

2023 IDAHO YOUTH WRITING CHALLENGE: ACCOUNTABILITY IN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES, AWARDS AND LESSON PLAN

During February's National Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Month, Idaho middle school/junior high and high school students are invited to enter the 14th Annual Idaho Youth Writing Challenge. This year's theme is Accountability in Healthy Relationships.

Conflict, misunderstandings, small harms or small breaks in trust can all happen in healthy relationships. Most of us – adults and young people – do not know how to move through conflict and be accountable for our actions. It's not unusual for people who make a mistake in a relationship to make up an excuse, freeze/disengage, make an insincere or quick apology without changing behavior.

Accountability is about being responsible for your choices and the consequences of your choices. We can learn to be accountable by engaging in self-reflection and writing about being accountable for the impact of our actions in healthy, caring relationships is a great way to start!

Submission Guidelines

Rules: The work submitted must be original work. Writing can be up to 100 words or less (title does not count) of original work related to a prompt. Students can submit up to three original poems or stories. Write in the language in which they can best express themselves.

Who is eligible? Student authors must be in Idaho middle school/junior high school or high school — public, private, alternative school settings, or youth groups — or be a 12- to 18-year-old home schooled student residing in Idaho.

Writing Selection Committee: All of the submissions will be read by adult and youth writers.



“Accountability is about being responsible for your choices and the consequences of your choices.”

Deadline to submit: midnight Tuesday, February 28, 2023

How to Submit Your Work:

- 1) Go to www.engagingvoices.org and enter your submission, or
- 2) Mail your writing submission, name, mailing address, email (required for gift card), school name, grade, and teacher's name to the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence, Linen Building. 1402 W. Grove Street, Boise, ID 83702. Only one submission per page.

Questions? For questions, contact Layla at layla@engagingvoices.org at the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence.

Author Awards

\$250 cash awarded to each of the top 10 selections for middle school/junior high school and the top 10 selections for high school categories.

\$25 Amazon gift card awarded to each of the 100 selections for middle school/junior high school and the 100 selections for high school. Be sure to include the student's email on the submission.

All authors selected for publication will also receive a book of the selections to be released in April 2023.

All published works will list the author, teacher, and school. A book of the published works will be distributed to Idaho's middle/junior high schools and high schools. Make sure your school is represented!

Students published in this year's books will be invited to share their writing at the *Accountability in Healthy Relationships* virtual or in person reading event in April 2023.

Teacher Stipend

\$50 Amazon gift card to each teacher who implements the lesson plan and has more than 10 students submit poems or prose. Confirm implementation of the lesson plan and submission by completing this form by February 28th.

\$100 Amazon gift card to each teacher who has four or more students published in the middle school/junior high school or high school categories.



Lesson Plan

Preparation

Print the two-page handout on the Accountability in Healthy Relationships prompts at the end of this document for your students. If you want to use the video, have access to Wifi and equipment needed to show the video.

Introduce the Idaho Youth Writing Challenge: Accountability in Healthy Relationships

What is Accountability? Conflict, hurt feelings, misunderstandings, small harms or small breaks in trust can all happen in healthy relationships. Most of us — adults and young people — do not know how to move through conflict and be accountable for our actions. We can learn by engaging in self-reflection and writing about being accountable for the impact of our actions in healthy, caring relationships.

Accountability is about being responsible for your choices and the consequences of your choices in your relationships.

Option 1 - Accountability in Healthy Relationships 30/60/90/120 Graffiti Activity (15 minutes)

Purpose

To identify effective and impactful ways to apologize for a mistake in a relationship.

Set Up

Four flip chart sheets or large butcher block paper with markers hung around the room with one of the questions below written at the top of each piece of paper. If you have a large group of participants, you can replicate the statements and set up eight sheets of paper for eight teams.

- What does it look like when someone apologizes for a small harm, makes things right and changes their behavior? (what actions occur)
- What does it sound like when someone apologizes for a small harm, makes things right and changes their behavior? (what words are used)
- What does it feel like when someone apologizes for a small harm, makes things right and changes their behavior (describe feelings)
- What does an insincere or ineffective apology look like, sound like or feel like?

During the first rotation, give each group 30 seconds to write or draw all the ideas that they can come up with in response to the question written at the top of their paper. At the end of 30 seconds, ask groups to rotate to the next flip chart paper. During the second rotation, give each group 60 seconds to do the same thing and add check marks to ideas or concepts they agree with (repeat this step, giving the students 90 seconds for the third question and 120 seconds for the final question).

Debrief

After the 30/60/90/120 activity, engage the group in conversation and reflection about what everyone experienced. Guide the conversation to meet the needs of your students. The intentions of the conversation is to:

- Demonstrate commonality of experiences of conflict, misunderstandings, small harms and small breaks of trust in healthy relationships. [Redirect if students are identifying abusive patterns of behavior rooted in threats and power over someone else.]
- Demonstrate how conflict, misunderstandings, small harms and small breaks of trust can be repaired when you apologize well, make things right and change behavior.

Option 2 – Reflective Journaling Activity (15 minutes)

Begin with small group conversations, then move to journaling.

Triad or Paired Conversations (10 minutes): Have students talk in small groups to identify the ways conflict, misunderstandings, small harms or small breaks in trust happen in healthy relationships and the impact of those actions. (10 minutes)

Journaling (5 minutes)

Ask students to “time travel” to a place or moment when they caused a small hurt or misunderstanding with someone they care about – it can be a small lie, not doing something that they promised they would do or gossiping about someone they care about to other friends.

Once they have a moment in mind, ask students to reflect and journal on what they did and why they made that choice. Did they apologize and name the harm and the impact of the harm? What did that feel like? What did they do to change their behavior? What would they do now, knowing more about apologizing well? What needs to happen? What was the struggle on this journey? What is it like once you’re there? What does it smell, taste, sound, feel, and look like?

Teacher’s tip: While unhealthy behaviors can be harmful, it doesn’t necessarily mean someone is in an abusive relationship. In abusive relationships, there can be a pattern of behavior involving threats, intimidation, or coercion. People who are abusive commonly do not accept accountability for their harm, so blaming the person they harm becomes part of the abuse.

If someone is being abused or severely harmed or if they are abusing someone, these accountability practices are not recommended. If someone thinks that they are in a dangerous situation, encourage them to trust their gut and get help.

What is Accountability?

Brief lecture

Accountability is a practice with four parts: 1) engaging in self-reflection to understand our actions and the impact of our actions; 2) making an apology that acknowledges the harm that has occurred and the impact we have had on another person; 3) repair and making things right; and 4) changing our behavior in the future so that the hurt or harm does not happen again.

What is Accountability Video (Optional for High School Students:

<https://bcrw.barnard.edu/videos/what-is-accountability-2/>

This is a 16-minute video that features multiple people sharing their views on the meaning of accountability. This video is a way to begin the conversation and to inform your understanding and/or your student's understanding of accountability as a practice.

Writing a Poem or Telling a Story about Accountability in Healthy Relationships

Provide students the handout with the writing challenge prompts. Encourage them to create an original poem in any format (haiku, free verse, prose, etc.) or story in 100 words or fewer on one of the five prompts: accountability in healthy relationships or one of the four parts of accountability — self-reflection, apology, repair, or behavior change.

Share Writing Tips with the Students

Start by writing down the first words that flow through your brain. Keep in mind that for the first draft, you don't have to get it right—you just need to get the words down. Don't be worried about the word limit for the first draft. It's easier to take out words to be below the 100-word limit. Trust your own voice. We're interested in reading what you have to say, not what someone else has already written.

Add specific details and avoid clichés. Avoid writing about abusive behaviors - patterns of controlling or threatening behavior, physical or sexual abuse. Remember, this is about the conflicts, misunderstandings, and small harms that happen in all healthy relationships.

Use all your senses to imagine what it looks like, feels like, and sounds like to be accountable for misunderstandings, or small harms in a relationship with someone they care about.

Resources on Accountability in Healthy Relationships

<https://bcrw.barnard.edu/videos/what-is-accountability-2/>

<https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2019/12/18/how-to-give-a-good-apology-part-1-the-four-parts-of-accountability/>

<https://www.yesmagazine.org/opinion/2022/05/31/accountability-adrienne-maree-brown>

<https://www.yesmagazine.org/opinion/2022/07/25/love-accountability-adrienne-maree-brown>





Conflict, misunderstandings, or small harms can all happen in healthy relationships - ignoring someone's feelings, acting like you are better than them, saying something offhand that is rude or mean, small lies, or not following through with a promise. Accountability is about being responsible for your choices and the consequences of your choices.

Writing Prompts — Accountability in Healthy Relationships

Choose from one of the five prompts below on the theme of Accountability in Healthy Relationships.

- **Accountability in Healthy Relationships** - Accountability is a practice of being responsible for your actions. Write about the four parts of accountability - self-reflection, apologizing, repairing, and changing behavior.
- **Part 1 - Self-Reflection** — Understanding your actions and the impact of those actions is the first part of being accountable. Write about pausing, looking inward and sitting with uncomfortable feelings (but not with guilt or shame). Write about understanding the choices you made and getting to a place where you are willing to make things right.
- **Part 2 - Apologizing** — Apologizing is an opportunity to share that you understand what you did and to take responsibility for the impact of your actions. Write about being authentic and courageous when apologizing for a conflict or small harm even though it was uneasy and uncomfortable.
- **Part 3 - Repair** — Repair means making things right and rebuilding trust. Write about making things right in a healthy relationship with someone you care about who experienced a small hurt. Tell the story about rebuilding trust with a person that was harmed.
- **Part 4 - Changing behavior** is about choosing to act differently in the future. Write about changing behavior — identify ways to act differently in the future.

While unhealthy behaviors can be harmful, it doesn't necessarily mean someone is in an abusive relationship. In abusive relationships, there is usually a pattern of behavior involving threats, intimidation, or coercion. People who are abusive commonly do not accept accountability for their harm, so blaming the person they harm becomes part of the abuse.

If someone is being abused or severely harmed or if they are abusing someone, these accountability practices are not recommended. If someone thinks that they are in a dangerous situation, encourage them to trust their gut and get help.

National Hotline Numbers

National Dating Abuse Helpline - 1-866-331-9474 or www.loveisrespect.org to chat online

National Suicide Hotline - 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or 988 or Crisis Text Line (text HELLO to 741741)

National Sexual Assault Hotline - 1-833-656-HOPE (4673)

Trevor Project (LGBTQIA Youth) - 1-866-488-7386

Sample Poems

Sample poem on Part 1: Self-Reflection

To look inward is an act of radical, responsible, and respectful partnership
Understanding the impact of what I say and do
Is not only an act of love for others but an act of self-love
To know yourself well enough to understand when you have hurt someone and when you need to take responsibility
Is to cherish your commitment to restoration
We are all complex people.
In a busy and rushing world,
Realize how incredibly impactful and important to
Take a break, reflect, and think of how your actions impact others
You are honoring yourself and your loved ones.

— *Layla Bagwell*

Rebuilding Trust

It doesn't mean it's all perfect now, and
it certainly doesn't mean that my guard will now fall
alongside my recently dropped expectations,
but it is repairing, and
it is rebuilding trust.

— *NJN*

Changing Behavior

Change what's possible –
challenge hurt & trauma –
to become the person that you, yourself, would choose
again and again and again.

— *NJN*

Transformation

Self-growth is alchemy.
One cannot make gold from lead through osmosis;
you must go all in.

— *NJN*

Reconciliation

Although we aren't in over our heads,
we are in well over our knees.
We wade toward reconciliation
at the pace of trust and healing –
the very slowest parts of our trust and healing.
Mama said that trust drips at the speed of honey
and that healing moves at the rate molasses.
I don't know how fast that means,
but I do know that honey is sweet
and that anything good
ain't ever been rushed,
so I'm thankful to rebuild with you,
waiting for reconciliation,
wading toward reconciliation,
for as long as it may take.

— *NJN*

Different On Both Sides of Noon

Every morning,
I challenge the very best parts of myself
to come back to myself;
I reclaim my potential as the day passes.
Who will I be when the stars turn off?

— *NJN*

(Heal)thy Relationships

Healthy relationships
are not merely the bonds
that form between good people;
they are bonds
that form between people
who invest good work into healing together–
they are restorative bonds that
allow a healthy relationship
to become like
what it's meant to be like.

— *NJN*