

CHARACTER COUNTS!SM – *Trustworthiness*

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In the old movies, it was always easy to tell who were the “good guys” and the “bad guys.” What they stood for and how they lived their lives easily identified them. Unfortunately, the difference between right and wrong has been grayed by a philosophy that says “look out for No. 1” or “if it feels good, do it.” Recently, many leaders in our country are calling for people to look again at the importance of ethics.

The Nature and Importance of Trust

Trust is the basis of all good relationships and a cornerstone of good character. Trustworthy people keep their promises; they are honest, reliable, and principled; and they never inappropriately betray a confidence. The most important factor in effective leadership is trust.

Trustworthiness embodies four ethical principles:

- Integrity
- Promise-keeping
- Honesty
- Loyalty

Integrity

The most important factor in trust is apparent and unwavering integrity. The word integrity comes from the same Latin root as integer. It carries the sense of wholeness: a person of integrity, like a whole number, is a whole person, undivided, complete.

People with integrity:

- Stand up for their beliefs openly and boldly.
- Listen to their consciences and live by their principles no matter what others say and no matter the personal cost.
- Are honorable and upright in all actions.
- Have the courage to do what is right and try new things even when it is hard or costly or failure is probable.
- Build and guard their reputations.
- Don't do anything they think is wrong.
- Don't lose heart if they fail.



Honesty

There are two types of honesty: communications and conduct. Being truthful in representing facts and intentions to the best of one's knowledge is one form of communicating honesty. Sincerity and candor represent other forms of communicating honesty.

Deception is an act, including silence, intended to cause another person to believe something that isn't true. It is just as dishonest to deceive with half-truths, misleading comments, or tricky statements as it is to lie by saying something that isn't true.

Sometimes a person who is truthful can make a mistake and be wrong about what the truth is. Honest mistakes can hurt trust, but a person who makes a mistake is not dishonest.

Exaggerations, promising what you cannot deliver, deliberate distortions, concealment of important facts, and false statements of opinions are all lies in trusting relationships.

Being honest in our conduct means playing by the rules and being trustworthy of another's property and belongings. Dishonest conduct by way of cheating can come in many forms, such as trickery, fraud, misleading, deliberately violating the rules, and swindling.

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Promise-keeping

Promise-keeping is a vital moral aspect of reliability. Promises create duties beyond legal obligations. People have a right to rely on us to perform what we commit to do regardless of whether there is an enforceable obligation. A promise is a vow, a pledge, a declaration assuring that one will or will not do something.

Promise-keeping encompasses two basic areas:

1. **Good Work Habits:** There is an ethical dimension to good work habits – the work ethic – when others depend on us to show up on time, prepared and ready to do our work and dedicated to stick with the job until it is done well.
2. **Reliability:** This means keeping your word, honoring your commitments, and being dependable. Dependability requires one to do what is supposed to be done; for example, return what you borrow, pay your debts, show up on time, and be prepared.

Loyalty

Loyalty implies a steadfast and devoted attachment that is not easily turned aside. This could be loyalty to an oath, one's family, a party, or an ideal.

Loyalty implies the unfailing fulfillment to one's duties and obligations and strict adherence to vows or promises.

Do:

- Stand by, stick up for, and protect your family, friends, and country.
- Be a good friend.
- Look out for those who care about you.
- Keep secrets.

Don't:

- Betray a trust.
- Let your friends hurt themselves.
- Ask a friend to do anything wrong.
- Spread hurtful rumors or gossip.

People of character understand the importance of trust and pursue a life that makes them worthy of trust. Trust is an essential factor in achieving sustainable success.

Trustworthiness Quotes

“The courage of life is often a less dramatic spectacle than the final moment. [People of courage] do what they must – in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles and dangers and pressures – and that is the basis of all morality.”

– John F. Kennedy, 20th-century American president

“People of character have the integrity to do what is right even when it is likely to cost them more than they want to pay and more than they think is fair.”

“If you have made mistakes, even serious ones, there is always another chance for you. What we call failure is not the falling down, but the staying down.”

– Mary Pickford, 20th-century American film star

“Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful.”

– Samuel Johnson (1709-84), English lexicographer

References

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