Personal Accountability and the QBQ Process:

Strategies for Avoiding the Victimhood Trap
Objectives

Following completion of this module, participants will be better able to:

• Identify what ‘personal accountability’ is
• Develop a greater understanding of the QBQ process
• Identify strategies for increasing personal accountability
• Identify additional resources available regarding personal accountability
Story Time

This is a story about 4 people named ANYBODY, EVERYBODY, SOMEBODY, and NOBODY…

“There was an important job to be done and EVERYBODY was sure that SOMEBODY would do it.

ANYBODY could have done it, but NOBODY did it. SOMEBODY got angry about that, because it was EVERYBODY’S job.

EVERYBODY thought ANYBODY could do it, but NOBODY realized that EVERYBODY wouldn’t do it.

It ended up that EVERYBODY blamed SOMEBODY when NOBODY did what ANYBODY could have done.”

Source: Unknown
What went wrong?

In our story, there were many people available who could have done the job, but no one wanted to take responsibility for completing the job.

As a result, the individuals became angry and began blaming each other for something all of them could have done but did not do.

Had one of the individuals (or all of them) had exercised some personal accountability, the end result might have been completely different.
Personal Accountability – What is it?

Attempting to find a single definition of ‘personal accountability’ can be quite challenging, as all of the experts have their own interpretations of the phrase. That said, management consultant, Todd Herman, defines ‘personal accountability’ as:

“...being willing to answer ... for the outcomes resulting from your choices, behaviors, and actions... taking ownership of situations that you're involved in.”

Taking ownership... assuming responsibility... of your actions, regardless of the outcome
Personal Accountability – Self-Assessment

Take a moment to complete the Personal Accountability Self-Assessment which has been included as a handout for this module.

Remember to be honest with yourself as you mark your answers. This is not a race or competition, but rather, a snapshot of your own personal accountability.

Once you have totaled your score, put the Self-Assessment to the side; we will come back to it at the end of the module.

Why do people often fear assuming accountability?

While there is no universal cause as to why people avoid being accountable, there are some common causes:

**Fear of Blame**
- If I am accountable then I will get blamed if something goes wrong
- The blame triggers feelings of shame and inadequacy... and I do not like it

**Fear of Failure**
- I tend to stay with the familiar because I do not want to look bad or make mistakes
- I am not comfortable taking risks

**Fear of Success**
- If I increase my accountability, I will need to accomplish more
- I will be pressured to maintain this level of excellence

What does a lack of personal accountability look like?

There are several signs to look for:

• Lacking interest in work and in the well-being of the team
• Blaming others for mistakes and failures
• Missing deadlines
• Avoiding challenging tasks and projects; not taking risks
• Regularly complaining about unfair treatment by team leaders, managers or team members – engaging in self-pity
• Avoiding taking initiative and being dependent on others for work, advice and continual instructions/timelines
• Lacking trust in team members and leaders/leadership
• Making excuses regularly – using phrases like, “It’s not my fault…”

Success is directly correlated to our decisions. We can either choose to accept accountability or play the role of the victim in situations...

**Decision Path – Victim vs. Accountable**

Decision Path – Victim vs. Accountable

The Accountability Loop

**Recognize:** “This could be a great opportunity”

**Own:** “I can do this”

**Forgive:** “I made a mistake. How can I work to fix that?”

**Self-Examine:** “I could use some more assistance with... I could reach out to...”

**Learn:** “Each situation offers a chance to grow”

**Take Action:** “I want to start now, not later”

The Victim Loop

**Ignore it:** “Problem, what problem?”

**Deny it:** “It’s not my problem”

**Blame Someone:** “It’s their fault”

**Rationalize It:** “I have evidence”

**Resist It:** “You’re not my boss”

**Hide From It:** “Out of sight, out of mind”

At times, being personally accountable can come by way of simply changing our internal monologue. Rephrasing the internal questions we ask ourselves can lead us to a path of greater accountability.

### Learn to Change Your Self-Talk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTEAD OF...</th>
<th>ASK THIS...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why do we have to go through all this change?</td>
<td>How can I adapt to the changing world?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When is somebody going to train me?</td>
<td>What can I do to develop myself?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who dropped the ball?</td>
<td>How can I help?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When is that person going to do their job?</td>
<td>What can I do to understand the challenges and frustrations of others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is going to solve this problem?</td>
<td>How can I become part of the solution?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Why is this person telling me ‘no’ all the time?</td>
<td>What can I do ahead of time to learn more about this topic?</td>
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The concept of shifting our internal monologue by rephrasing questions is the core foundation of the Question Behind the Question™ (QBQ) strategy.

In his book, Flipping the Switch, John G. Miller, examines the core principles of the QBQ strategy and how they play a part in positively developing our personal accountability.

The core principles include: Learning, Ownership, Creativity, Service and Trust.

What is the QBQ strategy?

Developing greater personal accountability starts by turning the focus from others to ourselves.

As Miller puts it...

“The QBQ is a tool that helps leaders at all levels practice personal accountability by asking better questions and making better choices in the moment.”

Important Terminology:

QBQ - Question Behind the Question
IQ - Incorrect Question(s)

The QBQ as a tool...

A tool is something we use to help us perform at a higher level. It must be practical in order to be useful.

The QBQ strategy works in a practical way because of three guidelines that can improve how we ask questions.

1. QBQs begin with the words “what” or “how,” **NOT** “why,” “when,” or “who.”
2. QBQs contain the word “I,” **NOT** “they,” “them,” “you,” or even “we” because I can change only **ME**.
3. QBQs always focus on action, not complacency

The QBQ as...

Leaders At All Levels
Leadership has nothing to do with our title, position, tenure or ‘span of control’ and everything to do with the way we think

Personal Accountability
Personal accountability is about eliminating blame, complaining and procrastination

Asking Better Questions
Better questions often yield better answers; reframing our own thinking

Choices
Take charge of our thoughts can literally transform our lives – personally and professionally

The QBQ Core Principle #1: Learning

Various studies have proven there to be a direct correlation between having a commitment to learning and experiencing greater success.

A learning mentality allows us to:

• Build powerful insight into projects, challenges or issues
• Better adapt to change when it presents itself
• Reach goals we may have set (personally and professionally)
• Become the person we want to be (a valuable aspect when working with youth)

Approaching life with a learning mentality can bring forth great energy, enthusiasm and zest for life!

To operate from a learning mentality, we must be able to both identify and then remove potential roadblocks (or mindsets). These are often known as the 5 E’s...

- **Exception Mentality**: Hearing information and immediately thinking it only applies to others, rather than seeing how it might apply to me.
- **Expectations**: When we approach something with a negative outlook, we often only find issues rather than possibilities.
- **Entitlement Thinking**: Believing we deserve something more (or better) than those around us.
- **Experience Trap**: An approach where we feel we know all there is to know about something; believing nothing new can be acquired.
- **Exclusion**: Assuming people do not belong because of their background, limited time in position, or education experience/degree(s).

Ownership refers to the concept of facing problems head-on instead of blaming, complaining, procrastinating or making excuses.

Ownership-focused questions might look like this:

- How can I solve the problem?
- What can I contribute?
- How can I help the program succeed?
- What can I do to expand my personal impact?
- How can I rid blame from my life?

Notice how each question starts with a “how” or “what” and includes “I”

Ownership is the first step in working to find solutions. There are times, however, we must remember that not all problems are our responsibility to solve.

The QBQ Core Principle #3: Creativity

Creativity, while often believed to refer to artistic skills, can also be applied to the professional world. Being confronted with an obstacle, but working to find alternate solutions demonstrates creativity at its best.

Creativity-focused questions might look like this:

• What can I do to succeed with the tools I have?
• How can I obtain the information required?
• What action(s) can I take to move forward?
• How can I assist in developing those around me?
• What can I do to reach the final goal?

People who use the concept of creativity in their lives often do a better job staying focused on goals and working to discover the path to success, both at work and at home.

There may be times when the tools you have are quite limited; however, you want to ensure you are meeting the customer’s needs/expectations.

Let’s imagine you unexpectedly get ‘pulled’ into a meeting with your SFPD to discuss projected programming, outreach and vision for the next fiscal year, and you only have a pencil and paper with you... How can you turn a (potentially) negative situation and make it a positive one?

Armed with only those ‘tools’ (and your creativity), what can you do to succeed with what you have? What about creating your own (impromptu) diagram to clearly identify key components?
On a piece of paper, draw 5-6 circles, writing core areas of the Child and Youth Program. Then, have your SFPD identify specific aspects/details for each core area. By doing this, you manage to avoid a potentially negative situation and can walk away with a clear understanding of the customer’s needs/expectations.
The QBQ Core Principle #4: Service

When we work from a service-oriented mindset, we are better able to build relationships with others as well as trust.

As contractors, we must always remember that – in the customer’s eyes – the Program is only as good as the person he/she is interacting with at the moment. At that time, the individual is the Program!

Keep in mind... Organizations do not serve people, *individuals* serve people!

The QBQ Core Principle #4: Service

Providing services to others is a cornerstone of the Child and Youth Program. Service is also an integral aspect of building your leadership abilities. At all times, we must never forget we are here to help others succeed...

Service-focused questions might look like this:

• What can I do to understand the needs of others?
• How can I serve the customer more?
• How can I be a better coach to those around me?
• What action can I take to help others succeed?
• How can I add value by doing what I do not have to do?

Whether we define a customer as someone attending an event, or others around us, none of us can afford for even one of them to have a negative experience...

The final principle of the QBQ is trust. Trust grows from our actions as individuals; becoming our responsibility in order to establish positive relationships with others.

Trust-focused questions might look like this:

• How can I truly understand you?
• What can I do to know him/her better?
• How can I build their confidence in me?
• What can I do to better support the Program?
• How can I better understand individual situations?

Building trust with others includes your SFPD, office teams, families, Service Members, contract teams, partner organizations and each other (as youth-serving professionals), to name a few.

Potential Challenges When Building Trust

When working to build trust with others, there are a few challenges to be aware of...

**Silence:** When the people around you fail to raise concerns or offer suggestions and ideas, this can be a warning sign they still have not solidified their trust in you. In some cases, silence isn’t so golden!

**Cynicism:** Unlike silence where no one says anything, cynicism can appear by way of those around you questioning your intentions, sincerity and goodwill.

To overcome these challenges, employ the QBQ strategy and ask those important, personal questions related to demonstrating your dedication and passion for what you do.

⇒ Remember that building trust is a process, and often one not done quickly. Remain **patient** and **persistent** as well as **prepared** to ‘go the distance’ with others.

The important question remaining…

*What specific actions will I take today to unleash the power of personal accountability in my life?*

Start small… focus on one area or one aspect of your life… What small changes can you implement to build your personal accountability?

While the QBQ process can help guide us down the path of greater personal accountability, the following strategies may also prove successful:

• **Knowing Our Role(s):** Take a few moments to review your job description... How are you meeting all the requirements for the position?

• **Be Honest:** Success in life stems from being honest with ourselves and others; it is okay to admit you have made a mistake on something or do not have as much experience in a certain area

• **Apologize:** If you have said or done something that may have offended someone else or caused him/her to miss a deadline, offer them a sincere apology and accept responsibility

• **Use Time Wisely:** This may seem like a no-brainer, but ask yourself, “How well am I really managing my time?” “What things am I always spending a lot of time on?” “What can I do to remedy this situation?”

• **Avoid Overcommitting:** This may be challenging, given the expectations of the Child and Youth Program, but there may be times you need to stop and reevaluate the management and execution of programming and services being offered

• **Embrace Change:** When we learn to embrace change and be open to new ideas and insights, we expose ourselves to both personal and professional growth opportunities... Sometimes being personally accountable means asking yourself, “What can I do to positively embrace this new change in my work or life?”

In addition to the concepts outlined in the QBQ process, additional ways you can positive increase personal accountability in others include:

- **Ensuring Adequate Resources:** Does the person(s) have all the tools, materials and resources to effectively do the job?
- **Communicating Roles, Responsibilities and Objectives:** Has an appropriate amount of time been spent going over and clarifying roles, responsibilities and expectations?
- **Helping Them Take Control:** Have you allotted enough time to thoroughly explain the task, offer constructive feedback and empowered them to show ownership of the task?
- **Avoiding Micromanagement:** Have you allowed them some autonomy to complete the task, realizing he/she may not do it in the same manner you would have completed the task?
- **Giving Praise:** Have you taken time throughout the project to offer relevant, real-time praise for accomplishments/successes?

Helping Parents/Guardians Increase Personal Accountability in their Youth

In keeping with our responsibility to serve as a point of information, resource and referral for military families, the following tips may prove useful for parents/guardians wanting to increase personal accountability in their youth:

• **Start as Early as Possible:** As early as you are able to, start having your youth take responsibility for things of which they are involved (i.e. picking up toys, brushing their teeth, picking out a bedtime story, etc.)

• **Identify Responsibilities and Use Responsible Language:** Work to build verbal connections between responsibility and task completion; say things like, “Nice way to follow-through on your responsibility.”

• **Lead by Example:** As a parent/guardian, demonstrate to your youth how you meet your responsibilities; say things like, “One of my responsibilities is to go to work, and I’m doing that today.”

• **Teach and Coach Responsibility:** Take time to sit with your youth and explain what responsibility is and what it looks like; use real-life examples… Remember… coach, not lecture!

• **Help Them Embrace Change:** Use verbal cues to model how you learn to accept change; the positive aspects that can come from change and how it is our responsibility to positive adapt to change

Personal Accountability – Self-Assessment

Go back and review your responses and final score on the Personal Accountability Self-Assessment you completed at the beginning of this module. While reviewing, ask yourself the following questions:

- How can I utilize information from this module to increase my personal accountability?
- What small changes can I make today that will positively increase my personal accountability?
- How can I best monitor my progress in building greater personal accountability?
- What tools or resources will I need to begin increasing my personal accountability?
- What are some short and/or long-term goals I want to meet in the coming days? Weeks? Months?
- How can I also utilize this information when working with youth and teens?
Resources

• Flipping the Switch: Unleash the Power of Personal Accountability Using the QBQ. John G. Miller. 2006.


Resources


• “Don’t worry about it Dad, it’s my fault.” Amy McCready. http://www.positiveparentingsolutions.com/accountability/its-my-fault

Quiz

As evidence of completion of this course, you will need to complete the short assessment tool provided. To access the assessment, please click on the link below:

CLICK HERE TO BEGIN YOUR ASSESSMENT:

https://www.classmarker.com/online-test/start/?quiz=ppa573c74e1d3e91

Please Note: Following completion of the assessment, please email the results certificate to your RAPM. This will serve as your documentation of completion.
You have now completed the Personal Accountability module. Congratulations!