

Getting to Happily

8 Week Relationship MakeOver

Week 4: How to Take Responsibility

Audio Transcript

Hello there! It's Chavonne from RelateAble. Here we are at week 4, the halfway mark to our program. I hope that you are finding value and that you've gained some very important insights from the first 3 weeks. It wasn't easy, I know, but you are still pressing forward and moving toward a better relationship and a better you. Please don't forget your why - that goal you are working toward, the vision you have for what is possible. You are getting closer and closer.

Our first three weeks were spent answering 3 very important questions as we consider our relationships. You were asked:

"What's your story?" - the thoughts you've been filling your head with about your relationship. You were asked, "Who are you in your relationship?" - and looked at how you have been operating and showing up with your partner. Week 3 asked you about your manual and all the expectations of how he should think, speak, act and feel towards you. Pretty heavy stuff I know. It was a process of deep reflection and I hope you discovered some really important things about yourself. Remember, all of this is about your growth and development, and you are exactly where you are supposed to be to develop and transform to the best version of yourself.

This week, we move more into action and skill building. Here in week 4, we will be focusing in on how to take responsibility for our actions and for the results and outcomes we are seeing in our relationships.

So to start, listen to these statements:

Blame

It just makes me so mad when he does that.

It's his fault we have this problem.

If he would only do X then everything would be fine.

He should have just known what to do.

All I did was X, and then he blew up and did Y.

I'm doing X but he's still not doing Y.

Have you ever thought or said some version of those statements? I know I have. It's so easy to point out what my husband is doing wrong. How if he would only make this change, then I wouldn't get so upset. These statements also help me to prove that I am right and that he is wrong. The solution is in something he needs to do, or needs to stop doing. You can probably see quickly that these statements are examples of blame. They all point the finger away from ourselves and towards the other person. And if we're honest, it feels good and comfortable to stay right there. To focus over and over on what they need to do to change. That way, we get to make the smaller adjustments, while they need a complete overhaul.

Here are some more statements. Think about which ones you can relate to here:

Excuses

Nothing I do is going to make a difference.

I don't know how to make things better.

I'm too set in my ways or too old to make a change.

It's not even worth the effort.

I'm just not ready to do that yet.

I'm not the type of person who does x

I'm tired of always being the one to...

Statements like these prove to us why we should not take action, why we can't do something that needs to be done, and why it's better to just be like we've always been. These are all excuses, where we release ourselves from needing to do something. We find all the "reasons" why taking a step is not possible or not worth our time. They serve as a crutch for us to keep limping along not operating at our maximum capacity, and keep us from pushing through the uncertainty and fear to just do what needs to be done.

This module is NOT about placing blame on someone else, or about finding excuses for not taking action. This module is hopefully going to show you how to and inspire you to take responsibility.

And so, when I say take responsibility, what do I mean?

Responsibility means being accountable for what we think, say, and do. Response. Ability. You have the ability to respond in a mature and productive way to anything that comes your way. It is owning our part for what's happening in our life and our relationships. Taking responsibility involves working on our own character and skill development rather than blaming others for situations and circumstances. It means that you are the key to solving your problems. Not him, not me, not even this program. You have to do the work, you have to find a new way of seeing things, you have to take action and put the information and skills to use, consistently.

Ok, so if taking responsibility means being accountable, or understanding that we are in charge of what we think, say and do, how do you really do that? What does it look like to take responsibility?

The first step is

1. **Focusing in on the things that are within your control.** We've all heard this in some way, shape or form, and now it's time to REALLY believe it's true - you cannot control how something thinks, how they feel, what they say, how they respond, what they do, and what they don't do. So, when it comes to our relationships, we have to focus on what is in our hands, in our minds, and in our hearts. We can't control what is happening for him at work, we can't control how he chooses to spend his time at home, we can't control the way he responds to our requests, we can't control how he feels about us, or how he treats us in a given moment. So as you are faced with your triggers, or things that cause you upset, the first thing you should do is identify what is within your immediate control. And usually that includes your thoughts, your words and your actions.

2. Once you have narrowed in on the things that are within your control the next step is to **look inward and ask yourself how did I or am I contributing to this problem?** What part am I playing in this? What am I doing or not doing? What is the story I'm creating that leads me to think, say or do X? What could I do differently to influence this situation?
3. Most times, if we are really honest with ourselves we can easily see what we could be or should be doing to make progress on an issue in our relationship. However, for some reason, we don't do, or we keep doing that which we know is not helpful or achieving the outcome we want. Old habits die hard, right? So, the third step in taking responsibility is to **understand the choices you make and why.** It starts with the simple admission, I made the choice to do X, or I decided to not do Y. Just make the observation, and don't judge yourself about it. But be curious as to why!! It's like saying to yourself, I noticed that when this happened, I did...why was that? What was going on with me? Was it I let my emotions get the best of me? Is there some resistance to doing things a different way? Am I holding on to some resentment that prevents me from moving in the right direction? Do I need help learning the skills to do what needs to be done? Have I put myself in a box and am unwilling to consider that I could be a different way?
4. The 4th step in how to take responsibility is to **identify the lessons you have learned.** It can be as simple as making another observation about what's happening. When I blame him for doing...this happens. I see that when this happens, I always respond in this way...When I try to approach him in this way, the result is X, but when I try it this other way, the result is Y. I know that he needs X in order to do X, or I know that when I can do X, then it's easier to do X. Maybe it's taking stock of the lessons you've learned so far in this program.
5. The last step in taking responsibility is to **make the decision and commit now to do better in the future.** We covered this specifically in Week 2 where we were looking at our triggers. If you can decide now, (when things are more calm, and you are thinking rationally) how you will respond when things get more heated, and you are emotionally charged, you will be doing yourself a huge favor. When I can see something coming ahead of time, it gives the opportunity to remain in control of myself, my thoughts, my words and my actions. At this point, you have been in relationship with your partner for quite a long time and his behavior should be very predictable to you. Decide now and make a commitment to yourself to respond in a more healthful way. Hopefully, part of your decision will include a decision not to blame him and not to make excuses.

So to recap, taking responsibility includes:

1. Focusing on the things that are within your control
2. Looking inward and asking yourself how you are contributing to the situation
3. Understanding the choices you make and why
4. Looking at the lessons you have learned
5. Making the decision and commitment to do better in the future

So I've just covered what it looks like to take responsibility. I also want to be clear about what it is not.

First, it is not about self-blame and beating yourself up for what you do or don't do. Self-blame can easily lead you to becoming a victim of yourself. You get down in the dumps, believe you are a bad or horrible person and that you can't do anything right, which then immobilizes you and

keeps you down and not taking action. Remember, this is about empowering you with abilities to respond in a mature and productive way to anything that you are faced with.

Taking responsibility is also not about regret. You cannot change the past. What's done is done. Staying stuck on what you could have done, should have done, or would have done helps no one. If you find yourself spending a lot of time saying, I could have, should have or would have, you are missing the opportunity to do what you can right now and now is the only moment you have. So just shift it slightly and ask yourself, What could I do right now to take a step in the right direction? What should I do this very minute to make things better? What would I do right away if I knew it would work?

Taking responsibility is not about being responsible for someone else. It's not doing everything yourself or micromanaging something your partner is doing. Taking responsibility is about personal responsibility without stepping into someone else's space. It's staying in your lane, coloring within your own lines, keeping to your personal space, not someone else's. You let go of the manual you have for him, and create a manual for yourself. It's asking yourself, who do you want to be, and then making sure your thoughts, actions, and behaviors line up with that.

So, I want this all to soak in for a minute. It's a lot to grasp and think about. So, at this point, what are your reactions? What do you really agree with? What do you really want to work on? Take some time to think about it now. I'll pause and give you a quiet moment. So again, what are your reactions? What do you really agree with? What do you really want to work on?

So now we are going to get to work. If you can access the downloadable worksheet, it will be helpful for you to write this down. If not right at this moment, try to get to it sometime today. It will only take about 5-10 minutes.

Step-by-Step Guidance

Step 1. Identify an issue you are having in your relationship right now. Name it and write it down on your worksheet.

Step 2. What are your thoughts about this issue? What's the general story you tell yourself?

Step 3. What have you been telling yourself about your partner in this situation? (i.e., what is he doing wrong?)

Step 4. What have you been doing or have failed to do, that could possibly contribute to the issue? Why have you operated that way?

Step 5. What's something you know you should try, but have not really done, to better address this issue? Why have you not done it? What do you need to be able to do what you know you should do?

Step 6. What action(s) are you willing and prepared to take right away to move one step toward making this issue just a little bit better?

And that ladies, is how to take responsibility. If only it were that simple right? I know, it is not easy, and it definitely takes practice, practice and more practice.

Here are some additional words to drive the point home:

Inspirational Quote: The victim mindset dilutes the human potential. By not accepting personal responsibility for our circumstances, we greatly reduce our power to change them. ~Steve Maraboli

Bible Verse: For we are each responsible for our own conduct. Galatians 6:5, NLT

And now for that Empowering Question to really keep you mind thinking:

Empowering Question: If you are the key to solving your problems, what will it take this week, for you to unlock an issue you are having?

Here are two action steps you can take this week to begin to make personal responsibility a habit:

Action Step #1

Identify something you have been telling yourself that you cannot do or don't want to do in your relationship. This should be something that would be productive and helpful to creating a better relationship, not something that would compromise your values. Examples include, show love when you are upset, forgive a past wrong, do something nice for your partner. Take one small step towards doing the thing you identified.

Action Step #2

Bring any questions, comments, concerns or feedback about what we've been doing to our upcoming group coaching call.

Optional Activity with your partner:

Admit to your partner something you usually blame him for doing or not doing. Share with him a commitment to take responsibility for your part. List specifically what you will start doing or stop doing differently. Note: This can be in conversation or via email or text if that's a more comfortable way for you to communicate at this point.