



Community of Character

Responsibility

September

Responsibility

Character Qualities

- Responsibility
- Respect
- Thankfulness
- Caring
- Perseverance
- Unity
- Integrity
- Service
- Moral Courage
- Citizenship
- Fairness
- Self-Control

“Few things help an individual more than to place responsibility upon him, and to let him know that you trust him.”

Booker T. Washington

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Responsibility is the quality of being able to fulfill duties or tasks.

Responsibility involves knowing what is expected of you and doing it! Often the tasks are specific requirements, such as requests from parents, employers, or teachers. But **responsibility** also involves having an intuition or sense of what needs to be done and then taking the initiative to do it. The word “response” means “answer.” Thus, to be responsible is to be able to answer—to be “answerable” or accountable.

Responsibility also includes being trustworthy, dependable, reliable, proactive, and being able to plan ahead.

Responsibility is a life skill, which does not come naturally, but can be taught and instilled in children through training and practice! When we train our children to become responsible persons, we are helping them toward maturity.

Responsibility isn't just completing a task; it is also an attitude, the idea of taking action and being proud of doing it yourself.

Although we cannot always control what happens to us in our lives, we absolutely can control our response to every circumstance. As Charles Swindoll states, “Life is 10% what happens to us and 90% how we respond.” We can *choose* our attitudes and how we respond to situations. We can be in control! When we realize that we can choose our reactions to life situations, we avoid blaming others or circumstances for what happens to us and we are empowered to seize the initiative and think about solutions and options.

We can shape and transform our lives by taking complete responsibility for our actions, successes and failures, as well as choosing how we will respond to circumstances. Responsible people do what needs to be done, fulfill their commitments, and are proactive in life rather than reactive.

Former Secretary of Education and author William J. Bennett states in *The Book of Virtues*, “Responsible persons are mature people who have taken charge of themselves and their conduct, who *own* their actions and *own up* to them—who *answer* for them.” Bennett suggests that we can help to cultivate **responsibility** in our children through practice and by example.

Og Mandino, author of *The Greatest Salesman in the World* states, “Always do your best. What you plant now, you will harvest later.”

This Aesop fable, *The Ant and the Grasshopper*, provides a good illustration of **responsibility**. The ants are proactive, they know what is expected of themselves and they do it. They plan ahead! The Grasshopper lives for the moment and expects a “free lunch.” He must bear the consequences of his irresponsibility.

The Ant and the Grasshopper

An Aesop’s Fable on **Responsibility**

In a field one summer's day a Grasshopper was hopping about, chirping and singing to its heart's content. An Ant passed by, bearing along with great toil an ear of corn he was taking to the nest. “Why not come and chat with me,” said the Grasshopper, “instead of toiling and moiling in that way?”

“I am helping to lay up food for the winter,” said the Ant, “and recommend you to do the same.”

“Why bother about winter?” said the Grasshopper; we have got plenty of food at present.” But the Ant went on its way and continued its toil. When the winter came the Grasshopper had no food and found itself dying of hunger, while it saw the ants distributing every day corn and grain from the stores they had collected in the summer. Then the Grasshopper knew:

It is best to prepare for the days of necessity.

Books and Movies of Character

Fiction Books

A Doll Named Dora Anne
by Yona McDonough
(2nd to 3rd grade)

Just Grace Walks the Dog
by Charise Mericle Harper
(1st to 5th grade)

Berenstain Bears' Trouble With Pets
by Stan Berenstain
(Preschool to 3rd grade)

Stone Fox
by John Gardiner
(2nd to 6th grade)

What a Mess!
by Stephen Krensky
(Preschool to 1st grade)

Sign of the Beaver
by Elizabeth George Speare
(4th to 7th grade)

Nonfiction Books

The Children's Book of Virtues
by William Bennett

Being Responsible: A Book About Responsibility
by Mary Small

I am Responsible
by Sarah L. Schuette
(Preschool to 3rd grade)

Responsibility Counts
by Marie Bender
(4th to 7th grade)

Raising a Responsible Child: How Parents Can Avoid Overindulgent Behavior and Nurture Healthy Children
by Elizabeth M. Ellis

Movies

Snow White and the Seven Dwarves
The Lion King

What is Responsibility?

- Knowing the right thing to do and doing it.

Quotes

“If you want children to keep their feet on the ground, put some responsibility on their shoulders.” *Abigail Van Buren*

“‘I must do something’ always solves more problems than ‘Something must be done.’ ” *Author Unknown*

“I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation; every possession, a duty.” *John D. Rockefeller Jr.*

“You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.”
Abraham Lincoln

“I am only one; but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; I will not refuse to do something I can do.” *Helen Keller*

“Man must cease attributing his problems to his environment, and learn again to exercise his will – his personal responsibility.” *Albert Schweitzer*

“Nothing strengthens the judgment and quickens the conscience like individual responsibility.” *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*

“When you blame others, you give up your power to change.”
Author Unknown

- Fulfilling duties or tasks required by a parent, teacher, or authority.
- Being accountable.
- Planning ahead.
- Being trustworthy, so that others can depend on you.
- Keeping your promises, agreements and commitments.
- Doing your best.
- Following the rules.
- Being accountable for your own behavior and not blaming others when things go wrong.
- Parents give children tasks to do around the house and monitor their progress on other responsibilities.
- Parents give praise when the child fulfills responsibilities well and provide consequences if responsibilities are neglected.
- Choose how you will respond to a life circumstance; be in control of your attitude.
- Follow through when you agree to do something or are given a task.
- Be dependable and trustworthy.
- Do not agree to do something you know you are not able to do!

Practicing Responsibility

- Take charge of your conduct.
- Do your household chores.
- Finish your homework on time.
- Plan for your future by doing your best in school and putting money in a savings account each month.
- Think before you act--consider the consequences.
- Admit your mistakes and learn from them.

Applying Responsibility

- Parents set an example by working diligently to provide for the family.

Personal Commitments to Responsibility:

- I will not make excuses.
- I will keep my promises and follow through on my commitments.
- I will do all of my work on time and to the best of my ability.
- I will make things right when I do wrong.
- I will be on time.
- If I am on a team or play an instrument, I will practice.
- I will admit my mistakes, and won't blame others or make excuses.