly cynical about exactly what and when they will see what has been promised.

This situation benefits neither the pledger nor the recipient — the former losing the patience, and eventually trust, of the latter as they wait for a promise to be realised. Any goodwill earned from the announcement turns rotten when reality doesn't live up to the expectations.

The State Government is in danger of falling into this trap again on the issue of youth mental health funding. The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System interim report found a critical demand for youth and adult acute beds locally and, after a spate of youth suicides in our region made headlines last year, new beds were pledged. However, when that promise becomes reality next year it will be in the form of 16 new adult mental health beds that it is hoped will free up six existing Swanston Centre beds that can be used for young people. Not really the dedicated youth mental health bed funding experts have repeatedly said is sorely needed in our region.

An issue as critical as youth mental health should be above politics. If the experts and the studies say we need the beds, the funding should be prioritised and dedicated beds established as soon as is practicable.

## ON THIS DAY

**1629** King Charles I dissolves England's parliament and rules without it, starting his "11-year tyranny".

**1876** Alexander Graham Bell makes the first telephone call, calling his assistant, Thomas Watson, in an adjoining room in Boston.

**1971** PM John Gorton gives his casting vote against a motion of confidence in himself when he chairs a meeting of Liberal MPs. William McMahon is elected to replace him as PM.

**1988** British-born Australian singer and songwriter Andy Gibb (right) dies in Oxford at 30 of heart trouble.



**2005** Wry Irish sit-down comedian Dave Allen dies suddenly in London, aged 68.

**2020** Russia's parliament passes legislation allowing Vladimir Putin to hold the post of president for life.

## WRITE TO US

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