

CHARACTER COUNTS!SM – Responsibility

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*Life is full of choices . . .
Being responsible means being in charge
of your choices and, thus, your life.*

Responsibility requires you to recognize that what you do—and what you don’t do—matters, and you are morally **responsible** for the consequences of your choices.

What Is CHARACTER COUNTS!?

CHARACTER COUNTS! is a national grassroots initiative based on voluntary citizen action. It has no ideological or political agenda other than strengthening the moral fiber of the next generation by promoting ethical values.

CHARACTER COUNTS! is not another outlined program; it is the incorporation of common language and terms into families, organizations, agencies, and schools.

The Six Pillars of CharacterSM . . .

The Six Pillars of Character result from a search for common truths that allow us to distinguish right from wrong and define ethics and good character. These pillars are:

- Trustworthiness
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Fairness
- Caring
- Citizenship

CHARACTER COUNTS! uses these six pillars to describe how a person of character thinks and behaves.

An effective character education program encourages individuals to do the right thing by incorporating these core ethical values into their daily lives.

Our communities benefit when people understand the importance of being involved and caring citizens and “doing the right thing.”

Character education works when it is community wide. It works best when ethical values are consistently taught, enforced, advocated, and modeled (T.E.A.M.) throughout all facets of our communities, including schools, organizations, law enforcement agencies, businesses, and other groups.

What Can Be Done . . .

Individuals: Consciously incorporate the teaching and modeling of the Six Pillars of Character into everything you do, in all of the various roles of your life.

Service and Community Organizations: Get all the organizations to which you belong to take an active role in supporting character-building activities and to incorporate them into your group’s plans and actions.

Communities and Schools: Be active in bringing Character Counts! to your school system, community groups, and agencies. Support community trainings.

Responsibility

People of character are **responsible**. They are accountable, show self-restraint, and pursue excellence. They mean it when they say, “You can count on me.”

Being responsible is part of a person of character. ***Being responsible means that we do the right thing even when no one is looking. We do the right thing just because it is right and not because we will get credit or praise for doing it.***

To have good character, we have to do more than **say** we are responsible. We must **take** action. Responsible people take care of themselves as well as others and can always be counted on to do the right thing, even when the right thing is hard to do.

Be Accountable

Responsibility means being accountable.

Be Accountable – Look Out for Excuses

“That’s just the way I am.”

You are whatever you choose to be, nothing less and nothing more.

“It’s not my fault.”

Responsibility is not about blame, it is about accountability.

“It’s not my job.”

Your moral duties often go beyond specific job responsibilities. **Responsible people often do more than they are required to do.**

What you do and what you say start a chain reaction that affects others.

Exercise Self-Control

- Take charge of your own life.
- Practice self-discipline with your health, emotions, time, and money.
- Act out of reason, rather than anger, revenge, or fear.

Plan and Set Goals

- Set specific goals and plan to achieve them.
 - Long-term goal: assuming leadership roles
 - Short-term goal: being an active and productive member this year
- Organize and manage your time in order to keep commitments and promises.

Choose Positive Attitudes

- An attitude is an outlook on life.

“Your living is determined not so much by what life brings to you as by the attitude you bring to life; not so much by what happens to you as by the way your mind looks at what happens.”

– John Homer Miller

Do Your Duty

- Know and do your duty for yourself, your family, groups in which you participate, your community, and the world.

There is an ethical dimension to good work habits and the work ethic—show up on time and be prepared, ready, and dedicated to sticking with the job until it is done.

Be Proactive

- Take the initiative to improve yourself, your conditions, and your communities.
- Seek to change systems and tackle social problems to make things better.

Set a Good Example

- Lead by example—take the initiative to do what needs to be done.
- Role modeling—what you do is more important than what you say.

Resources:

CHARACTER COUNTS!
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CHARACTER COUNTS! and the Six Pillars of Character are service marks of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a project of the Josephson Institute of Ethics (www.charactercounts.org).

*In the final analysis, the one quality that all successful people have . . . is the ability to take on **responsibility**.*

– Michael Korda
