

SESSION 42: Accountability

WELCOME

Welcome again to our course on realizing a life of love! It's good to be with you!

If you're new to this course, I strongly recommend that you review the first ten sessions because they make up the core foundation. You'll need this to benefit from the remaining sessions.

SO LET'S GET STARTED

Again, as a reminder, the 3 As of awakening are *Attending*, *Appreciating*, and *Acting* with love. Attending leads to appreciation, which then leads to skillful loving action. Appreciation has two meanings, however: both understanding the nature of things and understanding the value or sacredness of Reality. Both of these aspects of appreciation arise from careful attending. Together, the twin practices of Attending and Appreciating, called "Appreciative Attending," generate wisdom and reverence, which enable us to fulfill our purpose—to nurture and savor Life. Inspired by reverence for Life, we can then take *Action* to benefit all of Life—others and ourselves—with a loving heart, while enjoying each brief and precious moment of existence.

In our last session, we discussed the love practice of patience. I hope you've had a chance to reflect on the practice of patience, and how to best cultivate more patience in your life. Where is it that you need to practice patience? Today, we will explore the love practice of accountability, both holding others accountable and taking accountability for our own lives and our actions.

What is Accountability?

Accountability is being responsible for our attitude, behavior, and success. It

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is also holding others accountable for managing their attitudes, behaviors, and successes.

When we take accountability for our actions, we stop blaming others, our past, or our circumstances for our behavior. We don't make excuses and move from victim to survivor. We take ownership of our actions, particularly our mistakes and failures, as well as the consequences of our actions.

When we take accountability for our attitude, we see that we have a choice about how we interpret and respond to both adversity and opportunity. Accountable people recognize that a negative attitude leads to poisonous negativity, which leads to negative outcomes. Conversely, accountable people see that an appreciative attitude promotes appreciation and positive behaviors, which lead to positive outcomes.

While we can't control a lot of what happens to us, we can control how we react to what happens. When we're accountable, we realize that how we respond is a choice. We can react destructively and give up, or we can respond in ways that improve the situation. We can choose to hope and persevere.

Accountable people make the best of their circumstances, playing the cards they were dealt as best they can and making the best of difficult situations.

Accountability also means being reliable and having integrity. Accountable people do what they say and say what they mean. When we're accountable, the person we are on the outside matches who we are on the inside. We do the next right thing to the best of our ability. We keep our promises or at least take accountability when we can't do so because of circumstances

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beyond our control.

Lack of accountability is hypocrisy. We lack it when our words and actions don't line up. We blame others and make excuses as a result of fear and dependency. Our fear is borne of a lack of faith in our own goodness and adequacy, and our dependency is borne of a yearning that someone else will take care of us. When we're secure in our goodness and know that we can succeed with the help of others, we can take accountability for our lives. When we see that it's ultimately up to us to create our lives, we can counter laziness and do what needs to be done.

When we take full ownership, we empower ourselves and take control of situations. We look for the greatest potential outcome for all involved and do what we can to achieve it. If we fail or fall short, we admit our mistakes.

Accountable people take responsibility for managing their vulnerabilities, including asking others for help when needed.

When we're accountable, we face and work through our fears so that we can achieve our goals. We don't let fear or negative, limiting beliefs hold us back. In this way, accountability requires the courage to do what needs to be done despite our fears or even when these actions may be painful.

When we're accountable, we also take very good care of ourselves. We take responsibility for being our own ideal parent, treating ourselves as our own cherished child. We live with balance and savor life, making sure we're good so that we can be good for others.

Accountability is a paradox, as we need to be kind to ourselves when we mess up, but at the same time own our mess-ups. We need to willingly

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accept the negative consequences of our unskillful behaviors and be willing to pick ourselves up, make amends, and clean up after ourselves, repairing the damage we've done.

Accountability takes a special form in recovery from addiction and other conditions where there's an impairment of free will. We're accountable in these situations for asking for the help we need to abstain from behaving destructively. We must empower ourselves through our humility and by surrendering to the need for help from others.

The practice of accountability also includes holding others accountable. We give credit to others for their skillful and virtuous deeds. At the same time, we don't let others off the hook for their mistakes and misdeeds. This doesn't mean that we're cruel or unkind. Just as we show ourselves compassion when we fall short, we also show others compassion when they flounder and cause harm. We see that, while painful, people need to experience the natural negative consequences of their unskillful behaviors. Recognizing pain as an invaluable teacher, we don't shield others from self-generated pain when it can nurture their growth. Doing otherwise is enabling, which is unloving.

To hold others accountable is to have realistic expectations that they will behave responsibly. Expectations are loving if they're realistic. When we hold people accountable for doing their best, we help them be their best.

Benefits of Accountability

Accountability enhances our success and vitality. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy because the more we believe we're the master of our own fate, the truer it is. So, it's loving to believe in ourselves and our capacities. It's

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loving to expect ourselves to be able to live a virtuous life for the benefit of all. When we hold ourselves to this expectation, we're empowered to live our best life and get the help we need along the way. When we take accountability for managing our disabilities and vulnerabilities, we motivate ourselves to do what's necessary with the help of others.

When we realize our fate is in our own hands, taking accountability is motivating and inspiring. Self-belief counters defeat and despair.

Because we don't want to let others down, accountability accelerates our performance. It keeps us engaged when times are difficult. It helps us to sustain effort and persevere. By eliminating excuses, accountability helps us to stay responsible.

Because accountable people are reliable and make amends and reparations when they cause harm, accountability promotes healthy, harmonious, trusting relationships.

Being accountable to others makes us more effective in helping because we follow through. Accountability also boosts productivity, which makes us more valuable to others. As we give value, so will others give value back to us. In this way, accountability promotes the prosperity of everyone.

It's loving to hold others accountable, as it boosts their success and helps them be the best they can be. When we believe in others, we help them to believe in themselves.

How to Practice Accountability

Just like all the love practices, accountability is a practice that requires

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intentional, sustained effort over a lifetime. It can be difficult. If you're tired after a long day at work, and you promised to make dinner, keeping that promise means tapping into your energy reserves and persevering. If you said you would exercise every morning, getting out of bed can be tough, so you'll need energy to stick to your pledge.

Accountability requires two parts: internal control and external support. Internally, set expectations for yourself, and commit to meeting them by developing positive life habits and overcoming the obstacles you'll inevitably face. You'll need discipline when holding yourself and others to a certain standard. To face adversity and to be creative and resourceful, you'll need resilience. You must commit to doing and being the best you can. Of course, to have a fulfilling life, you need others, but your success in life is ultimately up to you.

To live an accountable life, focus on today—on this moment. What are you doing right now to achieve your life vision? Look at how you're living your life. Are you wasting time in passivity, negativity, or distraction? Is your life made up of good habits or bad ones? Commit to making small, incremental positive changes in your habits to build a life of good ones. Make a vow to yourself that you'll take very good care of yourself no matter what. See that you have a sacred responsibility to both yourself and others to live the best life possible. Recognize that you've been given a one-time gift of this precious life, and the time to live your best life is right now because it's your one chance.

Externally, make yourself accountable to others by announcing your goals and intentions to the world. Set firm and public deadlines for tasks. Obtain an accountability partner (purpose partner) or develop an accountability group. Tell them what you're going to do and when you're going to do it.

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Ask them to hold you responsible for keeping your commitments.

Use your supports to validate your ideas and actions. Lean on the wisdom of others, and seek out mentors, coaches, teachers, students, and friends. Ask them for suggestions, as well as for honest feedback. Ask them to point out your blind spots so that you can see yourself more clearly.

Be willing to say, “I don’t know, but I’ll find out.” Then, act to find out what you need to know.

Admit when you’re wrong, and fix your mistakes, repairing any harm you’ve caused.

Don’t be afraid to make promises and commitments. They are action motivators. Once you’ve made them, do everything in your power to keep them.

If possible, let yourself work under the observation of others. You’ll perform better when people are watching you.

Don’t run from failure. Instead, learn from it. Use failures as pathways to success. Along the way, live a no-excuse life. Take 100 percent responsibility for everything you do and don’t do. Let yourself be imperfect and fallible, just like everyone else. Life isn’t about being perfect; it’s about meaning and fulfillment.

Empower yourself by asking for help when you need it. Don’t be afraid to see the truth of a situation, even if it’s painful. Acknowledge the reality of things. Brainstorm solutions and make them happen. Don’t allow fear or laziness to get the best of you. Be courageous enough to give your very best effort.

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Above all, renounce blaming, complaining, and passivity. When others point out your faults and mistakes, don't get defensive. Instead, thank them for helping you to see things more clearly and for helping you to grow. Remember that you have blind spots and a shadow side that others can see much better than you. The feedback and criticisms of others are key ingredients of your success, so treasure them.

Whatever you do, look for the best possible outcome for everyone involved. Abstain from acting until you're clear about the next right action so that you can avoid causing harm. Take whatever time is needed to figure it out, but then act when you see the way forward.

Be virtuous, and let yourself be an inspiration to others through the way you live your life. Give others support and guidance if requested and needed. Hold others accountable with firmness and kindness without resorting to harshness. Combine accountability with unrelenting hope for others. Help them believe in themselves by believing in them.

Accountability is difficult and requires hard work, humility, and intentional practice. Motivate yourself by seeing that accountability is essential for your happiness, wellbeing, and success.

Start your accountability practice right now. You'll be amazed at how much better your life will be a year from now and the fulfilling life you will create for yourself in the years to come.

OUR NEXT SESSION

In our next session, we'll discuss the love practice of integrity. This critical practice of doing the next right thing is a cornerstone of the practice of loving.

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In the meantime, between now and then, I encourage you to practice the following:

1. Continue your daily presence practice—both a period of silence, solitude, and stillness in the morning and your practice of stillness in motion through the day.
2. Start your day with a morning intention to love. You might want to recite a daily intention in the form of a prayer as in the dedication to love prayer in the meditations in the resource section of my website.
3. Practice appreciative attending. Inquire deeply into your experience with kind, curious eyes, especially if you're in pain. Ask, "what is this?" and affirm, "this is sacred." Continue to let go of negative judgments.
4. Read this lesson on accountability. Reflect on the benefits of accountability and on any barriers to holding yourself or others accountable that you experience. Are there any opportunities that you see to enhance your practice of accountability? If so, add these to your daily intentions.

Please take some time after our session today to share your reflections with your fellow members of the WellMind community and to read what others have to say as well. Let us share and support each other in our exploration of love!

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