

CHARACTER COUNTS!SM – *Responsibility*

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Educational Objectives:

1. To increase participants' awareness of CHARACTER COUNTS!?
2. To have the participants understand that responsibility means being accountable for who you are and what you do.
3. To increase awareness of the concepts of responsibility.

What Is CHARACTER COUNTS!?

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

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.”

Activity: Before your meeting, copy the following six definitions. At the meeting, distribute them to six members and ask them to share with the group at this point in your lesson.

Trustworthiness means being honest; having integrity; not deceiving, cheating, or stealing; and being reliable and loyal.

Respect means following the Golden Rule; being tolerant of differences; using good manners; not using bad language; being considerate of the feelings of others; and dealing peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements.

*You teach
by what
you do,
not what
you say.*

Responsibility means doing what you are supposed to do, persevering, always doing your best, using self-control, being self-disciplined, thinking before you act, and being accountable for your choices.

Fairness means playing by the rules, taking turns and sharing, being open-minded, listening to others, not taking advantage of others, and not blaming others carelessly.

Caring means being kind, being compassionate, showing you care, expressing gratitude, forgiving others, and helping people in need.

Citizenship means doing your share to make your community better, cooperating, staying informed, voting, being a good neighbor, obeying the laws and rules, respecting authority, and protecting the environment.

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 CHARACTER COUNTS! Is NOT

CHARACTER COUNTS! is not:

- a means to introduce religion into public education, although it is consistent with and in no way hostile to religious and spiritually based beliefs about right and wrong.
- just a “feel-good” or “do-well” program stressing personal happiness and success. It stresses the need to discern right from wrong and the acceptance of a moral obligation to honor the Six Pillars of Character.

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.

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

What Is Responsibility?

“You can count on me.”

Do we carry through on what we say we will do? 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.”

We are all part of families and groups that depend on us to do our part.

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.

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—makes a difference. You are morally responsible for the consequences of your choices.

Attributes of Responsibility

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|----------------------|-------------------------|
| • Be Accountable | • Exercise Self-Control |
| • Plan and Set Goals | • Positive Attitude |
| • Do Your Duty | • Be Self-Reliant |
| • Pursue Excellence | • Be Proactive |
| • Be Persistent | • Be Reflective |
| • Set a Good Example | • Be Morally Autonomous |

1. Be Accountable

- Responsibility means being accountable for what you do and who you are.
- DO accept responsibility for the consequences of your choices in not only what you do, but also what you don’t do.
- DO set a good example.
- Don’t look the other way when you can make a difference.
- Look out for excuses.

Activity: Before the meeting, copy the following and have members read them at this time.

“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. The question for the responsible person is: “*Could I have done something that would have mattered?*”

“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.*

“It was legal.”

You are not legally or morally obliged to do whatever you are permitted to do. *Responsible people often do less than they are allowed to do.*

- *Everything you do* makes a difference. What you do and what you say start a chain reaction that affects others.

2. Exercise Self-Control

- Take charge of your own life.
- Set realistic goals.
- Be prudent and self-disciplined with your health, emotions, time, and money.
- Be rational—act out of reason, rather than anger, revenge, or fear.

3. 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.

4. Choosing Positive Attitudes

- An attitude is an outlook on life, a state of mind that affects the way we interpret facts and events.
- Positive attitudes that produce better relationships and more productive work habits include:

Trustfulness	Enthusiasm
Hopefulness	Optimism
Generosity	Cheerfulness

5. Do Your Duty

- Know and do your duty for yourself, your family, groups in which you participate, your community, and the world.
- Acknowledge and meet your legal and moral obligations.

6. Be Self-Reliant

- Seek to manage your affairs so as not to be a burden on others.
- To the extent you can, provide for yourself and “pay your own way.”
- Avoid obligations that may be beyond your ability to satisfy.

7. Pursue Excellence

- Do your best, persevere, be prepared, be diligent, work hard; make all you do worthy of pride; and practice good work habits.
- 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.

8. 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.

9. Be Persistent

- Demonstrate perseverance and determination in pursuit of goals.
- Stick to it and finish what you start.

10. Be Reflective

- Make reasoned and rational decisions.
- Think ahead to anticipate the consequences of choices.
- Think back to review what happened.
- Be in control of your emotions.

11. 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.

12. Be Morally Autonomous

- “Autonomy” combines the ideas of:
- Self-determination and self-governance
 - Personal freedom and independence.

Activities

1. You can distribute copies of the following quotes and ideas to various members to read at the end of your lesson. You may want to follow with the final activity that relates to the success of your club.

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

– Elizabeth Cady Stanton

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

– Booker T. Washington

—————
*“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

—————
*“You teach character most by what you
do, not what you say.”*

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

– Michael Korda

2. Lead a discussion of all of the things in your club work that people have to take responsibility for to ensure the group’s success and effectiveness.

Resources

*CHARACTER COUNTS! Character Development
Seminars Notebook, On-Site Training Materials.*
West Virginia Department of Education.
November 27-29, 2001

Operating Manual for Character Education Programs.
Compiled by Nancy Reed, Hamilton County
School District, Tennessee, 2001

CHARACTER COUNTS! For Families, Greve, Vickie,
Jha, LaDeane, & Stockall, Sandy, University of
Nebraska-Lincoln Cooperative Extension

CHARACTER COUNTS! For 4-H Clubs, Nebraska 4-H
Youth Development, University of Nebraska Cooperative
Extension

Project consultant, Dr. Patrick Nestor, WVU Extension
Specialist, Volunteerism.

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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).