

Leaving One's Moral Compass at the Door

Whenever I hear a government employee, be it a bureaucrat or law enforcer, say anything to the effect of, "I'm just doing my job" as a response to someone criticizing their behavior, my immediate thought is that they've seemed to misplace their moral compass.

Or rather, they've intentionally left it at the door.

Thinking about what it would take for me to say those words, I'd have to have done something considered very wrong, and preferring not to feel shame, offer such a retort.

How good it must feel to relinquish moral culpability for one's actions!

I should try it some day.

But I think I'm on to something. Maybe the reason it's offered is that they *are* trying to avoid shame, a feeling that comes intuitively whenever they would behave that way outside of their jobs.

They need the income, their family's got to ~~play~~ eat, so they can't afford to carry their moral compass at work. We can all relate to having to do things as a part of our jobs that we'd prefer not to do. Perhaps not anything morally questionable, but undesirable nonetheless.

So it's an empathy-inducing ~~excuse~~ justification for what amounts to insidious behavior. And who are we to judge? Surely if we were in their position, we'd do and then say the same thing. Right?

Possibly. Or possibly we've already chosen not to be in that position. Not to trade our principles for a paycheck. Not to leave our moral compass anywhere except snugly in our pocket.

And if we did have to do something insidious for the people we ~~value~~ love, we wouldn't concoct baseless excuses or run from the consequences.