Life... They say I'm a "no pay"

S i t u a t i o n:

A very official letter we got in the mail yesterday from the local police department says they are investigating an incident where I drove away from a gas station without paying for the gas. The license plate number and vehicle description match mine, so that's accurate. Yet, I've never driven away without paying! I'm an honest person!

I wanted to clear things up right away, so I took the letter over to the gas station where I stop frequently and pay at the pump. Since it was Saturday, no one could help me, and I was told to come back on Monday to talk with the manager who filed the report with the police.

With lots of things to get done I didn't dwell on things too much during the rest of the day, yet I didn't sleep very well at all. My mind was really racing: "This is all a misunderstanding, the charge must not have gone through for some reason. This will be easy to clear up."

Then I started doubting myself: "I can't imagine driving away without paying, but what if I did? I've really lost it if I can't pay attention to details like paying for a purchase! I knew I was busy and stressed, but not paying for gas? OK – so maybe I did, I'll pay whatever the charges are to clear things up. If this is going to be on my record permanently, I'll never be able to get another job."

Help! I don't want to spend another sleepless night.

A n s w e r:

At this point, one of the best things to tell yourself is that you "don't know." You don't know all the details, you don't know the outcome, you don't know what steps you'll have to take to come to a resolution.

In this "rush, rush, instant pay" world, I'm sure you're not the first totally honest person who has ever been in a situation where a machine didn't register their credit card transaction, or who simply forgot to pay. In either case, the situation is average, it's happened to somebody else. So, you're not wrong, you're average. Not right, not wrong, simply average. Along with that, the situation is distressing, but not at all dangerous.
Each time an insecure thought pops back in, the process is to replace it. Replace it. Replace it. Replace it!

The people at the station deal with cases like this all the time, they know what steps come next. It's perplexing to you, because you've never been through it before.

Let's look at the worst case scenario: you really did forget to pay for your gas, you pay them whatever it is for the gas and incidental charges associated with filing the report, then find out first if the event does get lodged on a "record" and if it does, how it can be removed.

Forgetting to do something important is upsetting for sure, but it doesn't mean that you've lost it. Thinking there's something wrong with your mind is diagnosing, and it's attaching danger to a situation where there really isn't any. We ALL forget things, big and small. And we all make mistakes – if this one turns out to be a mistake on your part.

Recognize that your imagination was on fire. You went from, "I couldn't have done this," to "Maybe I did," to "I'll never be able to get another job." One negative thought attracted many more. Just as taking the time and beginning to replace some of those thoughts will bring more secure and positive thoughts. We make a shift in thinking by starting out with one secure, realistic thought, which allows and attracts more of the same.

Part of what your insecure thinking may have to do with: what will other people think? My advice is, control your speech muscles and don't tell the story to everyone. Limit your conversation on the subject to people who can help you calm down, not get more riled up.

Don't look for outer endorsement. You know you are honest. You know that you're willing to make things right if you really did forget to pay. That's all that counts.

Trust yourself – whatever steps that need to be taken, you will handle everything, no matter how uncomfortable it may be.

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