

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS ON DEVELOPING GOOD CHARACTER

A Parent's Guide to Fairness

*"It is not fair to ask of others what you are not willing to do yourself."
-Eleanor Roosevelt*

IT'S NOT FAIR!!!!

This is a common statement heard in our schools and homes. Usually when you hear this from a child, it probably means that the child didn't receive something he/she thinks was deserved.

A child's beliefs about what he/she should get are based on expectations from:

- ❖ previous experiences
- ❖ promises
- ❖ comparisons with others

Remember that children tend to react rather than reflect and sometimes their judgments can be over-simplified.

Fairness and justice are twin concepts that are concerned with processes and consequences. Decisions based on these concepts acknowledge and deal with such things as equity, equality, openness and consistency.

As a parent, you can help your child have realistic expectations by:

- making expectations as clear and predictable as possible
- giving adequate explanation when there is a change
- involving children in creating the rule they are to follow
- explaining that although certain rights are due everyone equally, others are earned with age and increased responsibility

Children will often get quite angry when they feel something isn't fair. As parents, we need to understand that this anger is most likely the result of some other emotion such as: frustration, pain, helplessness, disappointment and even jealousy – this emotion is usually triggered when an expectation is not met. Children must be taught that absolute equality is not always desirable; that an action must be judged by intent as well as by outcome; and that circumstances change and expectations cannot always be fulfilled.

Help your child practice the following ways to promote fairness:

- be open-minded
- listen to others

- try to understand what others are saying and feeling
- make judgments only after the appropriate considerations

QUOTES TO PONDER

“I have a dream my four little children will one day love in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”
-Martin Luther King, Jr.

“The chief vice of many people consists not in doing evil, but in permitting it.”
-Anonymous

“What lies before us and what lies behind us are small matters compared to what lies within us. When we bring what is within, out into the world, miracles happen.”
-Henry David Thoreau

“Fairness is an across-the-board requirement for all our interactions with each other ... fairness treats everybody the same.” -Hon. Barbara C. Jordan

We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, while others judge us by what we have already done.” -Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Activities You Can Do At Home to Teach Fairness

1. THE GOLDEN RULE, in one version or another, has a prominent place in all major religions.

Christianity: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Confucian: “What you do not want done to yourself, do not do unto others.”

Aristotelian: “We should behave to others as we wish others to behave to us.”

Judaism: “What you dislike for yourself, do not do to anyone.”

Hinduism: “Do nothing to thy neighbor which thou wouldst not have him do to thee thereafter.”

Islam: “No one of you is a believer unless he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.”

Buddhism: “Hurt not others with that which pains thyself.”

Discuss with your children: How could you apply The Golden Rule to actions at home and school?

2. Provide opportunities for your child to participate in making family decisions when you need to involve everyone’s input. For example, choosing a place to eat. Set the parameters (cost, time involved, etc.).

3. Does FAIR mean EQUAL?

As a family, have each person answer the following questions from their perspective and discuss how decisions feel differently from different perspectives. Talk about ways you can clearly set expectations so that decisions don't feel unfair.

- Is it fair to have different bedtimes for different family members?
- Is it fair for some family members to have more chores than others?
- Can you think of a time when it would be fair for one family member to get more attention than others?
- Have your family members think of examples at school, home or in the community where the answers to "Does FAIR mean EQUAL?" may sometimes be yes and sometimes be no.

4. Find opportunities to discuss with your children examples of when people are not treated fairly.

For example: historical treatment of people with disabilities, racism, homelessness, hunger, pollution, etc. Help children identify ways that they can help make life a little better and a little fairer concerning these issues. Use opportunities through civic and service organizations such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire and 4-H for your child to do service projects in your community.

5. Model the actions you wish to see in your child and be willing to acknowledge and apologize for mistakes you make. Share examples of times when you felt you weren't treated fairly and how you dealt with it.

Books and Recordings to Help You Teach Fairness

Alexander, Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday by Judith Viorst – for grades K-2

The Friendship by Mildred Taylor – for grades 3-6

Nothing's Fair in Fifth Grade by Barthe DeCements – for grades 4-6

Sing Down the Moon by Scott O'Dell – for grades 4-7

What About Me? by Colby Rodowsky – for grades 5-8

The Watsons Go to Birmingham by Christopher Paul Curtis – for grades 4-8

A Parent's Guide to Respect

"Character is the foundation stone upon which one must build to win respect. Just as no worth building can be erected on a weak foundation, no lasting reputation worthy of respect can be built on a weak character." – R.C. Samsel

A PERSON OF CHARACTER...

- **is a good person, someone to look up to and admire**

- **knows the difference between right and wrong and always tries to do what is right**
- **sets a good example for everyone**
- **makes the world a better place**
- **lives according to “The Six Pillars of Character”: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship**

The essence of RESPECT is to show solemn regard for the worth of people, including oneself. The ethical duty is to treat everyone with respect – not to respect everyone in the sense that we hold all people in high esteem or admire them.

The Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

- treat others the way you want to be treated
- value and honor all people
- take care of property: your own and anything you borrow
- ask permission before you use something that isn't your own
- don't use or try to manipulate others
- don't mistreat or be mean to anyone

Acceptance

- consider the character and conduct of others without regard to race, religion, gender, where they live, how they dress, or the amount of money that have
- listen to others and try to understand their point of view

Non-violence

- deal with anger and disagreements peacefully and without violence
- don't use threats or physical force to get what you want or to express anger

Courtesy

- use good manners
- be courteous and polite: say “please” and “thank you” and “excuse me”
- don't use put-downs, insults, yelling or making fun that will embarrass or hurt

What Can You As a Parent Do?

Teach – Enforce – Advocate – Model: Use the T.E.A.M. approach!

- **Walk the walk** – model “The Six Pillars of Character” in front of your children
- **Talk the talk** – use the language and definitions of “The Six Pillars of Character” in family discussions
- **Incorporate** – use “The Six Pillars of Character” when setting expectations of behavior
- **Follow through** – discuss “The Six Pillars of Character” when giving rewards for positive behavior and consequences for negative behavior
- **Emphasize** – let school and home enhance each other by emphasizing a pillar each month:
 - work as a family to build character in the emphasized area

- write “family rules” relating to each pillar
- catch one another doing the right thing

Activities You Can Do At Home to Teach Respect

- 1. Would you like it?** Respect is placing concern for others equal to or above concern for yourself. This is hard for young children to grasp. You may want to start with a series of questions about how they would feel in certain circumstances and then move to The Golden Rule. For example, offer a discussion based on “Would you like it if someone...called you a name?...pushed you out of line?...teased you?”
- 2. Manners.** Talk about and demonstrate good manners including “please,” “thank you” and “excuse me.” Then give your children a chance to catch other family members when they are using good manners and thank them for being considerate. Be sure to catch your child when he/she uses good manners too!
- 3. Respect for families and traditions.** Encourage children to listen to and learn from older family members, especially grandparents.
- 4. How do we show respect?** One effective way for students to learn about respect is to identify what it looks like. Provide an opportunity for them to hear from you how you show respect...to yourself, to your family, to animals, to property, to the rights of others, to our country, etc.
- 5. Respect through language.** You know the expression: “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Identify an experience to share with your children of hurtful words you still remember from your childhood. Discuss with your children how they want people to speak to them and talk about how language – including the tone of our voice – can show respect. Use examples to discuss your family’s beliefs regarding each of these:
 - How does the tone or volume of our voice show respect or disrespect?
 - Has the way we address elders changed? How can we show them respect?
 - Are words of courtesy important? How do they show respect?
 - How does swearing show a lack of respect toward others?
 - How can our language show we are respectful of other people’s abilities and feeling.

Books and Recordings that Help You Teach Respect

Bein’ With You This Way by W. Nikola-Lisa (Lee and Low, 1994)– for grades K-2

Annie and the Old One by Miska Miles (Little, Brown, 1972)- for grades 3-4

Flying with the Eagle, Racing the Great Bear by Bruchac (Bridgewater, 1993)

Zeely by Hamilton (Macmillanm, 1967)- for grades 5-6

Shiloh by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor (Atteneum, 1991)- for grades 4-6
Racing the Sun by Paul Pitts (Avon, 1988)- for grades 5-6
The Star Fisher by Laurence Yep (Morrow, 1991)- for grades 5-8
Free to be You and Me conceived by Marlo Thomas (McGraw-Hill, 1974)- book
and recording

QUOTES TO PONDER

“Sir, I will treat you as a gentleman, not because you are one, but because I am.”
-Thomas Jefferson

“We show respect and teach responsibility by providing young people with the
opportunity to participate in decisions that affect them.” -Michael Josephson

A Parent’s Guide to Trustworthiness

“We have to be the world we want our children to see.” –Ghandi

A PERSON OF CHARACTER...

- is a good person, someone to look up to and admire
- knows the difference between right and wrong and always tries to do what is right
- sets a good example for everyone
- makes the world a better place
- lives according to “The Six Pillars of Character”: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship

The foundations of trust lie not only in believing that a person will be honest, truthful and honor his/her word, but also in letting him/her know that you expect him/her to do so.

TRUSTWORTHINESS encompasses the following four parts:

Integrity – your actions reflect what they say you value. People of integrity:

- stand up for their beliefs openly and boldly
- listen to their conscience and live by their principles
- are honorable in their actions
- have the courage to do what is right and try new things even when it is hard
- build and guard their reputations

Promise-keeping – a vital moral aspect of reliability.

- keep your word

- honor your commitments
- be dependable: do what you are supposed to do and return what you borrow
- show up where and when you are supposed to
- be prepared: do your homework and bring what you need to do your work

Honesty – expect honesty, understand that silence can be a form of dishonesty.

An honest person will tell the truth and nothing but the truth, be forthright and candid, and be sincere.

A dishonest person will lie, steal, cheat, and be sneaky, tricky or deceptive

How many times can you lie before you are a liar?

Honesty and mistakes – Sometimes a person who is truthful can make a mistake about what the truth is. Honest mistakes can hurt trust (they reveal problems of reliability or carelessness) but a person who makes a mistake is not dishonest. We reveal our character in the way we deal with making mistakes. A person of character takes responsibility for the mistake, clears up any misunderstanding and shows sincere regret for the mistake.

Loyalty – A loyal person will:

- stand by, stick up for and protect family, friends, schools and country
- be a good friend
- look out for those who care about you
- keep secrets

A loyal person will not:

- betray a trust
- let a friend hurt themselves
- do anything wrong- even for a friend or to be liked
- ask a friend to do wrong
- spread rumors or gossip

What Can You As a Parent Do?

- Make sure your own behavior is what you want your children to emulate. For example: Do you ask your child to tell a caller you aren't home?
- Make your expectations clear. Expect honesty and truthfulness and demonstrate those qualities yourself. Then let each child know that you trust him or her.
- Talk about trust. Be realistic, but avoid creating fearfulness of others.
- Point out situations in your everyday life in which you trust others: drivers, store clerks, signs, each other and so on.

Activities You Can Do At Home to Teach Trustworthiness

1. **Use fables, stories and literature that teach lessons.** Use news reports, television shows, and real life stories to illustrate what trustworthiness looks like, feels like and why it is so important.
2. **Play “What would you do?”** Use real or made-up situations to present children with hypothetical conflicts to work out. These pretend situations give children safe opportunities to practice making choices and discuss possible consequences before they must make real choices that may have serious consequences.

3. **Make a “Family Pledge” sheet.** Have family members sign their names to statements about telling the truth, returning what they borrow and keeping their word.
4. **Build a “Tower of Trustworthiness.”** Use blocks and post-it notes. As the child does things at home that build their trustworthiness, write it on a post-it note and attach it to a block. As their actions multiply, the tower grows. If something happens to diminish trust, take blocks off. Children need to know that building trust takes time and when trust is broken, it takes even more time to rebuild it again.

Books and Recordings that Help You Teach Trustworthiness

The Boy Who Cried “Wolf!” an Aesop’s Fable

A Picture Book of Abraham Lincoln by David Adler

The Empty Pot by Demi

Sam Bangs and Moonshine by Evaline Ness

A Big, Fat, Enormous Lie by Marjoire Weinman Sharmat

A Promise is for Keeping by Anne Wade

The Emperor’s New Clothes by Hans Christian Andersen

QUOTES TO PONDER

“If you don’t want anyone to know it, don’t do it.” –Proverb

“This above all – to thine ownself be true, and it must follow as night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.” –William Shakespeare

A Parent’s Guide to Caring

“If you would be loved, love and be lovable.” –Benjamin Franklin

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You never know what happiness a simple act of kindness will bring about.” –Bree Abel

Caring means showing concern for others:

- ❖ be compassionate and empathetic
- ❖ be kind, loving and considerate
- ❖ be thankful and express gratitude for what people do for you
- ❖ forgive others for their shortcomings
- ❖ don’t be mean, cruel or insensitive

Caring means being charitable:

- ❖ give money, time, support and comfort without strings
- ❖ do what you can for the sake of making someone’s life better – not for praise or gratitude
- ❖ help people in need

Remember the T.E.A.M. Strategy: Teach, Enforce, Advocate and Model!

Teaching by example includes:

- ❖ how we treat our children
- ❖ how we treat others in front of our children
- ❖ what we say and do in front of our children
- ❖ how we lead our lives

QUOTES TO PONDER

“Make one person happy each day and in forty years you will have made 14,600 human beings happy for a little time, at least.” –Charley Willey

“Anyone can be great, because anyone can serve.” –Martin Luther King, Jr.

“A candle loses nothing by lighting another.” –Anonymous

“Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love.” –Lao-tzu

“Let go. Why cling to the pain and the wrongs of yesterday? Why hold on to the very things that keep you from hope and love?” –Buddha

“It is only great souls that know how much glory there is in being good.” –Sophocles

“What we have done for ourselves alone, dies with us. What we have done for others and the world remains immortal.” –Albert Pine

Activities You Can Do At Home to Teach Caring

- 1. Prime time.** Establish a time each day that will be “prime time” where you and your child can share stories of the day, be quiet together and provide love and appreciation toward each other. You may want to post your special “appointment” on the calendar or refrigerator. Establish a guideline that you both will listen without interruption and then model quality listening as the parent. Here are some activities you can do in your “prime time:”
 - take turns talking about the special events of the day; what went well and what was challenging
 - share five things that you appreciate about your life
 - read a favorite story together or make up one together
 - learn the words of an inspiring, short poem that becomes a regular ritual to recite together
 - post a picture of the two of you together in your regular meeting place as a reminder of the love that you feel for each other
 - share what caring things you have seen others doing that day
- 2. Learning to Care.** Look for opportunities to volunteer with your children. This can be as simple as taking food to an ailing neighbor, helping a senior citizen with yardwork or helping care for a young child. In addition, you could talk with your child’s teacher about opportunities for assisting the school with outreach to the community. Students could work on a service-learning project that provides food to a food pantry, birthday or holiday gifts for those who otherwise wouldn’t have them, notes or letters to children in the hospital or visits to the elderly in residential facilities. Be sure to provide a time for them to talk to you about what they saw and what they felt like when they showed caring.
- 3. The Traveling Block.** When I started traveling for my job and my daughter was little, she painted a piece of plexiglass block: on one side was her version of Mommy going off to work (complete with lipstick and pearls!) and on the other side was her version of herself looking out the window waiting for me to come home. At first, each time I had to be gone overnight we had a little ceremony before I left where she gave me the block and we put it in my suitcase. Wherever I stayed, the block was always sitting beside my bed as I made calls home each night. As she got older and started staying overnight with friends or her dad’s house, we began to reverse the ceremony and she took the block. Even though she is now 15, we still keep the block going

between us when we must be away from each other. It is a constant reminder of our bond of love and caring and that we carry each other with us wherever we go. (Shared by Kay Pettijohn and Kalli Swan)

Books and Recordings that Help You Teach Caring

Corduroy by D. Freeman (picture book)

Two Good Friends by J. Delton – for grades 1-2

The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein – for grades 3-4

The Gift by H. Coutant – for grades 3-4

Thank you, Jackie Robinson by B. Cohen – for grades 3-6

Maniac Magee by J. Spinelli – for grades 4-7

Rosie and Michael by J. Viorst – for older children

Chicken Soup for the Soul (series of books) – for adults

A Parent’s Guide to Citizenship

“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 that I can do.” –Helen Keller

Citizenship is defined as:

“The position of being a citizen of a country with all the rights, duties and privileges that come with it.”

Citizenship means:

- **be a good citizen**
- **do your share**
- **be a good neighbor**
- **care about and pursue the common good**
- **be a volunteer – help your school and community be better, cleaner and safer**
- **protect the environment by conserving resources, reducing pollution and cleaning up after yourself**
- **participate in making things better by voicing your opinion, voting, serving on committees, reporting wrong-doing and paying taxes**

- **help the community**
- **play by the rules**
- **obey those who have been given authority**
- **observe just laws**
- **honor and respect the principles of democracy**

Children need to learn to be active members of their school, local community and the world. A key concept children should learn is that with every right they are given comes the responsibility to exercise it in a fair manner and to work toward helping fellow citizens do the same.

Using the telephone is often the first or only means of communication a person has with other people. As citizens of their family, every child should learn to use the telephone properly, safely and with good manners. Even young children, with proper instruction, can be given the opportunity to answer the phone for the family.

Consider these things when your child is answering the phone:

- Children need to understand that when they answer the telephone at home, he/she represents the family.
- Children should learn to always ask the caller to identify him/herself and who is being called.
- Give your child specific directions about when and how to answer the phone when they are alone. (For example: if someone refuses to identify him/herself, if someone is calling to see something, if someone says rude things)
- Keep a pad and pencil, or a small tape recorder, by the phone so children can write or record messages and not have to rely on memory to give them to you.

Consider these things when your child is placing a call:

- Decide the people or places your child is allowed to call and specify the time of day they may call.
- Instruct your child on how to identify him/herself, how to ask for the person being called and the purpose of the call.
- Practice what the child should do if they reach an answering machine. Practice how a child should reach you at work and how to handle emergencies.
- Teach your child how to use the phone book and the wealth of resources it provides in your community.

Activities You Can Do At Home to Teach Citizenship

- 1. Model how a good citizen stays informed:** reading the paper, listening to the news, attending local meetings of importance (including school meetings) and

talking about issues as a family. When it's election time, show your child the different resources you use to learn about candidates and issues and take your child with you when you vote.

2. **Discuss the options available to your family to help protect and conserve the natural resources.** As a family, select specific projects and identify ways that each family member can participate. For example: recycling, planting trees on special occasions, participating in a litter clean-up. These activities can provide your child with a look at the role of your family in terms of the larger community – which is what good citizenship is all about.
3. **Help your child identify that they are citizens of many different groups.** For example: family, school, faith community, their community, their country. Help them understand that being a citizen of that group carries the responsibility to follow the rules and contribute to the group. Ask the children to think about the rules they have at home. Remind them that every family is unique and that the rules may vary from one home to the next. As they mention each rule, ask them to explain why that rule is important in their household. Talk about the other groups that they are a part of, the rules and why they think they are needed.
4. **Help your child identify ways that they can be “of service”** to the various communities of which they are a part: family, school, city, country.
5. **A good citizen should know something about the history, geography, government and other aspects of his/her country.** Encourage your child to know things like: the name of our Governor, the state's capitol, what the symbols on the flag stand for, the name and words of the national anthem, what states border ours, what countries border ours, who is the mayor of our town, etc.

Books and Recordings that Help You Teach Citizenship

Old Henry by Joan W. Blos (Little, Brown, 1972) – for grades K-2

The Bill of Rights by Warren Coleman – for grades 3-4

Fifty Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth by Earthworks Group – for all grades

The Drinking Gourd by F.N. Monjo – for grades 3-4

The Giver by Lois Lowry – for grades 5-6

What the Big Idea, Ben Franklin? By Jean Fritz – for grades 5-6

QUOTES TO PONDER

“You are on the pathway to a successful life when you do more for your community than the community does for you.” –Anonymous

“When you have decided what you believe, what you feel must be done, have the courage to stand alone and be counted.” –Eleanor Roosevelt

A Parent’s Guide to Responsibility

“A child is the only known substance from which a responsible adult can be made.”

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Life is full of choices. Being responsible means being in charge of our choices and thus, our lives. Responsibility requires us to recognize that what we do, and what we don’t do, matters and that we are morally responsible for the consequences of our choices.

Help children learn that:

- choosing not to choose is a choice
- we choose whether to be conscious and concerned about the consequences of what we say and do

To be a person of responsibility:

- do your duty
- be accountable
- pursue excellence
- exercise self-control

Everything we say and do makes a difference.

What we say and what we do starts a chain reaction that affects the lives of others.

What Can You As a Parent Do?

Teach – Enforce – Advocate – Model: Use the T.E.A.M. approach!

- **Walk the walk** – model “The Six Pillars of Character” in front of your children
- **Talk the talk** – use the language and definitions of “The Six Pillars of Character” in family discussions
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- **Emphasize** – let school and home enhance each other by emphasizing a pillar each month:
 - work as a family to build character in the emphasized area
 - write “family rules” relating to each pillar
 - catch one another doing the right thing

Activities You Can Do At Home to Teach Responsibility

1. **Help your child think about responsibilities they have every day in taking care of themselves:** brushing their teeth, bathing, getting dressed, going to school on time, listening in class, doing homework, keeping their room clean, household chores, etc. Work with your child to make a chart of his/her responsibilities. You can then use this chart as a reminder or use stickers or magnets for your child to mark when the responsibility has been done for each day.
2. **Work on responsibility with pets that you may have in your home.** Make a list of the special needs your pet has and talk about who needs to be responsible for meeting those needs. Discuss the possible consequences to your pet if the needs aren't met. Make a list of responsibilities and who will do them. Offer a rotation of the chores for your pet, especially if you have children who will share the responsibility.
3. **Talk with your child about the various ways that people get around in your community:** bikes, skateboards, in-line skates, etc. Talk about responsibilities that go along with each and potential consequences if people are not responsible.
4. **Use a simple plan for helping your child make decisions.**
 - (1) STOP – realize you have a choice to make;
 - (2) THINK – think about the people who might be affected by the choice;
 - (3) LISTEN – listen to your feelings and thoughts about the choices and what your family has said about the choices;
 - (4) TRUST – you know the right thing to do – trust yourself to do it;
 - (5) ACT – make the decision and be willing to take the consequences for the choice you make – good or bad.

5. **Excuses, excuses, excuses** – children often will have many excuses for not fulfilling responsibilities: “I’m too tired,” “I forgot” or “I’ll do it later.” Talk about what an excuse is and to what extent your family will allow their use. For example, if a child says, “I’ll do it later,” allow them to set the specific time they will have it done and then hold them to it. Be definite about the consequences about not getting it done by their chosen time – try not to argue with them – give them the responsibility and the consequence and let them make their choice!

Books and Recordings that Help You Teach Responsibility

Berenstain Bears: Trouble at School by Stan and Jan Berenstain

Henry and the Clubhouse by Beverly Cleary

One-eyed Cat by P. Fox

Little Toot by H. Gramatky

Street of the Flower Boxes by P. Mann

QUOTES TO PONDER

“We are responsible for the world in which we find ourselves.” -James Baldwin

“In the long run, we shape our own lives and we shape ourselves...the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility.” -Eleanor Roosevelt