

ACCOUNTABILITY TRAPS

By Lisa Merlo-Booth

Feedback is a gift that gives us insight into areas that may be getting in the way of our leading a great life. If we're not courageous enough to take feedback in, then this gift is wasted.

One of the most difficult skills in life and relationships is the ability to be accountable for our own actions. Too often people are great about telling others where *they're* off, yet struggle greatly with acknowledging where they themselves are off. Below are ten accountability traps that wreak havoc in people's lives. Avoid these whenever possible.

- 1. Denial:** Denial is the, "refusal to acknowledge the existence of something." Many people believe that if they never admit to something, then they can't be blamed for it, it can't be used against them or they won't look "bad." Although denial initially may throw other people off the track, a repeated pattern of denial seldom tricks them into thinking you didn't do it. It only leads the other person to believe you did do it, but you don't have enough integrity to admit it. Denial sounds like, "I did not have a tone. I don't know what you're talking about."
- 2. Switch Hitting:** Switch-hitting is when you turn the complaint around on the other person and, all of a sudden, what started as their complaint about you has now become a complaint you have about them. This move reminds me of the saying, "The best defense is a good offense." It can sound something like this, "What about the way you talk to me? You have no right to complain to me about how I'm speaking. Why don't you look at yourself?"
- 3. Collapsing:** Collapsing looks like someone acting fragile, as though they can't handle being called on their behavior or they're going to fall apart. It can look like crying, hysterics, pleas to not talk about this, etc. It can sound like, "I can't handle this. It's just too much. Do you know all I've been going through? I just can't listen to this too."
- 4. Defensiveness:** Defending yourself is about giving a reason for why you did what you did or deflecting blame in some way rather than owning your mistake and apologizing for it. Defensiveness sounds like, "I wasn't that loud—I'm not a bully you know." "Why can't you just let things go?"
- 5. Justifying:** Justifying is about excusing your poor behavior due to some extraneous variable. It's a way of naming all the reasons why what you did was okay. "Maybe if you paid more attention to me I wouldn't have to seek love from someone else." "I only did that because you weren't listening. What did you expect?"

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6. **Playing the victim:** Playing the victim happens when you act as if you had no choice but to do the behavior the other person is upset about. This trap leads you to think that the other person or circumstances “made you” do what you did. For example, “You make all the decisions and I have to go along or you get angry. So I agreed because I had no choice.”
7. **Minimizing:** Minimizing is when you respond to someone else’s upset with you by trying to make less of it than it is. For example, “OMG, it’s really not that big of a deal. Would you let it go?”

When it comes to being accountable, don’t fall into one of these accountability traps. Get accountable and courageously own your mistakes.

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