

# **A Developmental Model of Accountability**

## **Accountability to Primary Attachment Figure (mother)**

Each person's first experience of accountability revolves around their primary attachment relationships. Children are carefully taught how to get their needs met successfully. This includes the use of language, emotion, and behavior. Parents model accountability by quickly and effectively responding to their children's needs and create a durable belief system that "everything will be Ok for me," that later becomes the origin of patience and compassion. Children who are given age-appropriate choices may experience less significant difficulties during developmental periods involving new found power and autonomy (i.e. terrible twos). Parents model accountability by quickly and effectively responding to their children's needs and create a durable belief system that "everything will be Ok for me," that later becomes the origin of patience and compassion. Effective parents carefully correct their children, when they misbehave, in a manner that does not undermine their sense of value or competence. Difficulties arise when children's needs are not met or when they are met in a manner that undermines the child's self-esteem or competency skills. Children then either give up getting their needs met, get their needs met through inappropriate means, or develop an attitude of shame surrounding their needs. These children care little about the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behavior, lack appreciation for nurturing authority figure, and do not value accountability between people. In the most severe cases, children find solace and comfort in the absence of accountability with attachment figures.

## **Accountability to Familial Authority Figures and Representatives**

A child's initial capacity for connection, dependence, and trust, coupled with the cognitive, affective, behavioral, and social skills for getting needs met appropriately leads to the ability to place children under the supervision of other authority figures (relatives, school teachers, etc.) without threatening the child's sense of self or security. Successful children do well in school not primarily because they remember all the rules and think about them often, and not because they fear consequences. Instead, these children are successful because they know how to get their needs met appropriately, because they have the capacity for responding to their nurturing authority figures expectations for good conduct, and because it fits their positive self image to be appropriate.

## **Accountability to Peers and Peer Group Values**

The transition childhood through adolescent is characterized by a gradual loosening of dependence upon primary caretakers, and a corresponding increase in independent skills. As a feature of the normal separation process, children increasingly identify with friends and peer group values. In addition, it is common for youths to question and rethink the values and attitudes of their parents. Competent and confident children do this with little difficulty, however less successful people may overly identify with their peer group and reject family and community values as a means of gaining an adequate sense of self or autonomy.

## **Accountability to Community Values and Community Members**

In a save culture, it can be expected that youths relationships and allegiance continue an expansive course through adolescence and into adulthood. This is paralleled by an expansive concept of accountability from one's primary peer group to the community as a whole.

## **Accountability to Principles, Values and Ideals**

This mature level of accountability is inclusive of the previous stages but is highlighted by an awareness and interest in resolving conflicting values and finding a position of accountability that supports the safety and well being of all persons in all communities.