

## Resources on Accountability (November 2018)



Definition of Accountability  
(Cambridge Dictionary)  
*the fact of being responsible for what you do and able to give a satisfactory reason for it, or the degree to which this happens*

\*\*\* **note:** packet is divided into “self-accountability”, “community accountability” and “accountability to the divine” to make things more organized/clear \*\*\*

### Self-accountability

“It is wrong and immoral to seek to escape the consequences of one's acts.”

- Mahatma Gandhi

“Duties are not performed for duty's sake, but because their neglect would make the [person] uncomfortable. A [person] performs but one duty - the duty of contenting [one's] spirit, the duty of making [oneself] agreeable to [oneself].”

- Mark Twain

“If you are irritated by every rub, how will your mirror be polished?”

- Rumi

“When [the boys] came to an orchard wall that seemed too high and too doubtful to try and too difficult to permit their voyage to continue, they took off their hats and tossed them over the wall — and then they had no choice but to follow them.”

- Frank O'Connor

“In order to have compassion for others, we have to have compassion for ourselves. In particular, to care about other people who are fearful, angry, jealous, overpowered by addictions of all kinds, arrogant, proud, miserly, selfish — you name it — means to not run from the pain of finding these things in ourselves. In fact, one's whole attitude toward pain can change. Instead of fending it off and hiding from it, one can open one's heart and allow oneself to feel that pain, feel it as something that will soften and purify us and make us far more loving and kind.”

- Pema Chodron (<https://www.lionsroar.com/tonglen-bad-in-good-out-september-2010/>)

### Someone loved by someone else

By Kat Liu

Once, while in sixth grade, I brought home a quiz in which I'd gotten the highest score in the class: a 98%. When I proudly handed the paper to my mother, she asked, “Where's the other two percent?” Mom believed that by training her children to aim for perfection we would be more successful.

Academically, her strategy worked. Unfortunately, it also resulted in neurotic offspring who tend to dwell on our failings. Over the years, I've learned that many people share these nagging feelings of constantly falling short. Most of us have also learned to censor our internalized critic in front of others.

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One day, however, after I'd gotten myself into a serious jam that required a friend to help me out, my inner critic could no longer be contained. I let loose an unrelenting stream of self-reprobaton, ignoring Shelley's repeated attempts to assure me things would be okay.

Finally, she yelled, "STOP BEATING UP MY FRIEND!"

Taken aback, I stopped. Then the words sank in and I laughed. Her uncharacteristic outburst and choice of words allowed me to see what I otherwise could not. I saw myself not as myself but as Shelley's friend — someone loved by someone else — and realized that I was being harsher on myself than I ever would on a friend. If a friend were in my situation, I would have genuinely seen their failings as human and focused instead on how to make things better. So why hold someone to an unforgiving standard just because that someone is me?

It sounds corny, but in that moment I finally understood the popular adage that you have to love yourself, so that even when friends aren't there to defend you, you can be your own advocate, friend, and fan.

I will always have that voice telling me, You could have done better. That's okay and maybe even beneficial, so long as it's not the only voice we hear. Occasionally, when the first voice gets to be too much, I say, "Stop beating up my friend!" And it works.

### **Accountability to the Divine**

And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

- Hebrews 4:13

"[A person]'s ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all [their] activities—social, political, religious—have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavor, simply because the only way to find God is to see [God] in [God's] creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all."

- Mahatma Gandhi

"Why is it that it is often easier for us to confess our sins to God than to a [sibling]? God is holy... But a [sibling]...knows from... experience.... Who can give us the certainty that, in the confession and the forgiveness of our sins, we are not dealing with ourselves but with the living God?.... Our [sibling] breaks the circle of self-deception. A human who confesses... in the presence of a [sibling]...experiences the presence of God in the reality of the other person."

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

"Beloved, may I know the beauty that can be the full confession unfiltered, one that shatters the shame where I share my sin openly with all siblings. Grant a love that heals to those I harm; free my heart of hatred denial. Call my being to openness, covenant and accountability. Help me to be a faithful member of the confessing congregation. Amen."

- Rev. Robin Tanner

### **What have you bought with your life?**

By Mevlana Jalaludin Rumi

On Resurrection Day God will ask,  
"During this sojourn I gave you,

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what have you produced for Me?  
Through what work have you reached your life's end?  
For what have your food and your strength been consumed?  
Where have you dimmed the luster of your eye?  
Where have you dissipated your five senses?  
You have expended eyes and ears and intellect  
and the pure celestial substances;  
what have you purchased from the earth?  
I gave you hands and feet as spade and mattock  
for tilling the soil of good works;  
when did they begin to work by themselves?  
(Mathnawi III.2149-2153; translated by Kabir Helminski and Camille Helminski)

### **Community Accountability**

"No snowflake in an avalanche ever feels responsible."

- Stanislaw Lec

It is our duty to fight for our freedom.

It is our duty to win.

We must love each other and support each other.

We have nothing to lose but our chains.

- Assata Shakur

"You will learn accountability and respect by watching me make mistakes and make amends, and by watching how I ask for what I need and talk about how I feel."

- Brenè Brown *Wholehearted Parenting Manifesto*

"A body of men holding themselves accountable to nobody ought not to be trusted by anybody."

- Thomas Paine

"On good teams coaches hold players accountable, on great teams players hold players accountable."

- Joe Dumars (Basketball player)

"The way to get things done is not to mind who gets the credit of doing them."

- Benjamin Jowett

"When you're screwing up and nobody says anything to you anymore, that means they've given up on you."

- Randy Pausch, author, *The Last Lecture*

"The ancient Romans had a tradition: whenever one of their engineers constructed an arch, as the capstone was hoisted into place, the engineer assumed accountability for his work in the most profound way possible: he stood under the arch."

- Michael Armstrong (former Portland city planner)

*On solidarity:* "Self-culture is a good thing, but it cannot abolish inequality, nor restore men to their rights... No man can be a Christian who does not begin his career by making war on the mischievous social arrangements from which his brethren suffer. He who thinks he can be a Christian and save his soul, without seeking their radical change, has no reason to applaud himself... No man can be a

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Christian who does not refrain from all practices by which the rich grow richer and the poor poorer, and who does not do all in his power to elevate the laboring classes, so that one man shall not be doomed to toil while another enjoys the fruits.”

- Orestes Brownson “The Laboring Classes” 1840. (Brownson was first a Universalist minister then a Unitarian one, though later converted to Catholicism)

*On covenants:* “This form [of the church] is the visible covenant, agreement, or consent, whereby [the people] give up themselves unto the Lord, to the observing of the ordinances of Christ together in the same society, which is usually called the church covenant : For we see not otherwise how members can have church power one over another mutually. The comparing of each particular church unto a city, and unto a spouse, seemeth to conclude not only a form, but that that form is by way of covenant... the substance of it is kept, where there is a real agreement and consent of a company of faithful persons to meet constantly together in one congregation, for the public worship of God, and their mutual edification.”

- The Cambridge Platform (1648)

### What is all this clamoring after difference?

By bell hooks

“...all the clamoring is about seeking wholeness. Guilt leads to angry denial and inaction. Responsibility leads to grudging good works. The call to seek wholeness has room for acknowledging feelings of guilt (and anger, frustration,) room for accepting appropriate responsibility and plenty of room for moving toward personal and communal transformation.

...all the clamoring is for each person, each perspective, each truth to be granted sufficient respect so that we truly listen to those ideas and allow ourselves to be truly challenged by them.

...all the clamoring is for us to recognize that our lives are intertwined, so intertwined, that each is accountable to the other. Each particular story/truth calls us to accountability, calls me to accountability for my life, my limits, my individual and our collective transformation...

...all the clamoring is for truth—I need you—I need you, who you are, the experiences and perspective you bring, so that I may know truth beyond my partial truth.

...all the clamoring is for justice—We need each other, and what we can all do together for justice.”

### Healing

By Rev. Adam Lawrence Dyer (Lead Minister at First Parish UU Church in Cambridge, MA)

Don't speak to me of “healing” racism,  
or “wounded souls” or the “painful hurt”  
until you are willing to feel the scars  
on my great-great-grandmother Laury's back.

Don't speak to me of “values”  
or “justice” or “righting wrongs”  
until you are able to feel the heartache  
of my great-grandfather Graham  
whose father may have been his master.

Don't speak to me of “equity”  
or “opportunity” or the “common good”  
until you are able to hear the fear  
from my grandmother Mae

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as the only black woman in her college.

Don't speak to me of "passion"  
or "longing" or "standing on the side of love"  
until you know the shame  
felt by my mother Edwina  
mocked by teachers for the curve of her back.

Don't speak to me of "together"  
or "understanding" or "empathy"  
until you know my rage  
as a young actor hearing the direction  
to "be more black . . . more male."

The pain you are trying to heal has no real name.  
This "pain" you speak of has no story;  
it is anonymous, vague, and empty.

Don't speak to me of "healing"  
for I heal the second I am ripped apart.  
My wounds self-suture,  
and like the clever creature I am,  
I just grow new legs to outrun the pain ever faster.  
It is something I have had to practice for generations,  
that feel like an eternity.

So, please don't speak to me of "healing"  
because you cannot know what healing means  
until you know the hurt.

### *Taking Accountability*

"Accountability involves listening, learning, taking responsibility, and changing. It involves conscientiously creating opportunities in our families and communities for direct communication, understanding and repairing of harm, readjustment of power toward empowerment and equal sharing of power, and rebuilding of relationships and communities toward safety, respect, and happiness.

While it would certainly be a simpler world if accountability were one concept and one conversation, the reality of accountability is complex. Many different people have different ideas about what accountability is and what it looks like. Accountability is a many-sided word. What we mean by accountability shifts depending on whether we are looking at the short term, the long term, how we take accountability ourselves, and how we support others to take accountability."

-- From the Creative Interventions Toolkit (Section 4F, p. 2-3) [http://www.creative-interventions.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Section-4F\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.creative-interventions.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Section-4F_FINAL.pdf)

### **Further resources**

Three articles about developing accountability within men who have been abusive of women, with an understanding of the mens' humanity and from a feminist perspective:

<https://www.transformativejustice.eu/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/augusta-scott-comp-zine-imposed.pdf>

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Short primer on accountability in organizations -- "What is Accountability, Really?"