Dr. Carol Tavris
“Mistakes Were Made (but not by me)”

- Why do people dodge responsibility when things fall apart?
- Why can we see hypocrisy in others but not in ourselves?
- Why can’t public figures “own up” when they screw up?
- Are we all liars, or do we really believe the stories we tell?

At some point we all make a bad decision, do something that harms another person, or cling to an outdated belief. When we do, we strive to reduce the cognitive dissonance that results from feeling that we, who are smart, moral, and right, just did something that was dumb, immoral, or wrong.

In this one-hour talk based on her bestselling book, social psychologist Carol Tavris, Ph.D. explains why it is difficult, and for some people impossible, to say, “I made a terrible mistake.” The higher the stakes—emotional, financial, moral—the greater that difficulty. Self-justification, the hardwired mechanism that blurs us to the possibility that we were wrong, has benefits: It lets us sleep at night and keeps us from torturing ourselves with regrets. But it can also block our ability to see our faults and errors.

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$15 General
$10 with Student ID

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Carol Tavris received her Ph.D. in social psychology from the University of Michigan, and has taught psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles and the New School for Social Research. She is a fellow of the American Psychological Association, the Association for Psychological Science and the Center for Inquiry.

She has spoken to students, psychologists, mediators, lawyers, judges, physicians, business executives, and general audiences on self-justification; science and pseudoscience in psychology; gender and sexuality; critical thinking; and anger, among other topics.

In the legal arena, Dr. Tavris has given many addresses and workshops to attorneys and judges on the difference between testimony based on good psychological science and that based on pseudoscience and subjective clinical opinion.

Her articles, book reviews and op-eds have appeared in the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Times Literary Supplement, and other publications.

Her most recent book, “Mistakes Were Made (But Not by ME): Why we justify foolish beliefs, bad decisions, and hurtful acts”, was coauthored with Elliot Aronson and applies cognitive dissonance theory to a wide variety of topics, including politics, conflicts of interest, memory (everyday and “recovered”), the criminal justice system, police interrogation, the daycare sex-abuse epidemic, family quarrels, international conflicts, and business.

For further information, please see:
www.mistakesweremadebutnotbyme.com

“Even irrefutable evidence is rarely enough to pierce the mental armor of self-justification.”

CAROL TAVRIS