







## Ladder of Accountability Guidebook

### Statement 2: "I am going to help that person!"

How does this statement make you feel?

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**Write about how the below 2 statements make you feel:**

**Scenario: You look around your house and see job after job, piling on top of each other**

**Statement 1: "There is so much to do, why am I the only one that does anything around here?"**

How does this statement make you feel?

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**Statement 2: “I’m going to make a list, get it done, ask for help and set a game-plan so we stay on top of things next time.”**

How does this statement make you feel?

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The likelihood is that the 1<sup>st</sup> statements made you feel:

- A victim, helpless, a bystander, uninterested or detached.
- Like life happens to you and that you are overwhelmed and stressed.

Whereas the 2<sup>nd</sup> statements probably helped you to feel:

- Motivated, empowered, in control, resourceful and relieved.
- Like you knew what needed to be done.

**“Accountability is about **SILENCING** the thoughts that life is happening **TO YOU** and **EMBRACING** the fact that life is happening **BECAUSE OF YOU.**”**

- Simon Tickner

## Ladder of Accountability Guidebook

The Ladder of Accountability has 8 rungs, 4 of which are Victim mind-sets:

1. "I don't know"
2. "Blame others"
3. "Excuses"
4. "Wait & hope."

The last 4 are Accountable mind-sets:

1. "Acknowledge reality"
2. "Own it"
3. "Find solutions"
4. "Make it happen"

As you climb up the ladder, you become more accountable and begin to power your way through to success. We call this moving from Victim to Victor.

Lets look at each rung in more detail, starting at the bottom rung and working our way to the top:

### Rung 1 - "I don't know"

At the bottom rung of accountability is 'I don't know!' at this stage people simply don't know that there is a problem. They are completely unaware that the problem exists or that something needs attention. We are surrounded by topics and situations we don't know about - if we knew about them all we would likely have information overload. It makes sense then that we are all at this rung in some aspect of our lives - it's up to you to identify it and decide if you want to take action.

This stage could be something simple as using an old process at work and saying "I did it because it's what we've always done!" - when in reality the process is no longer fit for purpose. You may not have known it was an issue at the time, because you simply hadn't taken a step back to consider the risks of taking the actions you did, or if there were any opportunities to improve.

How many times have couples said to each other "How am I meant to know unless you tell me?"









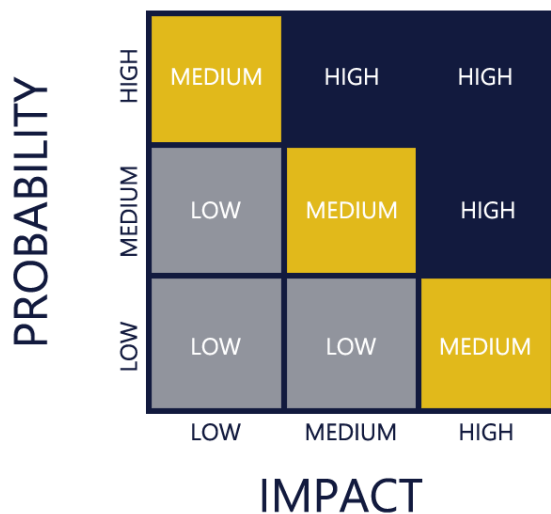
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**Risk assessments** aren't just for businesses. Have you thought about what would happen if giant ants from space came to enslave the earth? What would your emergency plans be for yourself and your loved ones? Yes - we got a bit crazy there but there is nothing wrong with creating an emergency plan in case of: natural disasters, burglaries, redundancy and so on. These are all things people can have a Victim Mind-Set about with questions such as "How was I meant to know?" or "What can I do about it?"

In reality though, there's a simple answer: Risk assess and plan. Ideally do this proactively and before the event occurs but occasionally things happen and we have to react. The best way forward once you have a plan in place is to figure out how to stop similar situations occurring in the future.

Consider a simple 9 point Risk Assessment - Impact /Probability grid that may help you identify what risks you are best placed to focus on.

### The 9 Point Grid - Probability and Impact Assessments



Prioritise your risks with the probability and impact grid.

**Step 1** - Identify the probability of the risk event occurring. Is it low, medium or high? Draw a horizontal line across that row. For example, a low probability event would have a line across the bottom 3 squares.

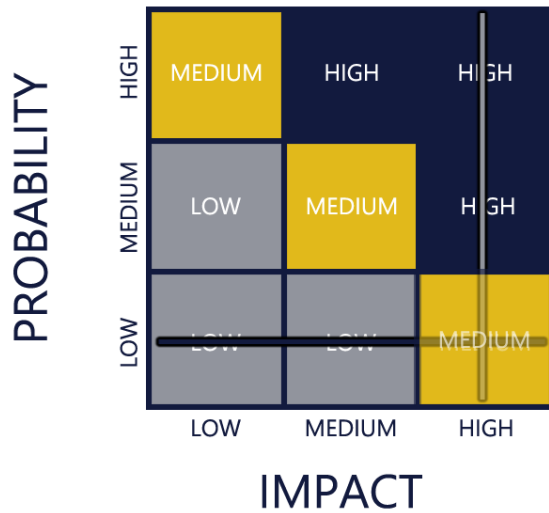
**Step 2** - Identify the impacts of the risk event should it happen. Draw a vertical line up on the grid based on it being low, medium or high.

**Step 3** - Find the grid where the 2 lines meet, this is your risk level.

For example, if you were assessing the risk of being made redundant and you are in a secure job where it is unlikely you will be let go, you would start at the 'Low Probability' row in the above image. If that job was well paying and you have lots of financial commitments, we can agree that the impact of redundancy would be high and so you would need to go to the grid point: Low Probability/High Impact. This Grid axis takes us to a "Medium" risk level as outlined on the next page:

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## The 9 Point Grid - Probability and Impact Assessments



The probability of redundancy is low and is shown by the blue horizontal line.

The impact of the redundancy is high and is shown by the grey vertical line.

The point where both lines meet is the Risk level - in this case, the lines cross on the Medium grid.

**Draw your own 9 point grid below and run a few quick Risk Assessments through it.**





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### Rung 2 - “Blame Others”

This is the phase where people want to shift the uncomfortable spotlight from themselves onto someone else. Whilst this can temporarily ease the pressure, it doesn't make you feel better in the long run, it doesn't get us to a solution faster, it damages relationships and it can make us feel guilty and ashamed later on.

In the words of Extreme Ownership Authors Jocko Willink and Leif Babin:

“Once people **stop making excuses**, **stop blaming** others, and **take ownership**... they are compelled to take action to **solve** their **problems**. They are **better leaders**, better followers, more **dependable** and actively contributing team members, and **more skilled** in aggressively driving toward **mission accomplishment**.”

- Jocko Willink, Leif Babin  
Extreme Ownership

So how do we stop blaming others and start being more accountable? Here are 6 quick steps:

- 1) Recognise
- 2) Refocus
- 3) Review
- 4) Rescue
- 5) Reflect
- 6) Recommend

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### Step 1: Recognise

You have to be aware of yourself when you are mentally or verbally placing the blame on someone else. Catch yourself doing it and stop the behaviour.

#### What are you thinking when blaming others?

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#### What are you feeling when blaming others?

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### What is your body language saying when placing blame?

Eg - arms folded is a defence posture, pointing a finger is an attack posture.

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### Step 2: Refocus

You are now aware that you were about to cast blame on someone else. Take a breath and quickly scan why you were about to do that, you might find the reason you are responsible for the issue.

### Why did you / do you cast blame?

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### Step 5: Reflect

We have fixed the issue at hand, all that's left to do is reflect on why mistakes were made, how to improve ourselves, processes and teams to make us more efficient in the future.

#### What could you do differently in the future?

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### Step 6: Recommend

All that's left now is to make recommendations so that this doesn't happen again. Up your accountability here and take some time to do a wider risk analysis to see if there is anything else that could benefit from being reviewed. This is where great learning opportunities come from, put processes in place to ensure your success in the future. Working with a team here helps build future accountability so consider facilitating a session on the best way forward.

#### How could you involve others in the solution?

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Here are 3 common reasons people pass blame, why they don't work and what you can do about it:

## 3 key reasons people blame others and why they don't work.



### Protect their Self-Image

**Why it wont work:** You will be seen as someone that is only out for themselves. People will see through the blame as a way to protect yourself - damaging relationships and lessening peoples opinions of you.

**What you can do about it:** Put your ego in check, understand that life is a learning journey and ask yourself what's better: protecting your ego or learning to be more successful and resourceful (which will likely do wonders for your image).



### Disliking Someone

**Why it wont work:** Harboring resentment isn't going to make you feel better or fix the solution. People will see what you are doing and may rally around your victim.

**What you can do about it:** Consider the reasons you don't like the person, are they acting that way because they simply don't know better or weren't shown a better way? Use empathy with people, assume they had the best intentions. Be kind.



### Blame is Easy

**Why it wont work:** The easy road rarely pays off. You aren't building the tools to be successful in the future. What will you do when there's no one left to blame? Don't waste time - start practicing now for when you need it.

**What you can do about it:** Embrace the hard road. Don't make things unnecessarily complicated or difficult but do things you don't want to do. For example, a cold shower everyday - it sucks but you set yourself up for the day mentally. Find things you don't want to do, do them and grow.

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### Rung 3 - "Excuses"

As coaches, we hear excuses all of the time, such as:

- "I can't!"
- "I don't have the time!"
- "No one is supporting me! What if I fail?"
- "I cannot do this on my own!"
- "This is too difficult, nobody could do this!"
- "Of course THEY did it, they had support!"

People that say these kinds of things don't tend to recognise them as excuses, they think they're legitimately unmovable obstacles. As coaches we tend to call them 'Limiting Beliefs' and it's something we are very good at challenging, reframing and helping people overcome.

A limiting belief is an assumption you hold about yourself or your situation that isn't actually true. It's our job as coaches to challenge this thought process through questioning and curiosity. We know that Limiting Beliefs often come from 3 main places: fear, uncertainty and self-doubt.

Once you have identified where these excuses or limiting beliefs are coming from, you can start to question your thought process on them.

#### Limiting Beliefs

**Write down 3 - 5 Limiting beliefs or excuses you hold about yourself or your situation.**

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It's important to listen out for limiting beliefs and excuses. By effectively challenging them you open up the door to accountability and success. Once we have successfully navigated the excuses and limiting beliefs, the next rung on the ladder is Wait and hope.

### Rung 4 - "Wait and Hope"

This is the last of the Victim mind-sets on the Ladder of Accountability. Whilst it isn't blaming others, making excuses or being unaware of the situation, there is still a clear lack of accountability that needs addressing.

Do not waste your time and energy falling back down the ladder. Here are 3 quick and simple ways to get passed Wait and Hope:

- 1) Do it yourself.
- 2) Explain to someone why you cannot do it and ask for help.
- 3) Offer to take work from someone else so they will have the time to do it.

**How empowered do you feel when waiting for someone else to act?**

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Once we understand how important acknowledging reality is, we need to establish how much of what we are seeing is raw factual data and how much of it has been interpreted by ourselves through our beliefs and assumptions.

Living in the facts and acknowledging reality is a powerful skill to develop. Keep working on it every time you feel your emotions getting the better of you.

Here are 3 more great questions we have highlighted in our previous article on the GROW model. They use a method called 'Chunking down', which is when you take an emotive statement and ask a question designed to break the emotional pattern and focus on a factual and logical answer.

**Chunking Down Questions**

Below are 3 examples of **Chunking Down** Questions. The top speech bubbles in blue are from the person being coached and the bottom speech bubbles in yellow demonstrate the coaches responses. Remember to Chunk Down to find **specific information**.

- “I am going to give up, no one is supporting me.”  
“What facts have you considered before making this decision?”
- “I just can't do it! It's too hard! It's impossible!!!”  
“Tell me specifically, what's stopping you from achieving this?”
- “I'm probably going to sort it soon.”  
“When exactly will you take this action?”

A great question for most situations is: “Tell me more about your thoughts on this.”  
Remember the power of an effective question.

DEVELOP THE EDGE  
ENGAGE RECOVER GROW OULVE





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**Rung 6 - "Embrace it"**

This is the stage that can be quite difficult as you now have the facts, it's time to embrace your responsibility for what happened. When you own the mistake or problem. You are more determined to solve it. This stage is a constant battle with your ego as it pushes back from taking blame and wants to shout about all the things it has done not the 1 thing it hasn't. The problem is, the 1 thing you didn't do is the cause of the problem. There is no point running a 100m race and stopping at the 99th meter.

**"If...self-motivation is low then the goal, and particularly the sense of ownership of the goal should be reviewed."**

**- John Whitmore**  
Coaching For Performance

As Whitmore said, ownership leads to motivation and thus results. If you take ownership of the problem, you will be driven to find a solution.

Think back to a time where you felt like there was no-way you could have been accountable for a problem or situation - when it was 100% someone else's fault. Take a different perspective on it now and think about what you could do to change that - what could you make yourself accountable for in that situation?

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Now that we have embraced our accountability of the problem, the next step is vital - Find a Solution.

### Rung 7 - "Find a solution"

It's pointless just taking ownership of a mistake, you have to learn from it and try to fix it. Consider the immediate way forward for the problem or situation and how you will take responsibility for it.

We also need to learn from our mistakes, so with your clear view on what went wrong from the Embrace it stage, start to come up with solutions that will stop it happening again.

Ariana Glantz has a TED talk about finding solutions where she acknowledges how scary it can be to start looking for solutions, especially if we don't initially think we have the tools or confidence to do it. To help overcome this, she has created a simple 5 step process for generating the way forward.:

#### 1) Mindset

Make being solutions minded part of your identity. Before sitting down, remind yourself that you are a person that is focused on finding solutions. If your brain keeps drifting back to the problem, redirect it to the solution.

#### 2) Structure

Create your own process for problem solving, whether it's a start to finish approach or is more about idea generation, know what works for you and make tweaks to it along the way.

#### 3) Question

Clarify the problem by asking questions about it - there's no point creating a solution if you haven't explored the problem - your solution may be wrong! Question colleagues, friends and subject matter experts for their opinions and ideas.

#### 4) Practice

Finding Solutions is a skill that takes time and practice, so use every problem as an opportunity to try out your new process.











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We thrive on helping people develop by sharing our knowledge of Learning Theory, Coaching tools and Leadership models with people as passionate about development as we are. We have taken time researching theories and utilising our coaching experience to build this Guidebook and provide you with as much value as possible. Consider taking a few minutes to think about and write down the most valuable thing you will take away from completing the Ladder of Accountability Guidebook:

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Based on completing this Guidebook and Article, take a few minutes to think about what you will STOP doing, what you will START doing and what you will CONTINUE to do:

| STOP | START | CONTINUE |
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We love to hear your feedback, so if you want to let us know what you liked or what you thought could have been better, write to us at: [Connect@DevelopTheEdge.com](mailto:Connect@DevelopTheEdge.com)

