

Accountability, Entry #1 of 2

Trusting each other doesn't mean that we reject accountability; we put routines in place to protect ourselves, and our trusted servants, from the types of mistakes we, as addicts, are liable to make (*Guiding Principles*, Tradition Twelve, "In Service").

"NA service taught me how to be a responsible, productive member of *this* society first," a member shared. "Doing service gave me skills and knowledge that help me navigate the world outside of NA, too. I think of these as 'the hidden curriculum' in NA service." From that perspective, we might consider accountability to be one of the subjects we study in this course.

Lessons on accountability begin in our first home group's business meetings and continue as we serve in various roles. One of the first things we learn is that the order of operations is different in NA. We had previous experience with the kind of accountability that comes *after* we screwed up. In NA, we often focus on setting each other up for success. To avoid missteps, we try to define tasks and spell out expectations upfront, and then strive for transparency, communication, and support as we follow through. Having safeguards in place, especially when money or ego might be involved, can help protect our trusted servants and NA.

We check our worst impulses in advance and limit openings for errors in judgment. The treasurer who asks another member to confirm the count of the basket avoids temptation. The subcommittee chair who keeps the service body informed and regularly seeks direction is less likely to go rogue or be micromanaged.

This kind of preemptive accountability has applications in our personal lives, too. Managing medication after surgery is a team sport in many NA communities; transparency about pill counts protects everyone involved. We can even see accountability's relevance to online dating in the advice of one member: "Meet for coffee while the sun's still up and don't shave your legs." It's the little reminders that help us behave.

I will seek out guideposts—in life and in service—to keep me accountable to myself and others.

Accountability, Entry #2 of 2

Honest self-assessment is essential to recovery, but it is only possible if we are vulnerable enough to let someone in. We choose those mirrors carefully, seeking those we can trust to be honest, helpful, and kind (*Living Clean*, Chapter 6, "Anonymity").

There are loads of reasons to keep coming back to NA. The fact that we can't do this alone tops the list for many of us. We need each other. As our Basic Text puts it, "we are each other's eyes and ears." When we share with others in NA, we get to learn from their valuable experience and get their perspective on ours. Their take helps us better understand the past and gives us a new vantage point on what we're doing now. Objectivity is an acquired skill. When we share honestly with our fellow recovering addicts, we can see our behavior more clearly in their reflection. We begin to gain some accountability.

Asking for such insights can make us feel quite vulnerable. One member wrote, "my outsides were suiting up and showing up while my insides remained aloof. 'Undercover isolation' became a way of life. I couldn't find my way out on my own." We find people we can trust and choose to confide in them, returning again and again to those who offer the insights we're seeking. It's what we mean when we tell newcomers to "stick with the winners!" Beyond simple abstinence, we need people who are real with us—and help us get real, too.

When we surround ourselves with people who are living the program, our lives improve. One member shared, "I developed a support system, and that system of support developed me!" We need people to tell us the truth when we can't see it ourselves. Sometimes the clarity begins the minute we begin to open our mouths. "It sounded good in my head," one addict shared, "but before I could even say it out loud to my sponsor, I realized it was total BS!"

To stay clean, I need a clear reflection. Who are my most trustworthy mirrors today?