

Character Education: Responsibility

Pre-teach:

Reacquaint yourself with the students and tell them which trait you will be discussing today. Ask the following questions and call on different students for answers. Below each question are examples of responses. You may need to rephrase students' answers or guide them along.

(Ask) **What is *responsibility*?**

1. Being accountable for what you do, for your actions and behavior.
2. Doing the right thing at the right time, so others can trust and depend on you.
3. *Taking care of your property, yourself, and others.*
4. *To know what your job is and to do it to the best of your ability.*
5. *When you choose to make a poor decision, you admit to it, apologize for it, and then take steps to change it.*

(Ask) **What are you responsible for?**

1. *My own actions*
2. *My time*
3. *My possessions*
4. *Chores*
5. *My family*
6. *Pets*
7. *Homework*
8. *My community*
9. *The Earth*

(Ask) **What are ways you can show *responsibility*?**

1. Complete your homework and chores on time without being reminded.
2. Follow through on your commitments, even when you don't feel like it.
3. Accept responsibility for your mistakes and learn from them. Don't make excuses or blame others.
4. Take care of your things and those of other people. Return items you

borrow.

5. Find out what needs to be done and do it.
6. Make wise choices, such as choosing to eat healthy foods and wearing a helmet.
7. Always do your very best. Others are counting on you!

Book Suggestions for Responsibility:

Read and discuss a book that teaches a lesson about responsibility. These books and others are located in our Character Education library and available for check out. This library is located inside the school library against the back wall under the windows. You will see a "Character Education" sign and the books are divided by character trait. We have roughly 30 books about responsibility in the character ed library. Please check these books out with the librarian and return promptly since we all share these resources. Also, please feel free to bring an appropriate book from home or the public library. These are just suggestions.

Grades K-2

- *Berenstain Bears Trouble at School, Jan Berenstain*
- *Five Little Monkeys with Nothing to Do, Eileen Christelow*
- *The Ant and the Grasshopper, Amy Lowry Poole*
- *Annie Shows Off, Shelagh Canning*
- *Clean Your Room, Harvey Moon! Pat Cummings*
- *Pigsty, Mark Teague*
- *Arthur's Pet Business, Marc Brown*
- *Mrs. Katz and Tush, Patricia Polacco*
- *Tops and Bottoms, Janet Stevens*
- *The Little Red Hen, Paul Galdone*
- *The Worst Day of My Life Ever! By Julia Cook*
- *If Everbody Did by Jo Ann Stover*

Grades 3-5

- *A Day's Work, Eve Bunting*
- *Betsy Who Cried Wolf, Gail Carson*
- *Crow Boy, Taro Tashima*
- *Horton Hatches the Egg, Dr. Seuss*
- *The Paper Boy, Dav Pilkey*
- *Your Job is Easy, Carl Sommer*
- *Kate Shelley: Bound For a Legend, Robert D. San Souci*

- The Boy of the Three Year Nap, *Dianne Snyder*
- ▢Why Do Mosquitos Buzz In People's Ears? *Verna Aardema*
- I Just Want to Do It My Way! By Julia Cook
- Being Responsible by Cassie Mayer

Responsibility Activities:

Complete an activity to go along with your lesson. You may choose to incorporate an activity into your lesson at any time. Oftentimes visuals and experiments are very effective at the beginning and will get your students excited about the lesson.

Let's Work Together▢(suggested for grades 3-5)

With this fun activity, students learn how to work with others and take responsibility for their part of a finished product. Organize my students into a small-group assembly line. Then challenge them to make a product using materials provided. Ideas include Styrofoam balls, pipe cleaners, empty boxes or cartons. You can either give all the students that same product assignment or let them create their own product.

One favorite product is a robot. Each student has the responsibility of adding a particular part of the robot. Once groups have created their products, a designated, impartial student inspector determines if the groups' products pass muster.

Money Matters▢(Suggested for grades 3-5)

To help students understand budgets, divide them into small groups and give them play money as their “paycheck”. Next have the groups write their own needs and wants on a piece of paper. Then provide them with a list of necessary expenses—rent, heat, food—on which they must spend part of their allowance. Have them subtract these necessary expenses from the total to determine what they have left to spend on their “wants”. Talk to them about keeping even a small amount left over to put into savings. Have them determine their savings amount and then calculate how much they will have left over at the end of one year. If you are feeling extra creative you can create “wild” cards and have each group draw one card. These cards can provide them with a windfall like birthday money or an unexpected expense such as replacing a flat tire. Ask them to calculate how this “wild card” affected their outcome.

Helpful Hands▢(suggested for all grades)

Have the students create coupons for special tasks they will do at home to help their families. Emphasize that it's important for them to include tasks they don't do regularly (helping with laundry or unloading the dishwasher), make only promises they will be able to deliver, and do tasks willingly. Then students present their coupons to family members. Have them draw and decorate 1-3 coupons to take home with specific tasks written on them. Talk about how their families will react to these helpful gifts and how these positive reactions will make the student feel. You are welcome to create a template for these coupons to bring to class and ask the students to write the task and decorate them.

Trash Talk (suggested for grades 3-5)

To start students thinking about our global trash problem, ask them to estimate the number of bags of trash their families discard during one week. (Typically 2-4). Then calculate a class average to determine how much trash just this one class is generating in one week. Then if possible calculate how many bags are generated by the families in the whole school. (There are typically 30-35 classes). Then divide the class into groups and have kids develop creative ways to reduce trash. Discuss their ideas with the class.

A good poem to read with this lesson is Shel Silverstein's poem, Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout Would Not Take the Garbage Out.

Do what is right (suggested for all grades)

For younger grades you can do this as a group and for older grades they can create their own. Create a poster (or piece of paper if doing individually) and divide it into 4 squares. Label each section "At Home", "At School", "To Myself", "To the Environment". In each section have the class brainstorm on ways they can show responsibility. For example under the At Home section includes things like homework, feed the pet, clean my room, take out the trash, etc. Under To Myself section may include things like managing time, eating healthy, brushing teeth, play sports. If you do this as a group ask the kids to pick out one item from each group that they can do themselves. Have them make their own "pledge" card to take home. They can write one item from each group and decorate the card.

Teamwork (suggested for all grades)

Divide the children into teams of four or five. When you announce a letter of the alphabet, let each team arrange itself on the floor in the shape of the letter, using

every team member. Discuss responsibility by asking, "What would we have had if (one of the children) weren't in place?" How did you have to work together to get the job done? What if one person wasn't listening? What could you have done better to work as a team? Repeat the activity and praise everyone for doing his or her part to make the letters.

Minute to Win It (suggested for all grades)

There literally hundreds on minute to win it games on the internet. Here are a few ideas.

Stack it up with pennies: put students into small groups of 3-4 kids. Give each group a pile of 25 pennies. Have all groups start at the same time. Once the timer starts each group must stack their pennies into a vertical stack but each student may use only one hand. They have to alternate adding a penny to the stack so each child goes in order around the table. If the pile falls all group members can work together to restack the pile but they can still only use one hand. The group that completes their stack in one minute wins. Talk about how they had to work as a team. If someone wasn't paying attention and you had to wait for their turn how did that effect the group? How did you work together to fix a fallen pile? What happened if everyone tried to be the leader and all talked at once?

Stack it up with cups: divide the students into groups of 3-4. Groups have to stack up a pile of cups and then place them back into a single stack in under a minute. Same as the game above the students must take turns and can only use one hand. Each group stacks 21 cups, and we discovered that this was the perfect number that resulted in exactly half of the kids being successful. Challenging, but not *too* challenging! See the questions about team work from the penny section above.

Defying Gravity: Again divide the students into groups of 3-4. Using only one hand, players must keep two balloons from touching the ground for one minute. They must work as a team to keep their two balloons in the air. For a more challenging game, increase the amount to three balloons per group (and use different colored balloons for each group to make it easy to differentiate!). No holding the balloons!

Sweet Responsibility (Suggested for grades 2 - 5)□

Materials: Small apples and wrapped candy, enough so that you have one for

each student. Show the students what you have. Ask them individually which of the two items they would like and let them take the one of their choice. First speak to those that chose the candy, saying something like, "You have chosen the food that will give you quick energy. It is very sweet and delicious to eat. However, it doesn't last very long and it is mostly empty calories. A few minutes after you eat it, you'll be hungry for more." To those who chose the apple say, "The apple will also give you energy and it is sweet to the taste. However, the apple is nutritious and will supply you with extra vitamins. You will feel more satisfied and benefit from the energy it gives for a longer period of time. The decision to take the apple was a very wise one." Now, ask the children how you can compare the apple and candy to our responsibilities and the choices we face every day. Many of the choices we make can bring us immediate pleasure but have no long-lasting value (like the candy) or a wise and responsible choice will bring us a longer-lasting type of happiness and satisfaction (like the apple).
Examples

1. You are working on your homework when a friend calls and invites you to come over and watch a movie. Which choice will probably give immediate pleasure and which choice would give you long-term satisfaction? Which is the responsible choice?
2. You have been saving your money to buy a new skateboard, but as you walk by the arcade you think about spending the money to play a few arcade games.
3. You have the opportunity to finish your science project ahead of schedule or play basketball with your friends.

Responsibility Videos

YouTube is a great resource for videos about respect. Here are a few suggestions but feel free to find your own age appropriate videos.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tjnj5StX68g>

This video shows a young man taking care of various people in his community. Everyone wonders why he does and it and what he gets out of it. But what he gets is happiness and the peace of mind of knowing he is making a difference. This video is for older grades because it has sub titles so they need to be able to read it quickly to get the message.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QRqIGznHvU>

Very simple explanation of being responsible but actually going to extra mile to

be really good at whatever you are doing. Very simple and short

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=huirfCg9jm0>

A cute short film about how a community comes together to share responsibility for making sure their lighthouse works.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irSC4-j_NjY

funny video about which dog is responsible for getting into the trash.

Closing Comment

Read and discuss the meaning of the quote below.

“I am responsible for doing the work I need to do today even though it may be hard.” ~Helen Keller

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