

Module 10 – Support & Accountability

For many adults, requiring accountability outside of an employer/employee relationship seems really uncomfortable. Asking another person if they followed through with what they were supposed to be doing can almost feel like you're keeping tabs on a child.

But we have to get over those feelings if we're going to coach people with success. It's important to remember that clients have contracted with a coach because there are places they want to go in their life that they have been unable to reach on their own. There is at least some level of expecting, even desiring to be pushed.

It's much better to confront the trouble areas of life with someone than for someone to do it for themselves. It's even better if we confront trouble areas with someone who actually believes in us and is committed to our success.

For accountability to work, we have to:

- Be clear about expectations
- Ensure that expectations are understood
- Ask for feedback from the client to make sure they understand expectations

Coaching did not happen unless it closes with commitment. Accountability begins with commitment.

In Module 8, we discussed the “W” actions steps of the GROW model.

At the end of each session, the client is asked “What are you committing to?” When we ask these questions specifically, we are asking for the client to make a verbalized commitment to the actions steps that we've agreed upon.

It's not enough to just generally agree. We're qualifying the agreement with commitment. Here's an example:

“So are you committed to going to the doctor to get your wrist checked out?”

“Yeah, I really need to get it checked out.”

“Okay, so make a decision: are you going to get your wrist checked out?”

“Yes, I will.”

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“When do you plan on taking care of that?”

SUPPORT & FOLLOWUP

In subsequent coaching sessions, we must followup on action items. The coach asks the client for a progress report on the items agreed upon.

As we followup, we don't ask general, vague questions.

Example:

“Hey how's your wrist feeling?” – general and indirect

“Did you go to the doctor?” – direct, specific, and closed

“How did your action steps go?” – too general and skimming

“Let's go through each of the action items, and you can tell me what you did on each one.” – specific and detailed

If the client fails to keep a commitment to an action item, the coach should not be quick to judge or diagnose the problem. On the other hand, the coach cannot just blow it off and act like it's no big deal. That wouldn't be honest.

Instead the coach can begin there and ask the client:

“What kept you from keeping your commitment?”

“What would you like to change about your approach?”

The coach isn't placing blame or shame but is keeping the client accountable and owning the solution.

It's difficult for a coach not to be perceived as an authority figure. However, as we've said earlier, influence is greater than authority.

When a client genuinely knows they are cared for, believed in, and supported, the desire of the heart shifts and they are not accountable just because they are afraid of being

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asked. Fear may be a motivation for change, but it's not a positive motivation for change in a relationship.

Healthy accountability is detected really simply:

- Is it life-giving?
- Is it encouraging? (literally does it give courage)

Accountability should always be supportive and give energy.

HEALTHY ACCOUNTABILITY

It is voluntary

Healthy accountability starts with a voluntary relationship where one person requests the other to hold them accountable for a personal commitment.

In a coaching, this is part of the nature of a relationship: I will say that I'm going to do "x," and you are going to ask me about "x" to confirm that I've kept my commitment.

It is not guilt or shame based

Most of the accountability that we have experienced has been the type like mom coming home to find out that we didn't do the chores that she told us to do before we left to go to the movies.

Shame and guilt are focused on who we are and judgment for what we do. There's always fear and an expectation of consequences that are tied to them.

Shame and guilt will never bring a positive, lasting life change.

It is positive and based on support

In a coaching relationship, if a client has dropped the ball on action items, there should be no fear or dread of the next meeting. And if a client comes to the meeting with their own personal shame and guilt, then this is the place we need to visit to remove self-imposed shame and guilt.

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“I was really lazy and didn’t follow through with anything from last time. I guess I have a problem with commitments.”

“Wow, you really owned that one. What do you mean by ‘a problem with commitments?’ Can you unpack that for me?”

A coach can go right to the source of limiting, false, disqualifying beliefs and bring the support and encouragement that’s needed.

When shame and guilt are removed, courage is restored and the energy to recommit should be returned.

It stops negative patterns from starting

When we cultivate healthy accountability by consistently asking positive, direct statements about follow through, we eliminate patterns of failure before they ever start.

That’s what healthy accountability does: it serves as a mechanism to prevent balls from being dropped.

ENCOURAGEMENT & CELEBRATION

If coaches are going to take the time to ask the client to be accountable, it’s important to give credit where credit is due. Affirmation and validation is critical to the success of your client.

In your first session with a client (or perhaps in an intake form), you can actually ask the client:

- What are some things that motivate you?
- What are the kinds of things that demotivate you?
- What makes you feel appreciated?
- What are the ways that you like to be praised?
- When was a time that you felt most valued?

When we ask these questions on the front end, we can get a really good idea of the key motivators for a person. Every person needs to be praised and celebrated, but every person has their own language for praise and celebration. Knowing what triggers

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feelings of value and affirmation in clients help us relate to them in ways that they understand and can respond.