

Accountability

Me, The Baby & The Elephant

By Judy Kay Mausolf ©

Just hearing the word accountability can give most of us an “ugh” feeling. What usually pops into mind is the why we can’t do it or the why we can’t get someone else to do it. I looked up the word accountability in the dictionary. No wonder it makes so many of us uneasy. Here are just a few words to describe it; affliction, blame, burden, concern, difficulty, excess baggage, fault, guilt, hardship, liability, load, punishment, strain, trouble, work worry!

Whew...no wonder we don’t want any part of it! But what if we shoved all those descriptions aside and merely looked at it as being the ability to count on someone else to do something. Would that really be so bad?

If we could count on someone else we could:

- Free our thoughts and actions to focus on something new
- Utilize the strengths of others that our greater than our own
- Build strong relationships by being able to rely on each other

Accountability in this light is really a win; win for the giver and receiver.

For example; If you’re an assistant and your doctor asks you to take on something new such as documenting the notes in the chart to free them up to spend more time with the patient. The more time spent with patients’ results in stronger and more sustainable patient relationships and the practice grows.

If you are a hygienist and the doctor asks you to take Intra Oral Camera pictures on any patient with prior unfinished treatment, new treatment needed or anything suspicious and have it up on the screen when they come in to do the exam. Having the pictures displayed result in the doctor spending less time spent explaining the treatment, shorter exam time, increased treatment acceptance and a healthy bottom line. Because of the healthier bottom line in both of these scenarios the assistant and the hygienist have job security and may even receive a bonus.

Who is the giver and who is the receiver of accountability? See how easily the lines get blurred. Who wins the most? The magic in mastering accountability is everyone wins!

Here are 3 key components to help you master accountability

- Me
- The Baby
- The Elephant

Me, it's where it all starts; that's where accountability begins. When we commit to taking personal responsibility for a task or a behavior and follow up with actions that support our commitment we create accountability. If we all took personal responsibility for tasks or behaviors, no one else would have to hold us accountable!

The Baby is task management which is often difficult to achieve. We have many different expectations, resulting in many different actions, resulting in many different outcomes, ending in a lack of accountability. The tasks you are responsible to complete on a daily basis are your babies. You are the parent responsible for the care of the babies. If you cannot take care of your baby on a certain day you need to find someone to take over the care for the day. We call this person the babysitter. (Parents may only request a babysitter for their babies (tasks) that must be completed during the current day.) The parent cannot just leave the baby on the counter or the floor in a baby pile or propped up somewhere in a corner hoping someone will see it and take care for it. The parent cannot toss the baby at another person as they walk by and hope they catch the baby. They cannot force the care of their baby on another person. *These are some things that happen with our tasks when we feel we are too busy?*

The parent must ask another person to take over the care of their baby. The babysitter must agree before the parent can hand over the care of their baby. The parent's role is not complete until they inform the babysitter exactly what they have done so far to care for the baby and the expectations to complete the care of the baby for the day. The babysitter is now responsible to update the parent at the end of the day regarding the care they completed.

If for some reason the babysitter gets too busy to care for the baby, they cannot just give the baby back to the parent and say I can't do it. The babysitter has assumed responsibility for the baby's care. They can ask the parent if they can take the baby back. However, if the parent can't, the babysitter is responsible to find another babysitter who will agree to take over the care of the baby (by following the same protocol). The initial babysitter must inform the parent who will be taking over the care of their baby. At the end of the day, the current babysitter is now responsible to hand the baby back to the parent and update the parent regarding the care they completed. Treating a task like a baby will create a high standard of accountability for managing tasks.

The Elephant is behavior management and the third component to mastering accountability. Together as a team establish a standard of behavior in your environment to include attitude, communication and actions. Hold everyone equally accountable, no exclusions or exceptions or you divide the team. Together establish protocol on how to address inappropriate behavior before it ever happens. This will enable everyone to feel confident to hold each other accountable. Everyone on the team has given each other permission. Monitor behavior daily by talking about at your daily huddle the previous day's successes and growth opportunities. Maintain as a team and update as a team when changes are necessary. This means no individual opt outs. If something isn't working, meet with the team, discuss it, resolve it, and maintain it.

The next time you are asked to take on something new, to be accountable; respond with gusto, you can count on me. Even if you don't know all the answers, just dive in and see who really wins in the end.