

# The Responsibility Process

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🤖 = note from Geoff | 💡 = resonated strongly with Geoff

## Part I: Responsibility in Everyday Life

### Introduction

- Taking 100% responsibility -- you see yourself as an agent for your success
- 🤖 The quotation from Derek Sivers is a slippery slope toward taking responsibility for things you shouldn't. People have control, but not over everything.
- 🤖 Where is the boundary for taking on too much responsibility?

# Responsibility

Owning your ability and power to create, choose, and attract

**OBLIGATION**

Doing what you should or have to instead of what you want to

Giving up to avoid the pain of Shame and burden of Obligation

**QUIT**

**SHAME**

Laying blame onto oneself, which is often felt as guilt

**JUSTIFY**

Using excuses for things being the way they are

**LAY BLAME**

Holding others at fault for causing something

Ignoring the existence of something

**DENIAL**

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- Each of these are traps that we can name and get out of.
- Self-leadership traits that resonated: strong sense of loyalty, strive for work-life balance and fall short because you feel bad about shorting other people, see other people have a life of ease and you wonder if you'll ever be able to.

### **What is personal responsibility?**

- The book covers free will vs determinism, attribution of guilt, and cognitive biases.
  - Free will -- individual choice and voluntary action
  - Determinism -- all things exemplify natural laws and have causes; human thought/behavior is determined solely by what came before it
- Self-efficacy -- the degree to which we believe we can produce the results we want
  - This is a skill that can be developed.
  - Mastery experiences -- failures lower self-efficacy
  - Social modeling -- if they can do it, I can
  - Social persuasion -- discouragement lowers self-efficacy faster than encouragement raises it
  - Physiological and psychological responses -- how we feel affects our ability to perform
- Socratic method -- what do you know, and how do you know it's true?
- The framers of the US Constitution chose a single person (instead of a public body) and that person can be removable from office.

### **Responsibility $\neq$ accountability**

- Responsibility is internal.
- Accountability is external (being held to account).
- Responsibility > Accountability
- Work suffers if...
  - A person's willingness to be responsible is missing
  - Responsibility is punished (i.e., people cannot think for themselves and only do what they are told)
- 💡 Performance management systems usually suck...
  - People need to be watched. Businesses need to increase perceived control over the business (i.e., false certainty).
  - Crafting a culture of responsibility (people naturally step up, take ownership, perform highly) is messy, imprecise, and challenging.
  - Accountability is based on a credible threat (do X or face the consequences).
  - Low levels of ownership and responsibility -> onerous and complex performance management systems.

- Commands, controls, evals, and corrections make people dependent on authority rather than thinking for themselves.
- 🙄 I think the above concepts that make accountability "unnecessary" only work if everyone is responsible. When you have 1 or more people that don't want to play along (I would argue it gets amplified the larger the group), you need these controls.

## Part II: Three Tools for Understanding and Practicing Responsibility

### The Responsibility Process

- The process shows how we think about things that are bothering us.
- 💡 The trigger for entering the states of Lay Blame, Justify, Shame, Obligation, and Quit is when what you have  $\neq$  what you want.
- These natural states are to be expected because we are human.
- Each state is its own trap.
- **Lay Blame** -- Who did this to us?
  - The problem is external -- someone else.
  - We are powerless victims who are not at fault.
- **Justify** -- What circumstances did this to us?
  - If you have ongoing complaints about some situation, you are in Justify.
  - The problem is happening to us and for it to go away, circumstances must change.
- **Shame** -- Laying blame on ourselves.
  - The problem is internal (e.g., not smart enough, don't deserve success).
  - We believe we lack what we need.
  - Culturally we are conditioned to be here. Taking responsibility and being shamed gets us praise for "owning up."
- **Obligation** -- I have to, but don't want to.
  - This is largely a cultural trance where keeping our commitments is considered good even if we don't like it.
  - Commitments are still important for life to function. Obligation is about the feeling you have.
  - Being stuck here...
    - People do the minimum required.
    - Resentment is a mental virus.
    - You can look responsible by societal standards.
- **Quit** -- Disengaging from the problem.
  - You want something and think you can't have it.

- People stay here to avoid Shame and Obligation.
- **Denial** -- Ignoring the existence of something.
- **Responsibility** -- Owning your own power and ability to create, choose, and attract your reality.

### The Three Keys to Responsibility

- **Intention** -- Your intention to operate from the mental state of Responsibility when things go wrong.
  - Being in any other state is coping with the problem rather than owning it.
- **Awareness** -- Notice your mental state when you are upset so you can make a conscious choice about whether to stay there.
- **Confront** -- Face your upset directly so you can uncover the real problem behind it, resolve it, and grow.
- The #1 approach to formal leadership development is developing self-awareness. Leadership is a relationship issue.
- When we operate from Responsibility, we see more clearly and can accept things as they are.
- If we aren't mentally present, we're time traveling.
  - In the past, we replay events where we blame others, justify conditions, shame ourselves, or resent commitments.
  - In the future, we catastrophize.
- Being present allows us to be mindful of what trap we're in and gives us the choice to stay trapped or escape.

### The Catch Sooner Game

This is a 4-step adaptive process for changing anything about yourself that you want to change.

1. **Catch** -- Catch yourself behaving in a way you want to change.
2. **Change** -- Demonstrate the desired behavior.
3. **Forgive** -- Forgive yourself for being human and not changing faster due to unconscious programming or conditioning.
4. **Vow** -- Vow to catch yourself sooner next time.

💡 Notes about the Forgive step...

- Most advice about behavior change is accompanied with holding yourself to account (beating yourself up, extinguishing unwanted behavior, punishing yourself for falling short [Shame]).

- We are good enough. The longer we hang out in Shame, the more we reinforce old habits.
- Beating ourselves up for not changing is a sure way to continue not changing.

## Part III: Practicing and Mastering Responsibility

### Lead Yourself First

- 💡 Error: Most people start applying the The Responsibility Process to other people and how *they* should change.
  - Most people mistake responsibility for "You should be good and do as I expect."
  - Responsibility is the mind's framework for growing or not growing.
- Every upset is an opportunity to learn. You cannot avoid upsets, but you can control what you do when they happen.
- Take it easy on yourself. These patterns/traps are part of a cultural trance that *you can decide* don't serve you.
- What Do I Want > What Should I Do
  - Recall that "should" = Blame / Obligation.
  - We've been taught that no matter what problem you have, someone else has already solved it. You don't need to think for yourself -- just be responsible to ask for the right answer and do as you're told.
- Relearning how to want
  - Most of us don't really know what we want (typical answers are vague things like success, money, relationships).
  - We grew up being told now to trust ourselves but to listen to well-intentioned parents, relatives, and teachers who told us what we *should* want. (This is informally called The LifeScript™.)
  - 🤖 This concept is similar to the one outlined in Dr. James Hollis' *Finding Meaning in the Second Half of Life* where living a life someone (usually your parents) want you to live is unfulfilling.
- Discover what you really want.
  1. **Discovery** -- What do you want to experience in your life in abundance on a daily basis? (Spend 1 hour or until you feel complete writing these down without editing.)
  2. **Organizing** -- Group items based on specific daily experiences.
  3. **Ordering** -- If I could experience one of these things in abundance on a daily basis, what would it be. Repeat with the remaining list.
- Craft better goals.

1. **Clarify intention** -- Be clear about what you want and intend to accomplish.
  2. **Focus attention** -- To make something happen you must focus attention on it.
  3. **Remove obligation** -- Too many goals become a burden. (Procrastination comes from Obligation.)
  4. **Generate energy** -- Good goals lead to excitement, motivation, and a deep desire to reach them.
- There is a life beyond Obligation.
    - "Many patterns in life and work may look like a burden to you -- something in which you are trapped and don't see a way out of -- just something you must deal with to live."
    - "Instead of giving in to Obligation, simply refuse to feel trapped, and that will lead your amazing mind to find new choices." 🤖 This reminds me of /r/thanksimcured.
  - Clarify your needs, wants, and demands.
  - 💡 If you feel stretched too thin, or overworked and underutilized, you are likely producing only 20% of the desired results from 80% of your time, energy, and efforts.
    1. Write down all of your commitments.
    2. Sort each commitment into *No*, *Yes*, and *Hell Yes*.
    3. Empty the *Yes* column.
  - Clean up your messes.
    1. Acknowledge your role.
    2. Apologize.
    3. Ask what you can do to make amends.
    4. Recommit to do better in the future.
  - Claiming wins builds the power of intention.
    - 💡 We focus on losses all day long, which sends us into victimhood.
    - We are in charge of our choices.
    - A win doesn't need to be large. It's not a size, but an intention met.
    - 💡 Our culture teaches us that only the big wins count.

### Sharing Responsibility, Sharing Leadership

- Main dynamics
  - **Alignment** -- directional focus of people's efforts
  - **Integration** -- the degree to which members operate with shared values, principles, and beliefs that support and protect the whole as well as the parts
- Many leaders (incorrectly) assume they can't make much difference in groups unless they are given authority over others.
- You are a trim tab (a device on boats and aircraft that makes controlling the bigger movements easier).

- Sources of power
  - **Authority power** -- "power over" (threat)
  - **Exchange power** -- "power to" or "power by" (bargaining)
  - **Integrative power** -- "power with" (attract others to accomplish something you couldn't do alone)
  - The first two get more attention but are limited because they rely on scarcity.
- Dependence
  - **Positive interdependence** -- we are in the same boat together; people are naturally more open, supportive, and collaborative
  - **Independence** -- we are in separate boats that don't relate
  - **Negative interdependence** -- we are in separate, competing boats (i.e., for one to win, the other must lose).
- Elevating responsibility in others
  - A common statement the author hears in seminars: "I'm surrounded by people who don't take responsibility. How do I get them to step up?"
  - The fastest way to elevate responsibility is to model it yourself.
  - 💡 Most people agree that the biggest problems are between roles, between teams, between departments -- where problems aren't assigned to anyone.
  - Single-point (individual) accountability systems silo people's focus on themselves rather than the group.
  - Cynical people distrust and disparage other people. Teams get stuck in Lay Blame and Justify. They convince themselves that the problem is external.
- 🙄 Is there no room for actual blame in this process? What if problems are literally caused by others? (This is clarified further in the last section.)

### Developing Responsibility in Others

- After studying The Responsibility Process and practicing it yourself (how will you change to have what you want), commit to teaching and coaching others.
- 💡 The best way to teach the process is to tell stories about your own coping habits.
- When others share their upset with you where they try the "yes, but" trap to have you rationalize them being stuck (e.g., "But I really have to go to my manager's stupid meetings. Are you saying I don't have to go?" Don't validate their coping state; let them know you understand where they're coming from and ask them to look at it from a different viewpoint.
- There are no "between" states -- e.g., between Obligation and Responsibility. If you are feeling bad, burdened, or trapped, what state are you in?
- We are conditioned to ask, "What *should* I do?"



- 💡 **Responsibility-for-advice transfer** -- When you tell people what to do, then they make you responsible for anything about it that goes wrong.

### **Leading the Organization of Choice**

- Responsibility first, then accountability
  - When leaders and the org value personal responsibility over role accountability, they get much higher levels of self-leadership, self-management, personal responsibility, and shared responsibility.
  - 💡 If you start with accountability, you end up with complicated and onerous performance management systems to gain a false sense of control over the system.
- 💡 Bridging the two
  1. Am I operating from Responsibility?
    - a. How did I create, choose, or attract this?
    - b. What part of these unsatisfactory results are mine to own?
    - c. What do I want to be different so that we can get a better result?
  2. Do I know what I want?
    - a. Leaders seek personal clarity about what they do want before they address others.
    - b. Clarity can lead to new self-awareness or asking others to change.
  3. Have I asked for what I want?
    - a. Assumption: Most people are doing the best they know how at the time.
    - b. Ask for what you want rather than telling. Asking gives the other a choice.
  4. Do I have agreement for what I asked for?
    - a. Lead in a way that preserves other's choices and responsibility for those choices.
    - b. "Yes" is only meaningful in a relationship if "no" is also.
    - c. Responsibility means both parties choose "yes."
  5. If 1-4 are "Yes", then call to account.