

Finding Accountability & Support

Partly adapted from Mark Laaser, *Faithful & True: Sexual Integrity in a Fallen World*, Nashville, TN: 1996.

“Addiction is born in secrecy and dies in community.”

Building a Support Network

As men, we naturally tend to try to solve problems by ourselves at first. When we run into challenges beyond our ability, we consult with others to take advantage of their greater insight and skills. We do this in our occupation, in sports, and other practical arenas.

When it comes to our inner life, however, we are often tempted to go to extremes to take care of ourselves, even when it is clear we need extra help. We tell ourselves no one will understand us. No one will relate with how we think and feel. No one will respect us if they know our weaknesses. No one will like us. No one wants to be bothered with our problems; they have their own.

Rest assured that there are plenty of other men dealing with exactly the same issues. You have more in common with others than you may think. If we stick together and encourage one another, we'll find insight, power and strength.

But there is no way to discover this except by taking the risk of opening up to other men.

Healthy Male Relationships

In a brick wall, each brick is supported by at least six others: Two above, two below and one on either side. This structure of six allows each brick to be removed without the wall getting unstable.



So it is with us men. The optimal arrangement for us to live in an empowering and growthful flow of giving and receiving love and respect is to have at least six such men in our lives, two of each of three positions:

- a) Seniors/Mentors (above) – Older or at least wiser, more experienced men to go to for perspective and guidance and from whom to receive vertical love.
- b) Peers/Comrades (side by side) – Equals with whom he can be brothers-in-arms, exchanging mutual, horizontal support.
- c) Juniors/Mentees (below) – Younger or less experienced men for whom he can be a mentor, giving vertical love and being reminded of his wiser self.

Successful men understand this need and intentionally arrange to have these relationships in their lives. As circumstances change and people no longer fill these positions, they adapt and find new ones to take their place.

Question to consider:

1. *What men do you now have in these three positions: Mentors, Comrades, Mentees?*
2. *How might you find another mentor? Mentee? Comrade?*

Arranging for a Support

A core skill for overcoming the habit of excessive independence and self-sufficiency is to learn to reach out for contact with others when we are in need, rather than reaching for our habit to self-medicate. “In need” means when we are feeling empty or anxious or otherwise uncomfortable with our feelings.

That’s why connecting with your “brothers in the struggle,” and mentors during the week is such a valuable discipline.

Additional resources for support

- Bulletproof Integrity Group
- 12 Step Group, either in person or by phone

Accountability

Accountability is a key to productivity. Successful businesses and organizations make sure that someone is accountable for any given task. Accountability means that you make an account—a report—of your work or your life to someone else.

Healthy and successful individuals also understand it is the key to achieving their positive goals and overcoming bad habits. They are all the stronger to recognize that even the greatest strength has limits, and no one can go it alone. They recognize they have blind spots and limitations and arrange for someone to help them shore up their weaknesses so they don’t bring them down.

You've heard the wise saying, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." Similarly, if you fail to plan for accountability, you plan to fail.

Accountability is smart

Athletes have their trainers. Executives sign on with personal coaches. Twelve Step group members have sponsors.

So it is only smart to enlist another's assistance to overcome a bad habit—whether it be procrastination in tackling our bills, reluctance to exercise, a tendency to eat too much, or viewing pornography.

Getting accountability and support can be as simple as requesting that a friend ask us every week about our progress.

Or it can be as involved as reporting in about the habit on a daily basis, enlisting multiple accountability partners, having our activities electronically reported to someone else, and so on.

Question to consider

- 3. How do you use accountability in your life right now? Do you have anyone—or anything, like a smartphone app—helping to remind you to stay on track with your goals?*

Break secrecy, gain awareness

Knowing that someone else knows what we are doing with a habit can be a powerful incentive to make better choices, especially with online habits.

If we all knew our internet browsing habits were being watched by others, most would never venture to porn sites—or even waste all that time on cat videos!

The porn habit thrives on secrecy. And so that secrecy means that we are alone with our weaknesses and getting defeated. Breaking through that isolation and secrecy is one key purpose of accountability.

The porn habit like all bad habits also depends on a certain degree of unawareness—we don't fully realize what we are doing, how often we do it and how it is affecting us.

The other key purpose of accountability is to make us increasingly aware of our habit so we have a basis to start getting more control over it.

Accountability supports self-discipline

Accountability has a lot of unpleasant connotations—like control, accusation, monitoring to find something wrong to criticize or punish. What it means in this

context is being proactive, seeking help to raise our awareness, remind us of our better intentions and strengthen our own inner resources.

Accountability partners are an external support to our internal discipline. They are the back up to our own conscience and self-control. They are like the training wheels when we learned to master riding a bike. Or a wake-up call from the front desk that we set up in addition to setting our alarm.

They are not appointed to be police. They are not there to stop you from doing the wrong thing, or make sure you do the right thing. They don't control you and they are not responsible for your success. They are there to help remind you of what you want and how to get there and not get there. They listen and help you think things through, and offer support for your better self.

They will also give you feedback or even confront you if they believe you have become blind and slipping into what you have declared you don't want.

Accountability Team

A team of accountability partners is a strong accountability system. Everybody needs such a team to discuss key areas of their lives—marriage, parenting, finances, and so on.

Start by choosing two individuals to be on your accountability team. You want several point persons in place so that you are likely to be able to reach one of them when needed.

Guidelines for Selecting an Accountability Team

1. Look for people who are:
 - a. Able to keep confidentiality and who don't gossip about others.
 - b. Mature in way they conduct their lives.
 - c. Able to be honest with you and lovingly confront you when needed.
 - d. Have learned how to make changes in their own lives.
 - e. Further ahead in the process of developing healthy sexuality than you.
2. You will know these people by the peace and stability you sense in them.
3. Determine how much of your story you want to tell initially. Write it down on paper as a way of practicing what you will say.

Whom not to choose

Avoid close friends

It is usually wise not to choose close friends for your accountability team. You may think close friends know you well, but you may not have been honest with

them about your secret thoughts, desires, and actions. Close friends may be unable to be honest with you and confront you for fear of hurting your feelings.

Avoid poor examples

Also, avoid someone who is not clearly successful or at least determined to conquer their unhealthy sexual attitudes and behaviors. Otherwise, they may be faced with you confessing the same activities which they are indulging in their own lives. They have an incentive to minimize it in your life so they can continue to rationalize in theirs.

Thus you can have a tacit agreement developing where “I won’t call you on your misbehavior if you don’t call me on mine.” The discussions become an exchange of, “I acted out again,” “Yeah, me too; oh well, at least we’re talking about it,” and nothing changes.

Accountability methods

Personal contact

The next level will be to get contact information from your fellow group members to text and call them during the week. You will greatly increase your sense of camaraderie and support, and feel more at home during the group meetings.

You might also make a few lasting friendships--friends in recovery often make a lot deeper connections with each other than the friends we make at work, school or even church.

Online monitoring

Software like Covenant Eyes will monitor your browsing habits on your phone and other devices, and send a weekly or daily report to someone you choose. This person (or several people) can then ask you about your online activities.

Many wives ask to receive the report, but it is best if another man takes the lead to receive them and intervene with you as needed.

Ending the secrecy of your online wanderings can make a tremendous difference. At the same time, if this simply challenges you to find a way around it, it is of course useless.

Recovery apps

Apps like [rTribe](#) allow for daily check-in accountability. You rate how much you struggled that day from 1-3 and it's shared with the people in your circle.

Questions to consider

4. *What people might be qualified to be candidates as Accountability Partners for you, without considering the challenge of asking them?*

5. *What kind of support would you need to be able to ask them?*