

While unhealthy behaviors can be harmful, it doesn't necessarily mean you are in an abusive relationship. In abusive relationships, there can be a pattern of behavior involving threats, intimidation, or coercion.

People who are abusive commonly do not accept accountability for their harm, so blaming the person they harm becomes part of the abuse.

If you are being abused or severely harmed or have a friend who is being harmed — or if you are abusing someone — these accountability practices are **not** recommended.

If you think you or a friend are in an abusive relationship, a dangerous situation or are severely hurting someone, trust your gut and get help by contacting a trusted adult or a helpline listed on this brochure.

Content on accountability for this brochure is adapted from *The Four Parts of Accountability & How to Give a Genuine Apology* by Mia Mingus

Where to get help

Contact your local domestic and sexual violence organization or reach out to a national help line below:

National Hotline Numbers

National Dating Abuse Helpline

1-866-331-9474 or www.loveisrespect.org to chat online

National Suicide Hotline

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

National Sexual Assault Hotline

1-833-656-HOPE (4673)

Trevor Project (LGBTQIA Youth)

1-866-488-738

www.engagingvoices.org

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ACCOUNTABILITY IN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



“Being accountable is how we can come to truly love ourselves, and give and receive love from others. Being accountable in our. . . relationships creates the pattern of societal accountability.”

– adrienne maree brown

Conflict, hurt feelings, misunderstandings, and breaks in trust can all happen in healthy relationships. Most of us do not know how to be accountable for our actions. We can learn – and continue learning – about being accountable in our relationships.

Accountability is a practice on how *you* can apologize better and not how someone else can apologize better to you! Accountability has four parts and each part is important to the entire process:

Part 1 – Self-Reflection is needed to understand your actions and the impact of those actions. Self-reflection helps you get to a place where you are willing to make things right. Looking inward and sitting with uncomfortable feelings (but not with guilt or

shame) may help you understand the choices you made, the outcomes of those choices, and how to make different choices in the future.

Questions to ask yourself:

“So what happened?” “Why did I say or do that?” “How did my words or actions impact the person I care about?”

Part 2 – Apologizing is a chance to share that you understand what you did and to take responsibility for the impact of your actions. Apologizing is a fundamental part of rebuilding trust and requires us to practice being authentic and courageous. Accountability doesn’t have to be scary, even though it can be extremely uneasy and uncomfortable.

Words you can use:

“I’m sorry that I (name what you did) and that it impacted you (name how it caused harm). I want to rebuild trust and will make an active effort to (name the way you will change your behavior) in the future.”

Part 3 – Repair means making amends and rebuilding trust. It is an opportunity to do the work necessary to be in a healthy relationship with those you have hurt or harmed — and to be in a healthier relationship with yourself. Repair can take a long time — you may need to apologize more than once.

Questions to ask yourself:

“How can I rebuild trust with the person I’ve harmed?” “What is the pace of trust I can move at right now?”

Part 4 – Behavior change is one of the hardest parts of accountability. It will likely take time and lots of practice. Talk to people you trust about mistakes you’ve made, things you are ashamed of or feel guilty about, or times when you weren’t your best self. Understanding your behavior and how it impacted others may help you identify ways to act differently in the future.