

BACK TO BACK

STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY HOW TO

OUR GOAL

That you would graduate with at least one spiritual best friend.

In a world filled with casual interactions and superficial relationships, it's almost impossible to find a quality friend. Unfortunately, most people journey through life—and their faith—without a dependable friendship that's based on honesty and trust. All of us long for a safe place where we can be who we really are and find the support we desperately crave.

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2 NIV).

WHAT IS BACK TO BACK

Doing life with another person.

Back to Back is a student accountability group. It's very basic. It's all about meeting once a week with another person, an accountability partner, for a few minutes, to share about your lives and pray for one another.

WHY DO I NEED BACK TO BACK?

Life is too tough to do alone. Everyone needs somebody!

Let's be honest, life is hard! So many things take their toll: school, work, homework, conflicts . . . even our families can be a source of stress. When a really big conflict hits, we're often unprepared to shoulder the load and deal with it effectively.

Discouraging comments or sarcastic remarks are fired off frequently, leaving deep wounds—sometimes even from close “friends.”

Spiritual commitments are hard to keep. We either forget about them after a while or simply break them. It’s tough to manage our time wisely so we consistently make time for God. Temptations eagerly wait to ensnare us and the guilt that comes after a failure holds so much destructive power.

All of these things work together to wear down the human soul, replacing joy with apathetic despair. It’s no wonder the Bible says we need one another!

Since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others (Romans 12:5 NLT).

We need a partner to help shoulder the heavy burdens we carry. Each one of us needs someone in our lives to hold us accountable, someone we can let inside our interior worlds. Someone who is able to see behind our masks. Someone who knows who we really are—good and bad—and what we’re really going through.

It’s our prayer that you would choose to make this kind of honesty and accountability a priority for your life. The Bible tells us that this level of sharing is powerful and leads to healing:

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective (James 5:16 NIV).

HELP! CONFLICT!

What do I do if my Back to Back partner and I don’t connect?

We STRONGLY urge you to stick it out for the full eight weeks. You might be surprised and it could good get better (stranger things have happened). At the end of the eight weeks, be honest with your partner and tell him or her that it’s not working out. Here are a few things to keep in mind if it comes to that point:

1. You don’t need to be mean. You should speak the truth, but in love, with gentleness and respect. This is the biblical measure of maturity (Ephesians 4:15, 1 Peter 3:15).
2. Don’t avoid the issue and hope things will just “work themselves out.” Avoiding confrontation is weak, and it doesn’t make it go away.
3. If you do go your separate ways, maintain the confidentiality you had with the other person. Just because your partnership split up doesn’t mean the personal information entrusted to you can become common knowledge.

IF YOU NEED ADVICE, talk to your small group leader.

I'M READY TO START, NOW WHAT?

To get started . . .

1. Pick your partner.
2. Determine a time and place to meet.
3. Get started ASAP! Stay consistent for at least eight weeks.
4. Let an adult leader know you've made the Back to Back commitment; we'd love to be praying for you!
5. After eight weeks, celebrate your achievement! Decide if you and your partner are going to remain committed to one another. Ideally, you'll have the same Back to Back partner for a long time. However, if things don't work out with one partner, THAT'S OK—find another one. The next section has some ideas for ending a partnership responsibly.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Commit to share honestly and pray consistently with a friend.

THE FIRST THING YOU NEED TO DO IS FIND A PARTNER. Pick someone in your life with whom you'd like to "go deep" and talk to them about the Back to Back commitment (get them one of these booklets). You can pick anyone—a close friend is a good choice. Someone outside of your normal circle of friends might also be a good option. This way you can avoid some of the "sticky situations" that can happen with a close group of friends. It's important to have a partner rather than just a "group of Christian friends" because this will allow you to be more specific when dealing with the issues in your life.

THE SECOND STEP IS TO DETERMINE A CONSISTENT TIME AND PLACE TO MEET EVERY WEEK. Pick a place where you won't be interrupted. Consistency (every week) is important, especially if you're establishing this HABIT in your life for the first time. If you can't make your appointed time one week, connect with your partner over the phone, IM, or email. God hears those prayers too!

The Back to Back Covenant

The following covenant outlines the heart of the Back to Back commitment:

I desire to grow in my relationship with God, and I acknowledge my need for personal accountability in my life. I commit to meet once a week with my partner, to pray for and encourage one another.

How long does this commitment last?

We suggest you and your partner commit to Back to Back for at least eight weeks. This gives you enough time to get used to each other and establish this as a HABIT in your life. At the end of the eight weeks, you can both make a decision to commit for another eight weeks or go your separate ways. It's not necessarily bad if things don't work out. The last section in this booklet will give you some ideas for handling conflict if that happens.

WHAT SHOULD WE TALK ABOUT?

Anything that's important to your spiritual life.

The Back to Back commitment exists to help you and your partner grow in your faith through sharing and prayer. You can talk about anything and everything that relates to your faith. You can share your personal struggles and victories. You can talk about the things God has been teaching you, or new spiritual commitments you want to keep (e.g. friendship evangelism or a daily quiet time).

WHAT'S MY RESPONSIBILITY?

Be the kind of friend you'd want to have.

1. DON'T FLAKE on your scheduled time to meet.
2. Be a good listener, don't interrupt your partner. Since trust is essential for Back to Back to work, don't be judgmental and be sure to maintain confidentiality. Also, Back to Back isn't about gossip. Avoid the temptation to bash other people while talking about your "personal struggles."
3. Offer godly advice at the right time. Usually, your partner will just need someone to listen, so don't offer advice if it's not needed. It's also possible to stay too quiet, so you should speak the truth when you know the time is right.
4. Ask the tough questions so you can help one another stay strong spiritually. Holding a person accountable includes asking the question, "So, how are you doing with _____?"
5. Share about the important things in your life, be honest. Accountability is only effective if it's truthful.
6. PRAY while you are together, and pray for one another at least once each week in-between your meetings.

BACK TO BACK ISN'T EASY

It will challenge you in ways you never thought possible.

Quality friendships don't just happen. Since everyone is imperfect (this includes you), even good friends will hurt one another. Forgiveness is essential in spiritual relationships. Many relationships never go deep because they hold on to bitterness and let go of friendship.

You'll have to work hard at being consistent. There will be so many reasons (excuses) not to meet. You need to show up even when you don't feel like being there for your friend. There will be times where you'll be giving more than you're getting. Sometimes friendships are like that. It will be hard to be non-judgmental, and to be honest about what's going on in your own heart.