

# OWNING OUR PART IN RELATIONSHIPS

Couples therapy can be frightening for partners that feel responsible for shortcomings or mistakes in their relationship.

Recognising that there is no black or white system of assigning responsibility in shortcomings helps make the process of taking accountability less scary.

In a culture when mistakes are taught to be a shortcoming, it is no surprise that we would be hesitant to accept our part in the dynamic but affirmation and acceptances takes us a long way.

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Some practices for self-accountability that Esther Perel talked about are:

- Owning our experience: relaying our experience as a response to the partner is acceptance but our language often points to blaming them instead of highlighting our feelings (from "you made me feel" to "I felt")
- Avoid punishment: you and your partner are on the same team, even in a conflict, punishing them will further this conflict.
- Choose to stay in that relationship if it fulfils you and feels right.

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- Practice differentiation: Being able to be honest about your POV while simultaneously accepting theirs as their perspective instead of as a rejection of you. Their experience is not rejecting yours, it is merely different.
- Try to understand their experience, be curious and ask questions!
- Bad behaviour does not equal bad person: your partner doing something that hurt you does not make them bad, remind them once again?

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Some practices for self-accountability that Esther Perel talked about are:

- Bad behaviour across event/s does not mean it is a part of their personality, we tend to generalise others' without realising
- Humour when used right can help bring you closer during or after a conflict.

Last of all, practice grace and empathy. We all make mistakes and they don't have to be "do or die" situations. Your relationship will heal.