

How to find (and keep) an Accountability Partner

What is an accountability partner?

Someone to hold your feet to the fire, to be the voice outside your head that knows what you're up to and expects you to DO it. It's a great way to GET STUFF DONE, especially for ADHD folks.

What do we DO together?

Accountability partners tell each other about their plans for the week or the day or the month. Then they check in at regular intervals to report on their progress.

You might decide to set aside 30 minutes on Monday morning to report your plans for the week to each other, then check in again Friday night for five minutes to report on your progress.

You keep track of your plans and progress, usually in writing. Then the history of your partnership can be tracked.

Accountability partners are NOT coaches or therapists or business consultants so they don't give advice, they simply support you (and you, them) as you work.

That sounds difficult; how do we set up the schedule?

Your first session together will be a longer session (unless you already know each other and understand the scope of the projects). That's when you work out an agreeable arrangement that is comfortable for both of you while providing that little "push" to get things done.



What should I look for in an accountability partner?

You need someone with about the same level of COMMITMENT so you can both accomplish your personal goals. If one of you is gung ho and the other one is lukewarm about being an accountability partner, the experiment is likely to fail.

You need some one who is DEPENDABLE, which can be a challenge with an ADHD brain. It's not critical that the other person (or you) be 100% on time, but each of you must make your appointments a high priority.

It's important to choose someone who is NOT JUDGMENTAL because there will times that you fall short of your goals. You need encouragement, not guilt.

Try to find someone who has a similar COMPLETION TIME FRAME. If you finish your project while your partner is still struggling to meet her deadline, there can be a breakdown that will likely affect future partnerships.

I'm embarrassed to ask for help; I'm so far behind!

You're right, it can be embarrassing to let someone else in on our private "mess," but remember, your partner has her own "mess." You'll be in the same boat. And the results may surprise you,

It's weird how we promise ourselves that we'll do _____ (fill in the blank) this time. Absolutely. Positively. 100% yes. And we let ourselves down, time after time. It's disheartening.

Having someone "out there" who understands our situation makes all the difference in the world. Someone you don't want to let them down in the same way that you might let yourself down. Weird.



How do we keep up with our progress (if we make any!)

Some people use a very structured reporting system like a spreadsheet or graphs. Others are more informal - they send an email to each other and print them monthly.

You and your partner will know the right way to do this. And if both of you are allergic to taking notes and keeping track of each other, then alternate the duty from check-in to check-in or month to month. No one wants the “bad job” all the time. Not fair!

You might set aside 30 minutes on Monday morning to report your plans for the week, then check in again Friday night for five minutes to report on your progress.

Do we need a contract or something like that?

No, it can be less formal than a contract, but please, please, please **write down your agreement after that first meeting**. You need at least a little structure so you both “know the rules” and don’t step on boundaries unintentionally.

How long should the partner-ing last?

As long it works and as long as you both benefit. But the initial length of your commitment should be spelled out in your WRITTEN agreement. That ensures a more solid foundation for long term partnerships. Or you may ‘break up’ after just one project or time frame. There is no right or wrong way to do this...unless you don’t honor each other.

What happens if one of us quits?

Even with the best screening and agreement, people don’t show up when they said they would show up. It’s ADHD. It’s HUMAN. So, while you might feel abandoned or even angry, let it go and either find another partner or use the good habits you learned during your time together to test out your own resolve.



How do you maintain good relationship?

Communicate! Talk! Be honest - about what you need, about what it work and what is not working. An accountability partner is a bit like a marriage partner. It takes a little work to smooth the path.

A good way to stay in each other's good graces is to set out appropriate guidelines in your agreement.



How do you end a partnership?

Set up a mini celebration – in person or on line. Offer each other a figurative toast and wish each other well.

It sounds complicated but where do you find an accountability partner, anyway?

It's really not so complicated. It always looks worst when it's written down ; -) And to be honest, it can be a challenge to find an accountability partner right now. Lots of people want them but not many places offer a connection point. Here are a few ideas:

- Meetup or CHADD group
- Neighbors
- Church
- Co-worker
- ADHD Sites, e.g. ADDA, ADDitude Magazine
- Online accountability partner sites like Gentle Nudge

Do accountability partners really work?

You bet. You'll be surprised how much more motivated you are to FINISH when someone else is involved. And that means you're happier, they're happier and the job gets done. WIN-WIN-WIN

For more information about online accountability partners visit <http://addiva.net/gentlenudge>