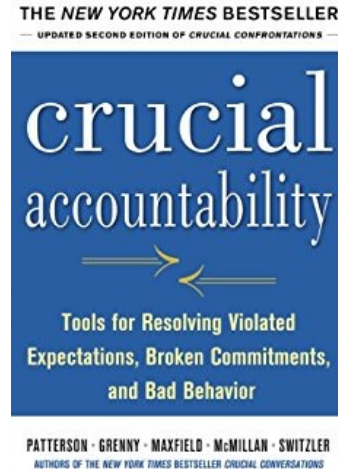


# **Crucial Accountability:**

Tools for Resolving Violated Expectations, Broken Commitments, and Bad Behavior

by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler, David Maxfield



**What to do Before, During, and After an accountability discussion.**

## **I. BEFORE an accountability discussion**

**1. Ask yourself: “WHAT is the conversation I should hold & IF I should hold it.”**

### **-WHAT:**

“What violation or violations should you actually address? How do you dismantle a bundle of accountability problems into its component parts and choose the one you want to discuss?”

If the same accountability discussion keeps coming up, there is probably a deeper issue to address.

### **-To determine which issue to discuss:**

#### **1. Use CPR:**

**Content:** “*The first time an infraction occurs, talk about the content, what just happened*”.

**Pattern:** “*The next time the infraction occurs, talk pattern, what has been happening over time*”.

**Relationship:** “*As the problem continues, talk about relationship, what’s happening to us...The issue is not that other people have repeatedly broken promises; it’s that the string of disappointments*”.

has caused you to lose trust in them: you're beginning to doubt their competency and doubt their promises, and this is affecting the way you treat one another".

**2. Consider other possible issues by exploring "what came after the behavior (the consequences) as well as what came before it (the intent)."**

**3. "Choose from the list by asking what you do and don't want: for yourself, others, and the relationship."**

**-Once you know which issue to discuss:**

"You have to *distill the issue to a single sentence*. Lengthy descriptions of violated expectations only obscure the real issue. If you can't reduce a violation to a clear sentence before you talk, the issue almost never becomes more understandable and focused as a conversation unfolds."

**-IF:**

"You have to decide if you're going to say anything. Do you speak up and run the risk of causing a whole new set of problems, or do you remain silent and run the risk of never solving the problem?"

**-To determine if you are staying silent for the wrong reasons, ask yourself:**

"Am I acting out my concerns?"

"Is my conscience nagging me?"

"Am I choosing the certainty of silence over the risk of speaking up?"

"Am I telling myself that I'm helpless?"

## **2. Master Your Stories – Being well informed**

Once we know we need to have a conversation and what we need to address, "work on your own thoughts, feelings, and stories before you utter a word". If we are convinced they are wrong, our attitude may be wrong as we talk which will destroy the outcome. That will be our fault, not the other person.

**-Tell the rest of the story.**

"Ask why a reasonable, rational, and decent person would do what you've just seen as well as if you yourself are playing a role in the problem."

**-Look at all six sources of influence.**

There are many things that influence our decisions, dig deep to give others the benefit of the doubt.

<b><i>6 Sources of Influence</i></b>	<b>MOTIVATION</b>	<b>ABILITY</b>
<b>Personal</b>	<b>1. Want To:</b> “Do they want to?” If this is the only influence we consider our view is limited.	<b>2. Can Do:</b> “Can others do what’s required? Does the requisite task play to their strength or weakness?”
<b>Social</b>	<b>3. Peer Pressure:</b> “Do others praise and support the desired behavior, or do they provide pressure against it?”	<b>4. Help from Others:</b> “Are people around them a help or a hindrance?”
<b>Structural</b>	<b>5. Carrots &amp; Sticks:</b> “Is the reward system aligned? If people do what’s required, will they receive a reward or punishment?”	<b>6. Structure, Environment &amp; Tools:</b> “Do the things around them provide a bridge or a barrier?”

## **II. DURING an accountability discussion**

“When another person has let you down, start the conversation by simply describing the gap between what was expected and what was observed.” Describing it as a Gap rather than “violated expectations,” or “broken commitments” helps to create safety. If people feel attacked a solution may not be reached.

### **Starting the conversation (Steps 1-3):**

#### **1. Start with safety**

“If you can create safety, you can talk with almost anyone about almost anything—even about failed promises.”

#### **-People will begin to feel unsafe if:**

1. They think you don't respect them (mutual respect)
2. They think you don't care about their goals (mutual goals)

“At the very first sign of fear, you have to diagnose. Are others feeling disrespected? Or do they believe you’re at cross-purposes? Or both? Then you have to find a way to let others know that you respect them and that you’re not going to trample all over their wishes.”

#### **-Restoring Safety:**

**Contrasting-** “First, imagine what others might erroneously conclude. Second, immediately explain that this is what you *don't* mean. Third, as a Contrasting point, explain what you *do* mean.”

#### **-Establish Mutual Purpose:**

“Build common ground before you even mention a problem. Let others know that your intentions are pure—that your goal is to solve a performance gap and make things better for both of you.”

**-Ask Permission:**

**-Speak in Private:**

## 2. Share your path

**-Start with the facts:**

“Stay external”; “explain What, not Why”; and make sure you do your homework to “gather facts”. The facts are “the least emotional and controversial element.”

**-Tentatively share your story or conclusion:**

“Make sure your language is free of absolutes. Trade “You said” for “I thought we agreed.” Swap “It’s clear” for “I was wondering if.””

**-Watch for safety problems:**

If someone becomes defensive: “step out of the content and rebuild safety. Decide whether the problem is that the other person feels *disrespected* or believes your *intentions* are bad (or both). Then use the **Contrasting** skill.”

## 3. End with a question:

“End with a simple diagnostic question: What happened? Make this an honest inquiry, not a veiled threat or an accusation such as “What’s wrong with you!””

## 4. Listen to their response:

-Does their response reveal that they *didn’t want* to do something?  
If yes, then they have a **motivation problem**.

-Does their response reveal that they *weren’t able* to do something?  
If yes, then they have an **ability problem**.

**-NOTE:** Sometimes it is BOTH. If someone doesn’t have the ability it is also demotivating.

## 5. Respond according to the type of problem (*Motivation* or *Ability*):

**-Motivation problems (Make it MOTIVATING!):**

“Here’s what motivation comes down to: change others’ view of the consequence bundle, and their behavior will follow.”

**-Approaches to avoid:**

“One thing is for certain: three of the more popular methods—charisma, power, and perks—don’t work very well. They all have the potential to change ... people’s behavior. Unfortunately, relying on these heavy-handed methods can be dangerous and rarely sustains behavior over the long run.”

**-Remind them of natural consequences:**

“Consequences motivate. Motivation isn’t something you do to someone. People already want to do things. They’re motivated by the consequences they anticipate. And since any action leads to a variety of consequences, people act on the basis of the overall consequence bundle... When dealing with someone who is pushing back, resist the temptation to jump to power. Search for consequences that matter to the other person.”

1. Link to Existing Values
2. Connect Short-Term Benefits with Long-Term Pain
3. Place the Focus on Long-Term Benefits
4. Introduce the Hidden Victims: Describe the effects an action is having on others.
5. Hold Up a Mirror: “Help others gain a view from the other side.”
6. Connect to Existing Rewards

**-Listen to Other’s view of Natural Consequences:**

They may know something you don’t know which gives a good reason for their behavior.

**-Stop when you reach compliance:**

**-Ability problems (Make it EASY!):**

NOTE: Sometimes people pretend it is a motivation problem when they really don’t know how or lack the planning skills to do something.

**-Jointly explore Barriers:**

Use the 6 Sources of Influence chart to brainstorm barriers

**-Avoid Quick Advice:**

**-Involve them in finding a solution:**

Don’t just *tell* them the solution. Involve them. “Involvement both enables and motivates”

**-Enables:**

“You’ve been working on the problem. What do you think needs to be done?”

**-Motivates:**

“When people are included in coming up with a potential solution, they’re more likely to be motivated to implement it... you empower them.”

**-Check both sides:**

If you started with Ability, check to see if Motivation is an issue or vis versa.

**-Ask for Feedback:**

**-Prime the Pump:**

If they are fearful to explore root causes, “take your best guess at possible causes, without looking stressed, miffed, or judgmental. This helps others start the flow of information by making it safe for them to speak honestly.”

**6. Make a plan:**

-“Decide *who* will do *what* and *by when*.”

-“Set a *follow-up time* in which you can check to see how things are going.”

**7. During the conversation if new problems emerge, “stay Focused and Flexible”:**

When a side-track happens, whether it is a new problem or an explosive emotion, be flexible enough to deal with the new problem or leave a “bookmark” at the original problem to come back to.

**III: AFTER an accountability discussion**

**-Follow-up (2 types):**

**-Check-up:**

You own the follow-up. Use when you are uncertain of the outcome.

**-Check-back:**

They are in charge. Use when it is a routine task that has been assigned to someone who is experienced and reliable.

#### **IV: Practices that ENABLE accountability to happen**

##### **-Create a Bedrock of Trust**

- 1. “Set clear and firm expectations.”**
- 2. “End by stating, “If something comes up, let me know as soon as you can.””**
- 3. “When you’re talking with someone who tries to excuse a missed assignment by saying that “something came up,” deal with this emergent problem—this violation of trust—as a new challenge. Never let it slide.”**