

Shame, Guilt & Recovery

Using accountability without turning past behavior into a permanent identity.

A common recovery trap

Shame can say, “Because I harmed people or broke promises, I am beyond repair.” That belief can increase isolation and return-to-use risk even when accountability is necessary.

More effective accountability

- Name what happened accurately.
- Take responsibility for what was within your control.
- Make repair when appropriate and safe.
- Accept that other people may need time, distance, or boundaries.
- Build credibility through repeated behavior rather than demanding immediate trust.
- Separate consequences from the belief that you are permanently worthless.

Try this reflection

What would accountability look like if it were measured by consistent behavior rather than self-punishment?

Using this resource: For education and skill-building only; not diagnosis, medical advice, or crisis care. If you feel overwhelmed, pause and seek appropriate professional support. In the U.S., call or text 988 for crisis support; call 911 for an immediate emergency.