

THE ACCOUNTABILITY BLUEPRINT



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Introduction

You're probably reading this because you want to get better—at something.

The desire for self-improvement is near universal. Writings about how to make the most of your circumstances and station in life date back thousands of years, and there are principles that seem to crop up repeatedly: *change your habits, change your life, and have a clear goal*, and one we'll talk about here: *Be around people who help you get better*.

We build this last one into society somewhat: teachers and mentors help guide young people into adulthood, sometimes we're surrounded by peers to collaborate and compete with.

But as you get more nuanced and specific about where *you specifically* want to grow in life, it's harder to find.

And that's where the accountability group—a flexible, purposeful gathering with a storied history—comes in.

Ben Franklin started his Junto as a way for himself and others in

the community to grow through enlightening discussion. C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien met weekly at an Oxford pub to improve their writing (in fact, history is littered with famous writing groups in particular). Napoleon Hill extolled the virtues of his version—the mastermind group—in *Think and Grow Rich*. And while his personal history is checkered, groups like this where people met regularly to grow in a particular skill or develop their character, have been part of the secret sauce for many successful people throughout history.

Other people with the energy and eagerness to improve in similar ways will help you get back on the horse more quickly when you lose momentum, will give you creative ideas on how to keep going, and will keep you motivated and hungry either by their encouragement, admonishment, or simple competition.

It's not easy to set up a purposeful gathering for self-improvement, so I've put together this guide on how to do it yourself.

The guide comes in three parts, and they're entirely independent. Feel free to jump to whichever chapter(s) grab you.

Chapter One, **THE MANIFESTO**, answers the question: *why does this matter?* If you're intrigued but still on the fence, this is for you.

Chapter Two, **MY STORY**, is about where my credibility comes from. What's my story with accountability and why should you listen to anything I have to say (TL;DR: I'm no expert but been a part of several groups and think about this a lot).

Chapter Three, **THE GUIDE**, is the *How To*: the nuts and bolts of what kinds of accountability groups are out there, how to create one, and how to level it up. If you're hungry to just start taking action, just jump to chapter three.

Let's dive in!

ONE: THE MANIFESTO

Introduction

Maybe you're one of the lucky few who is perfectly content with your life. You are the person you want to be, and your life is the life you want to live with little exception.

I suspect, though, if you've read this far, that's not you. (If it is, I'll save you the trouble and say you can stop here).

For most of us, there's some important way we want to improve our *lives* and *ourselves*. This usually lands within one (or more) of six types. We'll get into that in a second.

For now though, I believe an indictment falls on society for failing to help us get there, but the challenge lies with you to close that gap and to build a life that supports whatever your life improvement goal is.

Types of Growth

I've observed six forms most people's desire for growth usually fits within:

- **MATERIAL ABUNDANCE:** Plain and simple, "life would be better if I just had ____."
- **SIGNIFICANCE:** You want a

purpose that's worthy of your abilities and potential. You don't want to be underestimated by others. And you want to feel like you matter.

- **INTEGRITY:** We humans will always be a complicated mix of competing desires. You will always have to manage this. But you want to feel like your desires are well-balanced, and that they are guiding you towards becoming a person you truly want to be. We don't want to be short circuited by addictions, or pursuits that we just can't reconcile to one another.
- **CONNECTION:** Want to be in a relationship, find a better relationship, have less dramatic, better connected friendships, work relationships, romantic partnerships.
- **A GROWTH ARC:** Being stuck in one place is boring. You want to feel like you're *going somewhere*.
- **CHARACTER:** This is your moral sense of who you should be as a person. We have an inborn sense of what it means

to be a good person, and most of us care a lot about living in alignment with that.

Society's Gap

In the developed world in 2024, it is obvious society has made one tremendous stride.

The baseline of material abundance is far higher than ever. Here's Steven Pinker reminding us of how far we've come since the Enlightenment:

We take [the Enlightenment's] gifts for granted: newborns who will live more than eight decades, markets overflowing with food, clean water that appears with a flick of a finger and waste that disappears with another, pills that erase a painful infection, sons who are not sent off to war, daughters who can walk the streets in safety, critics of the powerful who are not jailed or shot, the world's knowledge and culture available in a shirt pocket. But these are human accomplishments, not cosmic birthrights. In the memories of many readers of this book—and in the experience of those in less fortunate parts of the world—war, scarcity, disease, ignorance, and lethal menace are a natural part of existence.

- Steven Pinker (Enlightenment Now)

And yet, for all the care society has taken to materially improve our lives, many of us sense that society is far less helpful in cultivating a deep sense of significance, greater connection,

selves of better character and more integrity, or a satisfying growth path beyond completing school and joining the workforce.

If you are not part of a small, connected community that closes this gap, whether that's a family, a church or religious community, or a tight-knit neighborhood or town, this is probably a gap in your life too.

Let's just take one of these—significance—as an example. My local grocery store has a little sushi stand. They make these avocado rolls (basically just avocado and rice), and for a few months of my wife's second pregnancy, it was one of the only things she could eat without getting nauseous.

One day, they were out of the rolls, but someone was at the stand making new ones. I asked him if he could make a plain avocado roll, and explained how much they were helping my wife get through her pregnancy.

I truly appreciate receiving that direct help from him, *and* having the opportunity to thank him directly.

And it struck me how out-of-

place that experience was. Hundreds and thousands of people are part of growing, harvesting, and packaging the food I buy, as well as shipping it to the store and stocking it on shelves.

And I interact directly with virtually none of them.

The most significant interaction is with the cashier, but even there, it's telling that at the moment I'm paying for my groceries - the "handshake" of our deal - I'm not looking at the cashier, but staring at a credit card terminal.

Our society has prioritized material improvement and efficiency to great gain, but with the cost that many of our interactions are now mediated through large, impersonal organizations.

In many jobs, people often don't directly see the people who benefit from their work. By default, we don't get the opportunity to show gratitude for all the people who improve our lives, or to receive gratitude for everyone our work impacts. We have to creatively look for ways to find that significance on our own.

Society doesn't owe it to us to provide any of these growth needs, but the opportunity is out there, and society is not taking advantage.

Hundreds of years ago, you probably would have had very little opportunity to significantly improve your life.

Your life probably would have been a consistent struggle just to meet your basic needs, no matter what life choices you made.

But nowadays our options are so much more open. We can connect with people all over the world, people who can inspire new directions and ideas. Travel has never been so accessible to so many. The sheer breadth of products, tools, and services many of us have access to

And none of these things will in themselves lead to a happy life, but if we are trying to paint our ideal life on a canvas, we've been given a way better paint set than people at any other time in human history.

As Figure 1 (completely

Life Satisfaction/Thriving

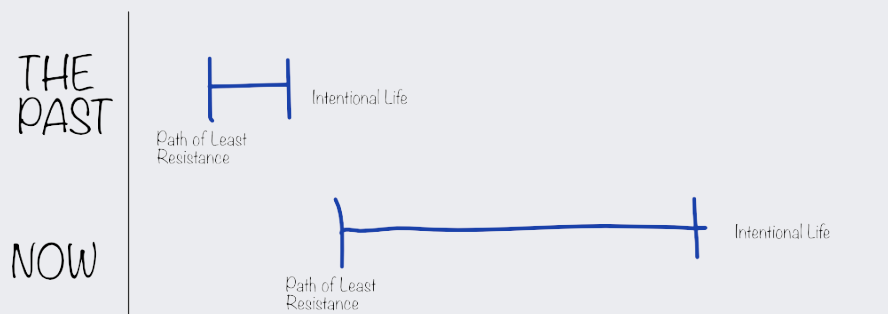


Figure 1: Return on Intentionality

unscientifically) illustrates, the returns to thinking deeply about how we want to live and making deliberate choices have never been higher.

And yet, despite our tricked out paint set, the lives many of us paint often much more resemble a narrowly default path than something individualized and deeply well-suited to our best selves.

Glued to our phones. Jobs we feel “meh” about. Few (if any) close friendships we can truly count on.

So the opportunity (and the responsibility) lies with you to move the quality of your own life further to the right.

The potential for a great life has never been higher, but we lack the structures to help us get those returns.

There’s a simple (straightforward, not easy) formula for understanding what’s important to each of us and how to create that life.

Success!

Where do you most want to get better in your life?

Think back to the six types of growth needs from page 5 if you’re struggling – *material abundance, significance, integrity, connection, a growth arc, and character.*

Where do you most want to get

better in your life?

Whatever your goal is, there are two parts to any movement we want to make.

First, you need the **vision** to know what matters to you and where you want to go in life. The clearer the better.

Second, you need the **courage and competence** to take whatever steps are necessary to move towards that vision.

In practice, this looks like a three part process comprised of a **vision, goals**, and daily **habits**.

If you’re like me, you hear those buzzwords and your eyes glaze over a bit. But please give me a second. This is not some productivity guru hack, this is a way of life that you’re already doing, just probably not very explicitly.

What I want to do here is point your attention to this process that’s already happening so you can more thoughtfully guide it.

First, **vision** comes from asking yourself what you *truly* want. But this is no static process. It’s a constant unfolding. First, our

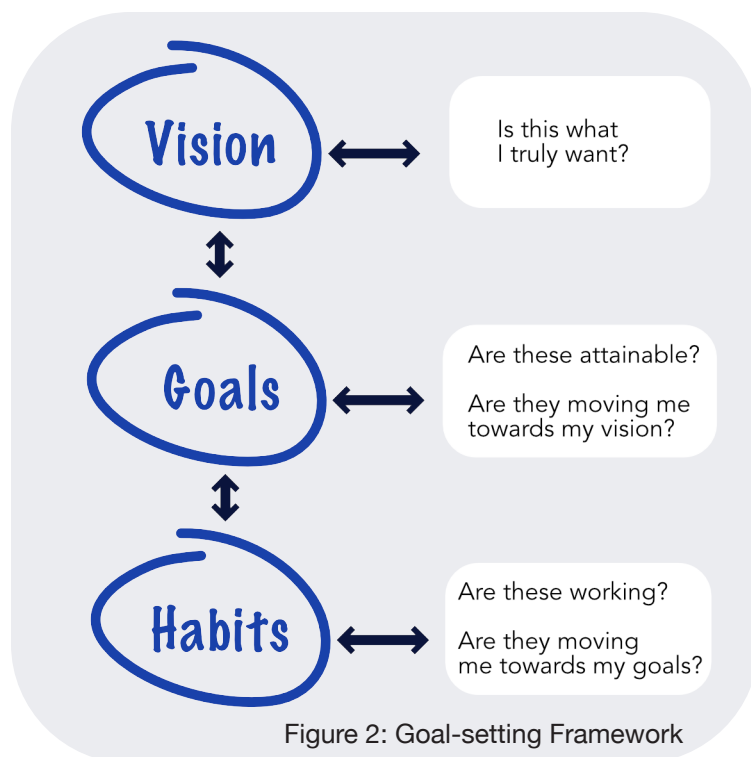


Figure 2: Goal-setting Framework

desires are not totally consistent. They change. Second, we're always learning more about what is and isn't possible in our lives. Our visions should adapt to that changing reality. And third, there are always multiple levels to interpret and understand your desires.

Maybe you say you want more money. At first glance, that looks like a simple "material abundance" wish. But if it's because everyone around you

drives a better car and you feel looked down upon, it might be something else entirely. And realizing that can completely reframe where you want to go as a result.

Developing a vision is all about understanding what you want, and then turn it into a direction.

So now your **goals** are the concrete milestones that bring that vision to life. What markers do you need to hit? If you want to have a family with kids someday, you first

need to find someone to date. The goals are rarely the end-all-be-all, but the next important milestone on the quest to realize your vision.

And finally, those goals are achieved or failed through your **habits**. They may take the form of regular practices and routines, but the most important one is having a regular habit of "working on your goals," which may look different each day.

Each level builds on the next and they should inform the others. If you keep falling short with a specific goal, maybe you need to drop down a level and adjust your habits. Maybe you need to go up a level and adjust your vision. If you hit a goal but it doesn't move you closer to your ultimate vision, that should inform the goals you set in the future.

Have a clear vision, turn it into goals, and figure out what habits you need to get there. Learn from each of those and adjust based on your results.

The process is straightforward, but it's not easy to execute. It's not natural to consistently hold ourselves to these kinds of markers. Most of us, doing this alone, will fall off the wagon, probably quickly.

That's the reason most of our New Years Resolutions end up in the graveyard of late January. We need some kind of external structure to prop us up.

Luckily, there's an even simpler way to get that.

The Accountability Superpower

People have been using accountability (wittingly and unwittingly) as one of the most common tactics to hold themselves and others to actually doing the things they need to do.

Your school expected you to complete assignments and get a passing grade. Your job expects you to show up on time.

And most of us are very cognizant of doing those things because we know someone is measuring us, and we know there are stakes attached.

But what if you brought that same influence to bear on *your own goals*?

You can literally have a couple people in your life that you talk to regularly about what you want, how you're going to get there, and they can encourage you, shame you, plead with you, or challenge you—whatever works to make sure you get it done.

There are so many ways to do this, and all it takes is a little creativity and the courage to ask other people to join in on a little social experiment.

You could get better. You could

talk more often about the stuff you really want out of life. You could see *other people* talking more about the stuff *they* really want out of life.

Maybe you know what your vision and goals are, you just need someone to help you stick to a habit. Maybe you need help figuring out what you really want. Maybe you need help with all three levels.

The great news is that in some form, accountability can help with all of that.

It will likely be your special sauce that helps you follow through on whatever you want to achieve in your life.

If you know what you want to set up already, great. Go forth and do that. If you're interested, but aren't sure how to set that up, Chapter 3 is for you.

If you're still wondering who is this Charlie person and why should I read the rest of what he has to say, read on to my story in Chapter 2.

TWO: MY STORY

My First Job

It was during my first job out of college when I finally decided to stop coasting on potential.

I had started working for a software company in the Midwest in September of 2013. I found myself in training class after training class with 150 other new hires that first month.

The nervous ambition of my peers was palpable in class as people looked to start establishing themselves, and my initiation into that culture laid the groundwork for a lot of the lessons that would eventually lead to this guide.

Lesson One: Expectations and Feedback

Early on, it was evident that people at this company took working hard very seriously. My more experienced peers had a similar ambition, though much more grounded.

What really settled this in for me was my conversations with my manager. Not only was he frequently checking in on my training progress, but I was also getting regular feedback on how I was doing in my core role, my

presence in meetings and email communications were also all grounds for feedback.

At least once a quarter we'd have big-picture check-ins where we talked about how I was doing overall, where I needed to keep growing, and where I wanted to take my career.

I was aware of how I was performing relative to what the company expected of me, and what I could do to take things to the next level.

It was the combination of clear expectations and feedback that made this so useful. I knew where I stood, and there was always some "next level" I could attain.

And it was a rush.

Lesson Two: The Pull of the Peer Group

The early days of my job had a lot of competitive jockeying for position as new people looked to distinguish themselves from their peers, and I found myself more easily comparing myself to others.

This has been a common thread in any new stage of life - high

school, college, etc. - when people lack a clear sense of who they are and who they want to be, they tend to size themselves up against their peers more.

It creates a competitive fire, which is a strong fuel but not very clean.

Being in this environment taught me two things: first of all, the peer group I find myself in has a strong gravitational pull, so it's important for me to put myself in environments with peers that I respect.

Second, when I start comparing myself to others, there are significant returns to clarifying my own vision. I need to get clear on what I want to be in that situation, so I spend less time looking at other people.

Lesson Three: Unintended Consequences

At the same time as I was starting this job, I had gotten married and my wife Allie and I got our first apartment.

I was equally anxious to learn to live as a married couple and learn to live on our own.

I devoted a lot of time and energy

to my family life at home, but I did notice that I found it easier to point extra time and mental space towards my work.

I really gravitated to the clear markers of success and the clear sense of growth and direction that the feedback culture of my job offered.

This has been a constant balancing act for me, but the major, and sometimes painful, lesson has been that *those areas of life that escape easy progress and measurement are the easiest to let slip.*

Especially if you have big goals, these may crowd out the softer areas of your life that are often more important, but lack clear markers of success (like relationships, spiritual health).

After about three years working there, I had one more critical lesson I needed to learn, but to do that I'd need to go elsewhere.

Our Sabbatical

Allie had harbored a dream of traveling for some time. I was fairly content with where we were at, but after we paid off student

loans and kept saving, we suddenly had a little nest egg.

Her dream started to crystallize into this concrete vision of over four months backpacking across Europe.

The idea scared me, but after plenty of conversations and convincing, I was on board.

So in June of 2016, we left our jobs, sold most of our possessions, and flew to Dublin with just carry-on backpacks and a three-month rail pass.

It turned out to be one of the best times of our lives.

My life had been effectively governed by a to-do list and a calendar for years. Every day was framed in terms of what needed to happen from those lists.

And now it was gone.

A lot of our mental energy went towards getting from A to B, making sure we had food to eat and a place to sleep, but those were all the “tasks” we had to do. Outside of that we just spent our time enjoying each other's company and being awed by

everything new we saw, tasted, and experienced. And that open space left a lot of time for our own priorities and perspectives to emerge clearly.

Lesson Four: Craft Your Vision

About three weeks into our trip, we were in Glasgow and decided to spend an afternoon checking out the Glasgow Cathedral.

It was an overcast day, a little cool but very comfortable.

Neither of us had any particular attachment to this cathedral, and so what became most memorable about that day was our conversation. It wasn't that crowded and I remember us walking around the grounds and simply reflecting on what each of us were noticing from the trip so far.

We were both struck by how well we'd done getting around with just backpacks, talked about the people we'd met (we stayed in almost all Airbnbs, often private rooms with locals), and how much we loved just walking around and having ample time to spend together.

We talked about our budding

minimalism kick, how much we enjoyed being able to walk to so many places instead of driving everywhere, how much our connection seemed enhanced by all the time we had together, and the fact that we had this thrilling project to devote ourselves to.

As the year went on we continued to have these conversations about new values that were emerging, and once we got back, it has been a continual process of clarifying those and other values, adjusting as our life has changed, but continuing to stay in touch with what we truly expect our lives to be.

Since coming back, it's been a continual process.

But almost any environment you find yourself in—your school, your company, your neighborhood, your country, your social media feed—has its own culture that it will initiate you into, and it's easy to blindly follow the dominant priorities and values of that culture.

It is invaluable to get out of whatever bubble you're in and see what new values emerge. And it's even better if you can have someone else who does

that with you.

Lesson Five: Get Accountable

Allie and I returned to the U.S. and moved to Austin, TX in 2017.

This was where I took more of a personal and proactive approach to my own growth.

I joined an accountability group with a few friends centered around a weekly 90 minute meeting very early in the morning.

The biggest thing I learned here was how to take a vision and turn it into something concrete - goals for the next few months, and specific actions and habits I'd need to do to complete those.

Once a quarter, my group would set goals in important areas of our lives—work, health, relationships, etc.—and we'd give each other feedback to make sure the goals were both ambitious yet realistic, but also aligned to what we each wanted.

My group was a clear mirror to me whenever my goals were out of sync. Sometimes they were unrealistic, sometimes way too easy, and sometimes the group

saw before I did if I had a goal that did not seem like it was going to help with the things that really mattered to me.

And if I was stuck - I wanted something but I wasn't sure what to do, they were an invaluable sounding board sharing new ideas I might want to try.

At the same time, there were some important areas of development that didn't easily fit that container.

For instance, I've always struggled with simply expressing myself. Being candid with my thoughts and feelings, talking about my interests and wishes. I've sensed this has held me back both personally and professionally, but it was hard to turn that into a discrete "goal" to work on with my accountability group.

I joined a group therapy group for a few years where the focus was all about expressing authentic feelings towards others in the group. I worked with a men's coach for a bit who specialized in relationships to work on similar things (AMA about either of these if you're curious).

These were much softer and less goal-oriented than the accountability group, but offered a concrete place to practice these skills.

Why I Wrote This

Of all the different forms accountability has taken in my lifetime, the consistent themes have been:

Have people who help you get clear on what you want. And have people who will help you get there where you fall short alone.

I don't write this so you can change the world.

I think many of us aim too high at the start - we're primed to think we have the potential to "make an impact on the world" and then surprised to find the world doesn't seem to care what our opinions are when we first join the ranks of the adult world.

But I hope more people can take the mantle of having a few important things to be truly responsible for: some good work, maybe a family, contributing to your community in a meaningful way, and taking care of the biggest gift you've been given:

your one wild and precious life.

Show up there first and undoubtedly the scope of your "impact" will grow.

But this is not an easy task, and we all do a better job when we have people who pull us up when we're down.

It's been deeply meaningful for me to have people in my life who encourage me to strive for more, and help me figure out how to get there.

I want to see you succeed, I want to see you build a life you're proud of, and I want you to carve out your own sphere of responsibility that improves you, your family, and whatever work you devote yourself to.

The world is a better place when more people do that and I hope the tips in this guide help you towards that end.

THREE: ACCOUNTABILITY GROUPS, A GUIDE

Introduction

Let's get down to brass tacks.

At heart, accountability is just having someone else keep you honest for doing what you said you'd do, and if you're lucky, actively helping you do it.

That's it.

The only reason you'd invest this time is because there's something you want in your life that's hard to do consistently by yourself.

If you've made it this far, I'm assuming that's you.

So now the question is, what's the best way to get the accountability you need?

I'm going to give you first a menu of options you can explore (p x).

Then I'm going to tell you all about the Cadillac of accountability - what I call the *Purpose Group*.

This is a small, general purpose group with a few people (generally 4-8) where you meet regularly to talk about your goals and help each other achieve them.

If you build some form of accountability into your life, that will not only help you get more clarity

Here's what we'll cover:

Accountability Menu (p 17)

Different accountability options to consider.

The Purpose Group (p 18)

What is a purpose group and how can you create one?

One or Many (p 19)

Benefits and drawbacks of getting a single accountability partner vs. a larger purpose group.

Ingredients of a Good Group (p 20)

Building a useful group is much more of an art than a science - these are some of the keys to an effective and meaningful group to guide you as you set something up.

Putting it Together (p 27)

Additional tactics for a strong and useful group.

Accountability Menu

Here are a sample of some of the most common types of accountability programs to consider.

The remainder of this document will only cover accountability partners and purposes groups.

Check out the [resources](#) page for more.

Accountability Partner

A regular check-in with one person; usually focused on a single goal or habit you want to build.

Pros/Cons: Easy to set up, extremely flexible, usually free.

Best for: internalizing a new habit, a quick on-ramp to accountability.

Purpose Group

A group of people (4-8 usually best) meeting regularly to discuss self-improvement, usually in pre-determined areas of life.

Pros/cons: Flexible, usually free. most involved, high-work effort to set up.

Best for: broad life improvement.

Practice Group

Groups where you just show up and do the thing together. Examples would be a running club, Toastmasters for public speaking, a Bible study.

Pros/cons: sometimes free, no talking required, just show up and do the thing. Easy to join. Narrowly focused.

Best suited for: single goals or habits.

Coach

A 1:1 relationship with an expert in the area you want to improve in.

Pros/cons: Coach (ideally) has the experience to lead you on a growth plan.

Best for: cases where you're willing to spend and you want to improve on something quickly.

Group Coaching

Coach-led programs that pair you with a cohort of other clients.

Pros/cons: You get the expert knowledge from a coach, but also peer accountability. Great way to meet others interested in the same thing. Cheaper than 1:1 coaching (usually).

The Purpose Group

The Purpose Group

The purpose group is a general group that can be as broad or as narrow in focus as you like.

It's essentially a regular meeting space for people to get clear on what they want, and talk through how they're successfully or unsuccessfully attempting to get there.

This page is the "quick start guide" version, and below that are six key ingredients that will help you keep improving your group.

Starting a Group

The practical steps couldn't be more straightforward:

1. Find people.
2. Set a group purpose and agreements.
3. Meet regularly.
4. Track each other's goals.

However, the devil's in the details, and this is much more of an art than a science. So I'll give you some basics, and then some *ingredients* a strong group should

have.

Find People

If you know people personally who you respect and think would also be interested in this kind of group, ask them. And then ask them if they know anyone else who might want to join.

If not, there are plenty of ways you can look for potential group members online. This can be riskier as you don't have the same level of personal relationship with people to vet beforehand. Check out the [resources page](#) (coming soon) for ideas here.

Set a Group Purpose and Agreements

As you start, settle on a purpose - why does this group exist? Is it for people to grow in one specific area, or is it generic to all areas of life?

Then set some agreements - things like confidentiality, showing up to meetings on time.

Sample set of principles/ agreement can be found [here](#).

Meet Regularly

I recommend every 1-2 weeks for

90-ish minutes. This is frequent enough that it keeps people honest (not enough time to fall off the wagon with whatever you're trying to do), but not overly burdensome.

Track Each Other's Goals

You need to know (1) what each person is trying to do, and (2) how they're doing.

1. Text your goals
2. Use a Google Doc
3. Use an app like Lattis

Lattis

Lattis is an accountability app specifically designed for setting goals in a small group. Create your goals, habits and tasks that power them, and a group to follow each other's progress.

Download at lattisapp.com.

Get Started

As you start, settle on a purpose - why does this group exist? Is it for people to grow in one specific area, or is it generic to all areas of life?

One Partner or a Full Group?

A purpose group is very similar in function to just getting a simple accountability partner. So the first decision you'll likely face is whether to just get one partner or put together a larger group. Each has pros and cons, detailed below:

Accountability Partner

Having a single partner is a very simple way to get started with accountability. You don't need to set up as many formal structures around when you meet, how your calls look, etc. Much of the advice outlined below doesn't need to be followed.

This is usually best if your goals are straightforward: you have one habit you're trying to build/break, or a single goal you're trying to pursue.

The main drawback is, because it's so flexible, it can much more easily devolve. Either your conversations turn into just talking and you lose the original purpose, or you just stop being consistent with those calls. And it only takes one single point of failure (either you or your partner lagging) for this to happen.

But the main benefit is that the startup costs are far easier. Even if you don't know four or five people who would be interested in such a group, a single person is much easier to find, and requires much less coordination to get started.

Purpose Group

A full on purpose group requires much more coordination - you usually will need more formal boundaries around when/how often you meet, a more structured agenda, and the interpersonal relationships require more active management than a single group.

The startup costs are higher, but the more structured format usually means group members are more committed. There also isn't a single point of failure - if one of the group members is lagging in their commitment, the other members and the group structure will usually help keep the group afloat.

This is also better if **inspiration** is a key component. If your main goals look more like broad visions ("I want to get healthier," "I want to be more present with my family"), having more people means more sources of new ideas — hopefully this will result in clearer goals and better tactics to get there over time.

Ingredients of a Good Accountability Group

Sharpening

Simply put, a good group calls you out when you're off the rails, whether that's regularly missing goals because they're too ambitious, impractical, or some other reason, or hitting goals that don't actually matter.

Inspiration

Expect to regularly come away inspired by the way others are accomplishing theirs and encouraging you.

A good test: how do you feel at the end of each group meeting?

Clarity

The group holds space for you to get and keep clarity on what matters to you.

You should feel more confident in your direction in life as a result of being in this group.

Consistency

To get these benefits, others have to know you, and you have to count on them to be there when you're talking through something.

So people need to show up consistently: consistent meetings, well attended, and available when needed.

Safety and Trust

To get the most out of a group like this requires vulnerability and candor about problem areas in your life.

The members and group structure need to give enough safety and trust to do that.

Alignment

Your group should have enough similarity of purpose that your partners can meaningfully speak to your goals and aims. The more you're focused on similar things, the better you can learn and grow from one another.

Sharpening

What is it?

This is the main function of a group. Simply put, a good group will call you out whenever you're off base.

People usually need this as a correction for one of three things:

Overstretching yourself: if you keep missing the things you said you'd do, why? And how can you adjust?

Playing it safe: maybe there are opportunities you're missing to set more ambitious goals.

Misaligned targets: the goals you're setting don't actually help with what matters to you, or they have unforeseen consequences in other areas.

How to Get it

Frame your Meetings

Each meeting should start with a **check-in**: *"how did things go since we last talked?"* and end with **intentions**: *"what do you plan to do before we meet next?"*

The backbone of your meetings should be a progress check: how are we each doing, and where do we go from here?

Intentions

Clear intentions each week gives everyone else a foothold to hold you accountable on - to make sure they know where you're headed and can help you correct if needed.

Check-in

Have each group member give a recap of how the last week went for them: where did they hit their intentions

and where did they miss?

If you did what you planned, it's a chance to celebrate.

If you didn't, it's a chance to ask the obvious question: *"why not?"*

Sometimes the reason is just a one-off thing, but the beauty of a group like this is your partners will get a read over time, and can help you correct for recurring patterns in your misses.

Make it a Deep Dive

If there's a goal you're consistently struggling to hit, make it a deep dive for one meeting.

Dedicate one group session (outside of the check-in and intentions) entirely to one person's problem - let them talk through it, and have others give feedback: what issues have they observed for the person? What ideas and suggestions do they have?

Inspiration

What is it?

Each member should come away from the group meetings consistently feeling motivated and inspired (not 100% of the time, but it should be the norm, not the exception).

This usually comes from one of two things:

First, an infectious group energy. Seeing other people overcome barriers, set and hit ambitious goals, and keep a positive attitude will usually inspire you to do the same.

Second, new ideas being shared. New tactics should be shared often.

How to Get it

Stay Solutions-focused

Consider a group agreement to stay solutions-focused. There is nothing more disempowering than a group that gets focused on complaining rather than what you can change.

Trust your reactions

You can't make an ironclad "rule" that clearly delineates between working through an issue and simply complaining.

But you will certainly notice your energy lag or the group's energy lag if too much time is spent fixating on a problem without going anywhere productive.

Trust that reaction. It is an important guide.

If you're feeling that, bring it up. Better yet, make it an expectation that everyone in the group does that.

It may lead to some hard conversations if a topic needs to be cut off.

But you can have that conversation frankly and positively if it's in the interest of safeguarding the group's energy.

Highlight the Wins

Make an effort to really celebrate people's wins. The tendency of your group will be to fixate on the issues people are struggling with, but give people latitude to talk about the achievements they're most proud of.

Make it a Deep Dive

Have members bring in outside topics for discussion on a rotating basis.

(Books they've read, podcasts they've listened to, exercises they've found valuable, etc.)

Clarity

What is it?

We spend so much time looking at the outside world. News, social media keeps you looking at what's happening *out there*, it's hard to have as clear a sense of what's going on *inside*.

Part of the benefit of a group like this is that it focuses you back on your own objectives, and ideally, the benefits.

Clarity is simply knowing first, *what you want*, and second, *what you'll do to get there*.

There are a few group activities you can do to make that happen.

How to Get it

Set Long-Term Goals

The chart above this section talked about how our vision, our goals, and our daily tasks and habits all align.

You will spend a lot of time in the weeds of tactics - "how did you do on your habits last week?" "how can we correct this issue?"

Make sure you have regular long-term goals these week-to-week efforts are building towards.

Review Goals

Make the long-term goal setting a regular process for your group (e.g. we do that once a quarter).

As part of that, have people present their goals to the group for feedback.

The group can offer any feedback on whether the

goals seem too lofty or too easy, but should primarily be focused on ensuring the goals

For example, "you say staying healthy matters to you, but I don't see anything on here about exercising."

If it seems like someone isn't clear on why they're setting specific goals...

Make it a Deep Dive

There will inevitably come a time where someone in your group isn't sure what matters to them.

Maybe they've hit a goal and aren't sure what's next, or are wrestling with a goal that no longer seems possible or a good use of time.

Or, perhaps two of their goals are in tension.

The space to spend an entire meeting talking through their aims can be a beautiful gift to give someone.

Consistency

What is it?

Consistency is the backbone of good sharpening and clarity.

If someone knows they will talk to you every other week and you'll ask them about a particular habit, they're much more incentivized to keep it up.

And when you hear someone talk about the goals they're hitting/missing repeatedly, you get a unique window into their strengths and weaknesses.

You'll be able to offer better feedback on where they need to change course and where they need to step up.

But this only comes with consistent presence.

How to Get it

Regular Meetings

Meet regularly and at a consistent time. If you have a group of 4-8, I'd recommend 90 minutes every 1-2 weeks.

90 minutes gives plenty of time to go through a full update/intention at the beginning and end with plenty of time for discussion in the middle.

Frequency should be enough to keep up without being overly burdensome.

In Person vs. Virtual

In person meetings offer closeness that can't be recaptured virtually, but if schedules or busy or you live in different locations, this might not be possible.

If you can't meet in person, consider having a semi-regular "retreat" where the group does get together in

person.

Enforce Attendance

Consider setting some rules around attendance.

You can always go back and make an exception if there are extenuating circumstances.

If you aren't sure how to do it, think up some unique consequences for unexcused absences - having to lead meetings or take notes, prepare some report for the group, or something else.

Safety & Trust

What is it?

In a group like this, you are working through challenging things, which means things that are vulnerable and potentially sensitive.

You may be talking about financial information, details about your personal relationships, or sensitive issues in your life.

To do this, you absolutely need to feel safe sharing that information and trust your group partners.

You need to know that they'll safeguard any of your sensitive information, and you need to know that they are trustworthy people who will respond to you beneficially with that.

How to Get it

Set Group Agreements

An artifact of your group should be a list of agreements that everyone signs.

Confidentiality is likely one of the first things you'll want to include as an agreement.

The most basic version would be something like:

Anything discussed in the group is not discussed with anyone outside the group.

Usually with the caveat that you could talk about advice you received from the group, but no details of what anyone else is going through.

Confidentiality and Significant Others

If people in the group are married or in relationships, you should specifically talk about how confidentiality applies to them.

Especially if your group involves any topics that could affect your partner (talking about your relationship, sharing joint financial details), your partner also has a right to trust that information is held appropriately.

At a minimum, you should have a conversation with your group and with your significant other to make sure the agreements of your group work for both sides.

Limit Side Conversations

You will probably have times where someone in the group frustrates you and you may want to vent about it with someone else.

As much as possible, *bring that up directly and within the group.*

It helps trust and it could be powerful for the person hearing the feedback.

Alignment

What is it?

A group like this needs to effectively balance two things:

Similarity: you want enough similarity of life goals/life stages that people can make a meaningful contribution to others' lives.

If one person is solely focused on one area of their lives (work for example) and others prioritize other goals (e.g. fitness), there's a higher chance people will just speak past each other.

Diversity: some diversity of perspectives is incredibly important. Part of the benefit of a group like this is others with different perspectives can help you see things you wouldn't see alone.

How to Get it

Make the Focus Clear

Make the group's boundaries clear from the outset. If your group is only focused on business goals, say that.

If it's a general life improvement group, say that. However, the more general the group's focus is, the more potential there is for someone to feel misaligned. So in that case...

Discuss Misalignment

At some point, someone will inevitably feel misaligned with what's coming out of the group.

When that happens, discuss it.

It's important and healthy.

If you feel like the discussions are too far weighted towards one topic, or discussing them in a way that you don't find

helpful, the group needs to get back in sync about this.

Maybe the takeaway is that the group isn't a fit for one person, or maybe it's an opportunity to re-clarify the focus of the group.

Putting it All Together

Putting it All Together

Work forward from “I want to X.”

Start or join some kind of accountability group from the menu that seems like it will help further your goals.

In doing so, you become someone who doesn't just take the relationships life has put in front of you, but who cultivates relationships purposefully, and who seeks out people who make you better.

This will help you reach your goals, but the secondary impact on your relationships is perhaps even more important.

Over time, you'll notice at least three changes in yourself:

First, increased confidence in yourself. As you hit your goals, you'll gain the confidence that comes with knowing you can accomplish what you set out to do.

Second, you become more particular with your preferences.

As your vision for what you want in life becomes clearer, it'll be easier to say no to the things that don't align.

Third, you'll become more proactive in your relationships in general. If you're doing the hard work of paying attention to where the group lags, and correcting those issues, you'll become more attuned to your own preferences in relationships in general (both personal and professional) and advocating for relationships that are both positive and helpful.

Evolving the Group

If you start a purpose group, I recommend starting it simply and let it grow over time.

If you have engaged group members truly committed to moving forward and helping one another, the group will evolve naturally, and it will need to evolve to keep pace with everyone's growth.

The six ingredients of a good group can be signposts to make sure the group is growing effectively. Check in on them regularly to make sure all six ingredients are present, and bring it up as time goes on.

Most of these changes will be updates to the way your group functions, but occasionally it's time for the group membership to change.

New Members/Departing Members

New people can bring an infusion of energy and fresh perspective to the group.

Especially if you have an established culture, people will want to vet new members, and it's probably useful to have a probationary period where they join for a predetermined amount of time and then everyone can evaluate whether it's a good fit.

Perhaps have someone join for a quarter and see if they like it and are bringing a positive impact to the group.

And then I would be remiss if I didn't mention this, but it's almost inevitable that at some point, someone will want to leave the group (and that may even be you).

This could be for any number of reasons - your life stage changes, the time commitment doesn't work, someone is bringing the energy of the group

down, etc.

Set the expectation that if someone thinks it might be time to move on, talk about it within the group.

This is healthy. It means that you're doing the hard work of making sure it's a strong fit for everyone.

You should have some moments of conflict within the group. I'll repeat that. In a purposeful social environment like this, conflict will be normal.

Have the conversations, and if someone needs to leave, that's probably for the best. It's a sign you're actively tending to the group.

Conclusion

Starting an accountability group could be one of the best decisions you make this year.

It's difficult to do, but that's a big part of why it's rewarding.

So I leave you with this challenge:

Challenge

Getting started is often the hardest part, so I'd like to keep you accountable for taking that first step.

Email me (charlie@lattisapp.com) three things:

- 1. What you want accountability for**
- 2. What kind of group you'll start or plan to join**
- 3. Your biggest barrier**

I want to know if there's any way I can help.

Best of luck. I'm looking forward to seeing you succeed.