

Elements of Accountability: Some Food for Thought

1. Admit that you committed a harm.

This does not necessarily mean admitting to a crime. However, it does require that you acknowledge your involvement with something that has harmful consequences to others and/or yourself.

2. Understand the action from the points of view of others, particularly victims and the community, but also your family & friends.

It is often helpful to think about someone you love being the victim in a similar situation; to imagine some possible consequences to victims and the community; or to think about how your mother/ father/ grandmother/ younger siblings might have felt when you got arrested, when they learned about the situation, etc.

3. Understand that you made a choice to behave as you did.

Understand that your behavior did not spring automatically from the actions of others. Recognize that you are the only one who can control your own behavior, and is usually the only factor that you actually can control.

4. Do something to repair the harm.

This can be restitution, an apology, community service, repairing property, etc. It is very helpful to get the victim's and/or community's input into what might help restore the relationship with the community.

5. Make changes in your life so that you are less likely to commit another offense.

This is a much longer-term goal, and it often requires assistance & introspection in identifying your core values and goals that you want to achieve.