



Character Education Program

and School

RESPONSIBILITY



"Success on any major scale requires you to accept responsibility In the final analysis, the one quality that all successful people have is the ability to take on responsibility." — Michael Korda, *Editor-in-Chief, Simon & Schuster*

"The price of greatness is responsibility." - Winston Churchill

AT SCHOOL

This month our school community will focus on the importance of responsibility.

We will be working on accountability, excellence, and self restraint. At school, we will demonstrate responsibility by:

- Being dependable and accountable for our words and actions
- Doing our best and never blaming others for our mistakes
- Making sure that our work gets done to the best of our ability and on time
- Setting good examples for others

AT HOME

- Perhaps the best way to encourage responsibility is to give your child age-

appropriate chores and expect him or her to be responsible while performing these tasks. The goal is to have children complete the work on their own and on time, without reminders from you.

- When assigning responsibilities to family members be sure your child understands what she/he is supposed to do as well as the time frame in which it is to be done. You might need to check on progress from time to time, especially if the job is a new one.
- Help your child to figure out a responsible method for completing homework and extra-curricular activities. Often, children need a structure such as a time frame within which to complete their work (see below).

- We can teach our children responsibility by having them care for their possessions and those of others
- Demonstrating respect for library books, school books and supplies, plants, pets, and money also shows responsibility.
- Try to set family goals by having each family member show greater responsibility in some way:
- Completing homework before watching TV.
- Walking the family dog each morning.
- Setting aside 15 minutes to read to a young child each day.
- Helping a neighbor

Responsibility: Teaching Children the Value of Responsibility

A two year old knocks over his cup of juice and it spills onto the hardwood floor. His mother frowns. "Look at what you've done," she hisses, pointing at the cup. "This is the third time today!" The child hangs his head. Something tugs at the mother's heart, but she can't stop herself from sighing heavily, as she bends down to wipe the floor.

Perhaps you've been witness to such a scene or maybe you've been a participant. There are so many things happening in this moment that it will take us two or three columns to discuss the dynamics and interplay. The first and most important thing to notice is how the mother blames and shames the child. She makes him feel bad about what was most likely an accident. If she thinks she's teaching him responsibility, she's wrong. In fact, the only thing the little boy has learned is that he feels bad about himself. Sure, he may be more careful about spilling in the future, but that will be driven by a sense of shame, rather than responsibility. This kind of scenario is not unique to parenthood, but extends into our

greater culture. When something happens that we don't like, we point a blaming finger. This strikes at the heart of the American allegiance to cause and effect: if something happened, someone must have caused it; therefore, it must be that person's fault. The guilty party must be blamed, shamed and often humiliated publicly. This suffering is part of what the offender must endure in order to make things right. Of course, it feels better to be the accuser, than to stand accused, so righteous indignation fuels the fire and at least partially explains why some people are so quick to blame.

While some crimes must be punished, spilling a glass of juice isn't one of them. As caring parents, we must find alternatives to assigning fault. Contrary to popular belief, a sense of responsibility does not derive from a sense of shame.

About ten years ago, I witnessed a family eating dinner in a restaurant and the way they behaved when their youngest daughter overturned her glass of milk has stayed with me ever since. Without a trace of disapproval, the mother said, "It's okay, sweetie. We'll help you clean

it up." Every member of the family grabbed their napkin and wiped until the spill was gone.

This, of course, is key and the essence of responsibility—the ability to respond, no matter what the situation. Think about it for a moment because it's quite profound. Nobody blamed or shamed. No one was left feeling bad. There was no righteous indignation and thus, no drama. Instead, everyone helped clean up the mess. The message sent? It's okay to make mistakes. It's okay to be human. When accidents happen, other people will pitch in and help.

What I witnessed that day was humanity in action—people helping people. If you want to teach your child responsibility, then teach him to be responsive to his environment. Model this behavior by acting, rather than reacting. If something happens, whatever it is, ask other family members to help. Show them how quickly messes can be done and over with if everyone lends a hand.

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FREE SEASONAL FLU SHOT October 17th (not H1N1)

Drive-thru Clinic at the Abington Senior High School

10am—1PM

SAVE TIME - Pre-register at <http://health.montcopa.org>



MONTGOMERY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT FREE INFLUENZA/ PNEUMOCOCCAL IMMUNIZATIONS—Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Only.

NOT Novel H1N1 (Swine Flu) Influenza Vaccine. Provided to: **Montgomery County Residents** aged 50 years and older, children and adolescents aged 6 months through 18 years, pregnant women, household contacts and caregivers of high-risk individuals and of infants less than 6 months of age, and people who have a long-term health problem, such as: Heart Disease ♦ Lung Disease ♦ Kidney Disease ♦ Diabetes ♦ Neuromuscular Disorders ♦ Anemia ♦ Asthma ♦ Weakened Immune System due to Steroid use, Cancer Treatment, HIV/AIDS

FOSTERING DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTHY BEHAVIOR

NASP believes that the following parenting practices help children to grow up mentally healthy and socially responsible, and prevent problem behaviors.

Developing a Trusting Relationship

When children feel loved and respected by their parents, they simultaneously increase their self-confidence in their independent decision-making and also are more accepting and responsive to their parent's direction. Parents form trusting relationships with their children by being predictable and mature in their own behavior. Parents also foster trust by protecting their children from harm while holding them responsible for the consequences of their own behavior (as is reasonable given their age and abilities). Children who feel safe to make mistakes can learn from them and make wiser decisions in the future. A trusting relationship is the cornerstone of both effective parental discipline and

the development of self-discipline in the children.

Developing Appropriate Expectations

Children need to understand their parents' expectations, and to believe that they can meet those expectations. The expectations must be appropriate for each child's age, abilities, and temperament. Children with learning, physical, or behavioral disabilities provide additional challenges to parents who must adjust their expectations to their child's unique needs and developmental patterns.

Setting Limits can help children feel that the world is predictable, orderly, and safe. Again, parents should consider each child's age and unique developmental factors when establishing limits, and review these limits regularly to adjust for their child's continuing maturity. Limits need to be explicitly and regularly communicated to children and should be enforced consistently. The

consequences for challenging limits should be clear, appropriate, and when possible, natural and logical in relation to the offense.

Offering Encouragement and Recognition

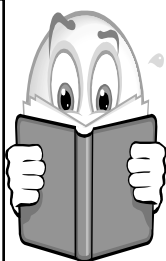
Supporting children's efforts and recognizing their positive behaviors will increase these behaviors. Planning, problem solving, discipline, positive action, self-restraint, and accomplishment are the basis for effective behavior management and should be abundantly encouraged and recognized by parents. Encouraging children to engage in self-evaluation that includes positive and realistic self-appraisal of their accomplishments and other behaviors will help children to develop robust self-management and to make better decisions when their parents are not available.

Adapted from the National Association of School Psychologists. (2006). *Effective parenting: Positive support for families* (Position Statement). Bethesda,

Some Books You and Your Child Might Enjoy ...

Suggested Grade/Title and Author

- K-3 Izzard by John Anderson
- The Remarkable Egg by Adelaide Holl
- Do You Have the Time, Lydia? by Evaline Ness
- 3-5 Henry and the Clubhouse by Beverly Cleary
- Skippack School by Marguerite De Angeli
- 3-5 Be Nice to Josephine by Betty Horvath
- 4-6 Sounder by William Armstrong
- When the Boys Ran the House by Joan Carris
- Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl
- 6-9 Dicey's Song by Cynthia Voigt



CHARACTER EDUCATION COMMITTEE 2009-2010

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- Dr. Ann Bacon, Director of Curriculum and Instruction
- Ms. Judy Bomze, Director of Pupil Services
- Ms. Patricia Carroll, Teacher

- Ms. Shelley Ferguson, Teacher
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