

# Responsibility Character Connection

“You can count on me!” We’ve all said it – and we meant it at the time. But have we always carried through?

Responsibility means:

- Doing what you are supposed to do
- Persevering; keep on trying
- Doing your best
- Using self-control
- Being self-disciplined
- Thinking before you act and considering the consequences.

## ***Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers***

Modeling responsible behavior is one of the best things you can do. If your children see you being responsible, they will want to act responsibly too. Once infants start on table food, give them the opportunity to feed themselves. Yes, it will be messy, but they will learn the satisfaction of trying.

Toddlers enjoy completing small tasks you give them like picking up toys, find their shoes, choosing between two stories to read. Give your toddler the chance to choose what to wear. This also teaches him that his opinion counts. These activities help your toddler feel confident, and they also learn to be responsible.

Your preschooler wants to help. Give him jobs at which they can succeed; it will make him feel that he is contributing and he will also learn about being responsible.

## ***Seed Planting Activity***

Help your child select flower or vegetable seeds. Using a Styrofoam cup or small pot filled with soil, help him plant the seeds. Explain that it is his responsibility to remind you every day that the plant needs water and light. Have him help you water the plant and place it somewhere that it gets adequate light.

## ***School-age, Middle School and Teens***

As you can see from the list of traits, responsibility is an important aspect of character. Help your child understand that being responsible means choosing his words and actions carefully. It also means he is responsible for his actions and must take responsibility for the consequences of his choices.



Choosing either a positive or negative attitude is also a responsibility. Help your teen understand that a negative attitude can be harmful and people don't like to be around others with a bad attitude. Viktor Frankl, survivor of a Nazi concentration camp during World War II, once said, "Everything can be taken from man except the last of the human freedoms, his ability to choose his attitude in any given set of circumstances..." Encourage your child to have a positive attitude. You may be viewed as the enemy but be persistent – solicit help from another adult that your teen admires.

Here are some suggested messages to stimulate a change in attitude:

1. Attitudes are products of feelings and always acting on feelings is unhealthy and unwise. A person of character takes time to make good decisions.
2. While initial emotional responses (anger, sadness, etc.) occur spontaneously, with reflection and willpower it is possible to change one's perspective.
3. How we react to an incident is determined by how we perceive facts and intentions. Our perceptions can often be based on erroneous assumptions produced by negative attitudes.
4. Accept what you cannot change.
5. Selfishness is self-destructive.
6. Bad things do happen, but the happiest and most successful people in life learn to put tragedies, failures, and hurt feelings behind them.

### ***Practicing Responsibility 1***

Taking responsibility is a way to show we are people of character. It means doing our part, controlling our thoughts and actions, and doing our best. When we are acting responsibly we take the blame when it is due and do not claim credit for other people's work. We accept responsibility for our decisions. Being responsible means we:

- Think before we act.
- Think about how our actions affect others.
- Think before we speak.
- Are accountable; taking responsibility for the results of what we do and don't do.
- Fix our mistakes.
- Keep trying. Stick to duties even when they are difficult.
- Are reliable and always do our job.
- Clean up our own messes.
- Show perseverance by demonstrating a commitment to finish what we start.



## ***Responsibility Journals***

Encourage your children to become more aware of their behavior by keeping a responsibility journal for two or three days. Suggest they record their behavior in one of three sections: being dependable, being accountable, and doing my best. After two or three days discuss the journal with them. You may also want to keep a journal for the same period of time.

### ***Practicing Responsibility 2***

“You can count on me!” We’ve all said it. We’ve probably all meant it. But have we always carried through?

Ethical people are responsible. You can count on them to be accountable, show self-restraint and pursue excellence.

- Think before you act!
- Be accountable! Don’t blame anyone else for your mistakes.
- Be reliable!
- Set a good example in what you say and do.
- Take the initiative to make your school, organization, neighborhood, or home better for yourself and other.
- Do your best!
- Stick to it!
- Finish your work before you play.

### ***Practice Exercises***

What would you do?

You agree to go to the big dance with a friend because the boy or girl you really like is dating another student. Five days before the dance, your dream date asks you to go with them.

You give the school lunch lady \$10.00 for your lunch. She is very busy and mistakenly gives you change for a \$20.00 What would you do?

