



Accountability



Founding Sponsor



STRONGER COMMUNITIES TOGETHER™

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Welcome to *UP Skills for Work!*

The program helps you build your **soft skills** which include:

- motivation
- presentation
- adaptability
- attitude
- teamwork
- stress management
- accountability
- time management
- confidence

When you have these skills, you have the foundation you need to work well with others—at work, at home, and in your community. That's part of why employers are looking for people with strong soft skills!



Soft skills are ways of acting or thinking that make it easier to work well with other people. Sometimes they're called "people skills."

This workshop

Accountability affects how other people see us, and how we see ourselves.

In this workshop, we'll explore what accountability means to us, and why it's important. We'll talk about how to handle the challenges to being accountable when we're at work. We'll also learn some strategies for improving our accountability.

Partners in development of *UP Skills for Work:*

Futureworx



What is accountability?

Think about the word **accountability**. What does it mean to be accountable—to yourself, to your family, to your boss and coworkers?



Accountability is owning your actions, both the good and the bad.

It's caring about the quality of your work, words and actions.

It's also about being willing to:

- admit mistakes
- take responsibility for mistakes
- learn from mistakes

How accountable we are depends on our situation and our values. Being accountable, though, can make a big difference in how other people see us, and how we see ourselves.

Good accountability helps make our relationships better. It can make us feel better about ourselves, too.



Let's talk about it

- What does accountability mean to you?
- Does it mean something different at home than at work, or in the community?
- What's the best thing about being accountable?
- Why can it be hard to be accountable?



Getting started

Check the statement that sounds most like you.

- I'm always accountable. Accountability comes easily to me.
- I think I'm being accountable, but I probably don't own all my mistakes.
- I'm better at being accountable in some areas of my life than in others.
- I don't care much about being accountable.
- None of the above. Here's my situation:



A place for your notes:



Why is accountability important?

Accountability isn't about what we do. It's about taking responsibility for what we do.

It can be easier to own our actions when everything's going well. We can be proud of saying or doing something that made a situation better.

Accountability can be harder, though, when we make mistakes. It's not easy to say, "I said or did something that made this situation worse." And sometimes, it's hard to tell. Did we help or hurt? What seems small to us can be a big deal to the other people in our lives.



Meet Klara

Klara works the morning shift at a coffee shop. Her job is to open the shop and prepare the drinks and pastries for customers. The shop opens at 6:30 every morning. But Klara sometimes doesn't get to work until 6:45. It's only 15 minutes after opening, but when that happens, customers are often waiting outside the shop. Or they've given up and left.

When her boss asks Klara why she's late, she always has an excuse. The bus was late, or her alarm didn't go off, or she couldn't find her uniform.



Let's talk about it

- Do you think Klara is accountable?
- What do you think her customers would say? Her boss? Her coworkers?
- Would you want to work with Klara? Why or why not?
- Do you think Klara's accountability will affect her success at this job? What about her next job?



Accountability at work

What does accountability look and sound like to an employer, or a coworker?

How would they know if someone was accountable or not?

Use the table below to write down a couple of examples of being accountable and not accountable at work. What do people say or do to show their accountability at work?

	Accountable	Not accountable
Looks like this		
Sounds like this		

A place for your notes:



Values & accountability

If you know what your values are, it's easier to be accountable.

Values guide how we live our lives. They're the things that are important to us. We use our values to make important decisions, both at home and at work.

But what do values have to do with accountability?

Accountability to others changes depending on our situation. But accountability to ourselves always stays the same.

Remember what accountability means:



Accountability is owning your actions, both the good and the bad.

It's caring about the quality of your work, words and actions.

It's also about being willing to:

- admit mistakes
- take responsibility for mistakes
- learn from mistakes

When you're accountable to yourself, you're saying: I care about how I act. It's important to me. I owe it to myself to be the best I can be.

What we think of as "the best we can be" is different for each of us. It changes, depending on what our values are.

A place for your notes:



Being accountable to our values

Take a look at this list of values.

- Caring for others
- Being open-minded
- Doing the best job I can do
- Respecting others' beliefs
- Taking care of my health
- Being honest
- Learning new things
- Making enough money to support me and my family
- Being spiritual
- Spending time with people who are close to me
- Protecting the environment
- Making the world a better place
- Doing meaningful work
- Being creative
- Being a good team player
- Making time to have fun

Pick a value that's important to you.

What does it mean to be accountable to that value? At home, at work, in the community?

What would it look like to be unaccountable to that value?

How would being accountable or unaccountable to that value make you feel about yourself?



Accountability is complicated

If accountability were easy, we'd all be good at it. But we all struggle with accountability sometimes.

Sometimes our values conflict with each other. Sometimes they conflict with the values of other people in our lives. Being accountable in those situations is complicated.



Meet Ryan

Ryan works at a grocery store. He stocks shelves in the evenings, and he does a good job. Two of Ryan's values are working hard and not wasting anything. He sees a lot of waste at the grocery store, and it drives him crazy.

Sometimes, Ryan notices cans that are dented. Or their packaging is torn. He knows that his manager will tell him to throw the damaged cans away, so he takes them home instead. They're still good food, and not wasting is really important to him.

When his boss sees him putting damaged cans in his bag one day, she gets very upset. She asks him why he's stealing. Ryan doesn't know what to say.



Let's talk about it

- How do you think Ryan would describe his accountability? What would his boss say, or his coworkers?
- What advice would you give Ryan for this conversation with his boss?
- What do you think Ryan could have done to avoid this situation?



Effects of accountability

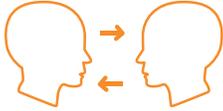
When we're accountable, it affects a lot of things:

- our relationships
- our reputation
- our career
- our well-being

When we're not accountable, it affects those same things, too. Just in different ways.

Take a look at the situations below where someone is not being accountable at work. How do you think each action helps the person's relationships, reputation, career and well-being? How does it hurt them? Think about the short-term and long-term.

Situation	Helps:	Hurts:
Raj's coworker has an idea that makes their work go a lot faster. When their boss congratulates them on making such good time, Raj takes the credit.		
Lily sees a few of her coworkers bullying the new employee. She doesn't join in, but she doesn't say anything about it either.		
When Jon's boss gives him feedback, he ignores it. Jon thinks his work is just fine as is.		
Zeke is always late for meetings.		
When Mina's boss is out of the office, she takes a longer lunch and longer breaks.		



Accountability and others

So you want to be accountable at work. That's what your boss and your coworkers want, too. But being accountable is more than just wanting. You have to act. And that means putting yourself out there.

Remember the definition of accountability:



Accountability is owning your actions, both the good and the bad.

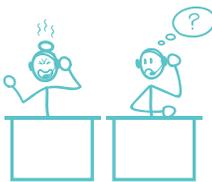
It's caring about the quality of your work, words and actions.

It's also about being willing to:

- admit mistakes
- take responsibility for mistakes
- learn from mistakes

To be accountable to others, we need to know a few things. What kind of quality of work do they need from us? What do they expect? And how do they think we're doing?

Our boss and coworkers don't always tell us. So to get answers, we need to be comfortable asking questions. And we need to listen to the answers we get.



Meet Manuel

Manuel works at a call centre for a large bank. He works hard to be polite to his customers, and to help solve their issues patiently. Jane, his coworker, sits beside him. She isn't as polite with her customers. She rushes through calls and tries to get as many done as she can. Their boss praises Jane for handling more calls than Manuel, but doesn't seem to care about her rudeness. Manuel starts to wonder if he's going about his job all wrong.



Let's talk about it

- What questions do you think Manuel could ask his boss to get feedback on the expectations for his job?
- What do you think Manuel should do next?



Accountability and you

Sometimes, you're the only one who knows what actions you're taking. It might seem like your poor accountability won't affect anyone but you. That might make your actions easy to brush off.

How your accountability affects you is important. Accountability can really affect your well-being!



Meet Maxime

Last month, Maxime's boss asked her to take on a special project, but she's been ignoring it. Whenever he comes by, she pretends to be working on it. When he asks her about it, she says it's going well. She figured she could get it done before he asks to see it at the end of the month, but now she's not so sure. Maxime is getting more and more anxious about it.



Let's talk about it

- How do you think Maxime's poor accountability is affecting her well-being? Take a look at the areas below. How could she be affected in the short-term? What about the long-term?

Areas of well-being	Short-term impact	Long-term impact
mental	stress about being called out by the boss	stress whenever she's given a special project
physical	hard time sleeping	too tired to do the things he/she cares about
financial		
relationships		
career		



Strategies for setbacks

We all have setbacks sometimes with our accountability. We get tempted to do something we know is wrong. We don't want to admit that we made a mistake. We don't think we have something important to learn from our mistakes. Or, we think whatever we might learn is not as important as telling ourselves and everyone else that we did the right thing.



A **setback** is a problem that slows down your progress toward a goal.



Meet Yves

Yves is a personal support worker at his local hospital. His job is rewarding, but can also be tiring and stressful. There's a lot to do, and it feels like everything's important. On the busiest days, Yves sometimes takes shortcuts to help get his work done. He might rush one client to the washroom instead of taking his time. He might check on a patient once a shift, instead of every hour. He might skim a nurse's notes instead of reading them all the way through. He knows he's not doing what his boss, coworkers and patients expect from him, but what can he do? It's not his fault the hospital has too much work and not enough staff.



Let's talk about it

- What do you think of Yves' reasons for taking shortcuts? Are they good reasons?
- Are they worth not being accountable to the people who depend on Yves?
- What advice would you give to Yves?



Think positively

So you've been unaccountable in the past. Or you were accountable and it meant admitting a mistake you made to someone you care about. Both of these situations can be hard. We want to feel good about ourselves. Thinking about what we've done wrong can make feeling good about ourselves difficult.

If you find yourself feeling down, remember to focus on the good you've done. Think about your values. And try repeating these positive sayings to yourself:

- I own my actions
- I care about what I say and do
- I take responsibility for my mistakes
- I learn from my mistakes
- _____ is important to me, and I'm good at it
- I'm important to _____



Let's talk about it

- What other sayings do you think could be helpful?
- Do you have any advice for feeling better about yourself?

A place for your notes:



Strategies for being accountable at work

So you want to be more accountable at work. What can help?

Try these strategies:

1. Do your best.

Remember, being accountable is something we work at every day. Think about who you want to be, and what you care about. Think about what your boss and coworkers expect from you. Try to act with those things in mind.

2. Ask questions.

If you're not sure what your boss or coworkers expect from you, ask! What they tell you can help you guide your actions to be more accountable. Asking shows them you care about being accountable, too.

3. Listen to others.

Whether it's expectations about your work, or feedback on how you're doing, pay attention to what other people are telling you. Think about what makes sense to you, and what you can act on. If you need more information, or don't understand, ask!

4. Admit your mistakes.

Remember that everyone makes mistakes, and that they're always an accident—that's what makes them mistakes! Practice admitting small mistakes, to yourself and then to others.

5. Change your behaviour.

So you've learned something from feedback from your boss or coworkers, or from a mistake you made. Now what? Think about how you can take that learning and be more accountable in the future. Make a list of what you're going to do.

6. Think positively.

Remember your list of positive sayings. Write them down, say them aloud, or think them to yourself. Add to the list when you think of new sayings that help you focus on the good.



Congratulations!

You've completed the *UP Skills for Work* Accountability workbook, and taken the next step in building your soft skills. For the last activity, we hope you'll make a pledge. The **pledge** can be personal, or you can share it with others.



A **pledge** is a serious promise to yourself or to others.

My pledge

I pledge to work on my accountability by:

Sometimes a pledge needs an **action plan**.



An **action plan** is a list of steps you'll take to make your pledge happen.

My action plan

Goal	
When I will reach it	
How I will reach it	
What I need to do first	
Who will support me	
Strategies for setbacks	