Accepting Personal Responsibility

What is accepting personal responsibility?

Accepting personal responsibility includes:

- Acknowledging that you are solely responsible for the choices in your life.
- Accepting that you are responsible for what you choose to feel or think.
- Accepting that you choose the direction for your life.
- Accepting that you cannot blame others for the choices you have made.
- Tearing down the mask of defense or rationale for why others are responsible for who you are, what has happened to you and what you are bound to become.
- The rational belief that you are responsible for determining who your are, and how your choices affect your life.
- Pointing the finger of responsibility back to yourself and away from others when you are discussing the consequences of your actions.
- *Realizing that you determine your feelings about any events or actions addressed to you, no matter how negative they seem.
- Recognizing that you are your best cheerleader; it is not reasonable or healthy for you to depend on others to make you feel good about yourself.
- Recognizing that as you enter adulthood and maturity, you determine how your self-esteem will develop.
- Not feeling sorry for the "bum deal" you have been handed but taking hold of your life and giving it direction and reason.
- Letting go of your sense of over responsibility for others.
- Protecting and nurturing your health and emotional well being.
- Taking preventive health oriented steps of structuring your life with time management, stress management, confronting fears and burnout prevention.
- Taking an honest inventory of your strengths, abilities, talents, virtues and positive points.
- Developing positive, self-affirming, self-talk scripts to enhance your personal development and growth.
- Letting go of blame and anger toward those in your past who did the best they could, given the limitations of their knowledge, background and awareness.
- Working out anger, hostility, pessimism and depression over past hurts, pains, abuse, mistreatment and misdirection.

How can failing to accept personal responsibility result in negative consequences?

When you have not accepted personal responsibility, you can run the risk of becoming:

- Overly dependent on others for recognition, approval, affirmation and acceptance.
- Chronically hostile, angry or depressed over how unfairly you have been or are being treated.
- Fearful about ever taking a risk or making a decision.
- Overwhelmed by disabling fears.
- Unsuccessful at the enterprises you take on in life.
- Unsuccessful in personal relationships.
- Emotionally or physically unhealthy.
- Addicted to unhealthy substances, such as the abuse of alcohol, drugs, food or unhealthy behavior such as excessive gambling, shopping, sex, smoking, work, etc.
- Over responsible and guilt ridden in your need to rescue and enable others in your life.
- Unable to develop trust or to feel secure with others.
- Resistant to vulnerability.

What do people believe who have not accepted personal responsibility?

- It's not my fault I am the way I am.
- I never asked to be born.
- Now that you have me, what are you going to do with me?
- I want you to fix me.
- Life is unfair! There is no sense in trying to take control of my life.
- Why go on; I see no use in it.
- You can't help me, nobody can help me. I'm useless and a failure.
- God has asked too much of me this time. There is no way I'll ever be able to handle this.
- When do the troubles and problems cease? I'm tired of all this.
- Stop the world; I want to get off.
- Life is so depressing. If only I had better luck and had been born to a healthier family, or attended a better school, or gotten a better job, etc.

- How can you say I am responsible for what happens to me in the future? There is fate, luck, politics, greed, envy, wicked and jealous people, and other negative influences that have a greater bearing on my future than I have.
- How can I ever be happy, seeing how bad my life has been?
- My parents made me what I am today!
- The problems in my family have influenced who I am and what I will be; there is nothing I can do to change that.
- Racism, bigotry, prejudice, sexism, ageism and closed-mindedness all stand in the way of my becoming what I really want to be.
- No matter how hard I work, I will never get ahead.
- You have to accept the luck of the draw.
- I am who I am; there is no changing me.
- No one is going to call me crazy, depressed or troubled and then try to change me.

Terms used to describe those who have not accepted personal responsibility include martyrs, self-pitying, depressed, losers, quitters, chronically angry, dependent personalities, complainers, addictive personalities, blamers, stubborn, persons in denial, troubled people, stuck, fearful, pessimists, despondent, mentally unstable, obstinate, hostile, aggressive, irresponsible, weak, guilt-ridden, resistant to help, passive, irrational, insecure, neurotic, obsessed and lost.

What behavior traits need to be developed in order to accept personal responsibility?

In order to accept personal responsibility you need to develop the ability to:

- Seek out and to accept help for yourself.
- Be open to new ideas or concepts about life and the human condition.
- Refute irrational beliefs and overcome fears.
- Affirm yourself positively.
- Recognize that you are the sole determinant of the choices you make.
- Recognize that you choose your responses to the people, actions and events in your life.
- Let go of anger, fear, blame, mistrust and insecurity.
- Take risks and to become vulnerable to change and growth in your life.
- Take off the masks of behavior characteristics behind which you hide low self-esteem.
- Reorganize your priorities and goals.

- Realize that you are the party in charge of the direction your life takes.

What are the steps in accepting personal responsibility?

Step 1

To decide if you are having problems accepting personal responsibility, answer the following questions in your journal:

a) How frequently do you claim that others have determined what you are today?
b) How easy is it to accept that you are responsible for your choices in life?
c) How easy it is to believe that you determine the direction your life takes?
d) How easy is it to blame others for where you are today?
e) What masks do you hide behind to avoid accepting personal responsibility?
f) How rational are you in dealing with the part you played in being who you are today?
g) How easy is it to accept blame or admit mistakes?
h) How easy is it to accept that you determine your feelings when negative events occur?
i) How easy is it to depend solely on yourself for acceptance, affirmation and approval?
j) How willing are you to be the sole determinant of the health of your self-esteem?
k) How frequently do you feel sorry for yourself?
l) How easy is it to let go of guilt if you stop rescuing those in your life?
m) How willingly do you take preventive steps to ensure your physical and emotional health?
n) How successfully have you practiced self-affirmation in your life?
o) How successfully have you practiced anger work out and letting go in order to get on with your life?

Step 2

Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 as to the level of personal responsibility you have accepted in each of the following areas:
1 = always irresponsible
2 = usually irresponsible
3 = irresponsibility balanced out with responsibility (neutral)
4 = usually responsible

5 = always responsible

Rating Area in Life:

___ a. Taking the preventive and maintenance measures to ensure physical health

___ b. Taking the preventive and maintenance measures to ensure emotional health

___ c. Controlling weight and over-eating

___ d. Stopping smoking, excessive drinking and drug abuse

___ e. Controlling excessive gambling, shopping and sexual behavior

___ f. Controlling workaholism

___ g. Taking preventive and maintenance measures to ensure healthy relationships

___ h. Taking the necessary steps to overcome my current problems and troubles

___ i. Taking the necessary steps to protect myself from being victimized by my rescuing and enabling of others

___ j. Managing my time, managing the stress in my life, overcoming my fears and preventing burnout in my life

Score: A rating of 3 or less in any of the areas indicates a need to accept personal responsibility.

Step 3

Identify your beliefs that prevent acceptance of responsibility for yourself. Develop new, rational, replacement beliefs to help you accept responsibility for yourself.

Step 4

You are now ready to develop a plan of action.

For each area of your life, identify that tools you will use to accept personal responsibility. The following Tools for Coping tools are available to help you determine your action plan: The Tools for Coping Tool Box.

Handling Irrational Beliefs

- Self-Affirmations
- Handling Guilt
- Building Trust
- Handling Insecurity
- Becoming Vulnerable
- Overcoming Fears

- On Becoming a Risk Taker
- Spirituality
- Time Management
- Stress Reduction
- Preventing Burnout
- Overcoming Perfectionism

Write your plan of action in your journal. Date and sign it. You are now ready to begin accepting personal responsibility.

Step 5

If you still have trouble in accepting responsibility for yourself, return to Step 1 and begin again.