

2. Teaching Kids to "Be Good"

At a Glance...



Parents will respectfully and consistently teach their children to be trustworthy, respectful, responsible, fair, caring and good citizens.

Time



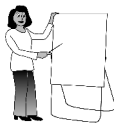
30 - 45 minutes

Core Concepts



- Parents are a child's primary character developer.
- There are six core, universal values that cross all cultural, economic, geographic and religious barriers.

Objective



Parents will select and use a variety of teaching strategies to use at home with their children.

Materials



- ☐ Flip chart with markers or chalkboard with chalk

- ☐ "Ways to Teach Good Character at Home: Trustworthiness" handout (E-2-a)
- ☐ "Ways to Teach Good Character at Home: Respect" handout (E-2-b)
- ☐ "Ways to Teach Good Character at Home: Responsibility" handout (E-2-c)
- ☐ "Ways to Teach Good Character at Home: Fairness" handout (E-2-d)
- ☐ "Ways to Teach Good Character at Home: Caring" handout (E-2-e)
- ☐ "Ways to Teach Good Character at Home: Citizenship" handout (E-2-f)

The six core values, or Pillars of Character, are:

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

More than 500 national and regional organizations teach and promote the Six Pillars of Character. These Pillars were designated in the Aspen Declaration in the fall of 1992 as core universal values that transcend cultural and religious basis of values. They form the basis of the CHARACTER COUNTS! SM

Coalition, a project of the Joseph and Edna Josephson Institute of Ethics.

Ice Breaker



Alphabet Character

Today we'll be discussing the basics of teaching character, so let's start with the ABC's. Form a circle for this activity. We'll rotate around the circle. Each person will name a quality you want your child or children to have. The first person will name a quality that starts with A. The second person will name a quality that starts with B, and so on, until we've gone through the entire alphabet.

Give your name, then the quality. For example, "My name is Peggy, and I want my child to be Ambitious."

Facilitator's Script



We all want our children to be good. But what exactly is "good"? And what do we mean by a "good child"? Let's go around the room and each of us share an idea of what we mean by good.

Ask for ideas from the group. Give everyone a chance to offer a suggestion. Do not judge the suggestions.

The question of "what is good" has been debated for centuries. Your opinion may differ from mine, so I may not want you teaching my child to be what **you** think is good because I don't agree with your definition.

As a result of this difference of opinion, teachers and even parents have been reluctant to label behavior as either "good" or "bad" for fear of being judgmental or imposing their values onto someone else.

Fortunately, we have a better way these days for identifying good behavior that is acceptable to most people. In 1992, a frustrated parent sold his business, pulled together a variety of authorities on education, character development, and youth development from across the country. He made them find a common set of values they all could agree on. It took the group three days to come up with a list. That was the beginning of the CHARACTERS!SM Coalition. Now there are more than 500 national and regional organizations as Coalition members.

The result, called the "Aspen Declaration," identified six core, universal values that cross all religious, cultural and geographical barriers. In fact, these values are terrific.

Write T R R F C C on the chalkboard.

They are **T**rustworthiness **R**espect **R**esponsibility **F**airness **C**aring and **C**itizenship.

It's easy to remember these six pillars of character if you think of the word "terrific." Here's a game to help us remember all six.

Ask participants to stand in a circle. Have the group repeat the six words (Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship) out loud so that they will learn the terms.

Then the game begins. Ask the first person to list the first value ("Trustworthiness"), the second to mention "Respect," the third "Responsibility," and so forth, until you have gone all around the circle. If you have more than six people in the group, repeat until everyone has had a chance to respond.

HOWEVER, if anyone forgets a word or mentions them out of order, then start the game all over! Repeat until the group lists the values in order correctly.

Then have each participant, in turn, name all six values in order until the entire circle has listed them without errors.

Knowing the minimum official standard for goodness is not enough, however. As parents, we must make it our job to teach our children what these words mean and how to live by the principles of goodness.

Each of the six "Ways to Teach Good Character at Home" handouts (E-2-a through E-2-f) features one of the Six Pillars of Character. Give out one of the handouts each day. Have the participants read the lists aloud to one another and to add their own suggestions.

We have shared some great suggestions. But what is more important is what we do with what we've talked about.

Final Thoughts

Select one of the words (**T**rustworthiness, **R**espect, **R**esponsibility, **F**airness, **C**aring and **C**itizenship) from the "Ways to Teach Good Character at Home" list. Circle three ways you're going to teach the meaning of that word at home.

Be prepared to report back on how you taught your selected word at home. Be creative and conscientious. Look for results.

Notes...

Ways to Teach Good Character at Home: Trustworthiness

You never outgrow the need for good character. Our children need solid standards. As parents we must be very clear about the behavior we expect from our children. These are the basics of character education for parents: Teach, enforce, advocate and model the Six Pillars of Character daily!

It's the Six Pillars of Character (plus ethical decision-making) that form the basis of honorable behavior. A person of character "thinks right" and "does right," according to core universal values that define the qualities of a good person: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Character is a moral strength. Remember the Six Pillars by thinking of the word "terrific" : TRRFCC!

Trustworthiness is being honest, telling the truth, keeping promises, and being loyal so people can trust you. Trustworthy people don't lie, cheat or steal. They have integrity and the moral courage to do the right thing and stand up for their beliefs even when it is hard to do.

1. Make trustworthiness a family priority.
2. Show loyalty to the community, your child's school, your family and your employer in your words and actions. Deal with conflicts in an orderly, private way, not by complaining to others or being dishonest.
3. Have a "thought for the day" or week or month.
4. Be careful about making promises. Only make promises you can and will keep.
5. Keep your promises to your children. If something stops you from keeping a promise, explain and say, "I'm sorry." Don't blame others or make excuses.
6. Be honest in your words and actions. Do everything possible to tell the truth. Give people the information they need to make the best decisions, no matter what it costs you. Don't be dishonest in your words or actions.
7. Walk your talk. Live your beliefs. Be who you say you are.
8. Set family rules that include being honest, keeping promises, and being loyal when talking with others.
9. Praise family members daily for things they do that are trustworthy, but be cool!
10. Encourage family members to recognize and acknowledge trustworthy behavior in one another and in others.

11. Discuss the importance of being honest, being able to look at yourself in the mirror, and being proud of who you are and what you stand for.
12. Select movies, videos, magazines and books for your home, where trustworthiness is promoted rather than mocked.
13. Spend time with happy teens and adults who show trustworthiness in their lives, even when it costs them money or power or popularity.
14. Encourage your children to help younger brothers and sisters or neighbors learn to be honest.
15. Remind all family members that they are role models for others.
16. Talk with your family about stories from magazines or newspapers that show honesty or dishonesty.
17. Use the words **honesty**, **promise-keeping**, **loyalty** and **honor** in family talks.
18. Focus on trustworthiness for at least a month when the community focuses on that Pillar. If the community hasn't organized a CHARACTER COUNTS!SM Pillar of the Month, select a month when it works best for your family. Your children may think this is corny, but ask them to humor you!

Ways to Teach Good Character at Home: Respect

Respect is showing others that they are valued for who they are and for their character, not what they look like or what they have. It means treating others the way you want to be treated, and never insulting or making fun of others who are different in looks, ability, race or religion from you. A respectful person is polite, does not use bad language, and never uses violence.

1. Create a climate of respect in the home.
2. Be polite to each other, your children, their friends, family guests, neighbors, co-workers and everyone else.
3. Praise **any** respectful behavior you notice in your children's friends.
4. Talk about how the different abilities and traits in family members and in neighbors make your family and community stronger.
5. Help your children understand the meanings of the words **respect, dignity, privacy, courtesy, individuality** and **uniqueness**, and use those words often.
6. Develop family rules for treating each other with courtesy, allowing others to keep their sense of dignity, giving needed privacy, showing decency, and appreciating others' individuality.
7. Focus on respect for an entire month.
8. Have a manners refresher course at home. Then practice your good manners as you eat a meal together.
9. Videotape yourselves at mealtime. Use the video to think of ways to behave more respectfully to one another.
10. Discuss specific, respectful behaviors that each family member needs or likes.
11. Collect 25 cents from every family member caught rolling eyes, not listening in a conversation, putting someone down, gossiping, or being disrespectful in other ways. Put the money in a special family fund jar, box or drawer. Use the money for a special family meal or event, and think about better behavior. (And be ready to put in **your** money. Children don't miss a move!)
12. Better yet, put money in a special fund when you catch a family member showing **respectful** behavior!
13. Discuss how others might feel if someone tells a disrespectful joke or makes a disrespectful comment. Talk about those things you hear on TV or in movies.
14. Point out others who show respectful behavior, and encourage your children to help others and to show respectful behavior to peers and younger friends.

Ways to Teach Good Character at Home: Responsibility

Responsibility is doing what you are supposed to do. Responsible people think ahead, set reasonable goals, control their tempers, and always do their best. They don't give up easily, especially when others are counting on them. They are accountable for the consequences of their choices; they don't blame others for their mistakes.

1. Be responsible yourself. Be true in your words and actions. Don't make excuses. Be on time. Do your best in all you do. Do your part and more.
2. Develop family guidelines for responsible behavior.
3. Place quotes, words and definitions related to responsibility -- accountability, self-control, excellence and punctuality -- on mirrors, the refrigerator and TV.
4. List the steps involved in household tasks (cleaning the downstairs bathroom, raking leaves, sweeping the porch, cleaning your room, etc.) on index cards. Shuffle the cards and let family members draw a card daily or weekly to be their chores for that time. This leaves no room for different ideas about the meaning of **clean**.
5. Praise your children when you see responsible behavior. Be specific. Notice when children use self-control, do their best, do their part, take responsibility for their actions, and do things on time.
6. Search for examples of responsible behavior in news articles, magazines, movies or television shows.
7. Find examples of irresponsible behavior in books, movies, and TV. Talk about ways in which the person or group could have behaved responsibly.
8. Focus on responsibility for an entire month. In fact, you may want to focus on this Pillar for several months if your household is getting out of control.
9. With your children, make a daily or weekly responsibility checklist. Make a list of chores or tasks that must be done to earn privileges, rewards, or even needs like food and water.

Ways to Teach Good Character at Home: Fairness

Fairness is playing by the rules, taking turns, sharing and listening. Fair people do not take advantage of others, consider all sides before they decide, and don't blame others unjustly.

1. Emphasize fairness in your family.
2. Show fairness to each other by setting and using standards for special privileges.
3. Use words like **equity, equality, criteria, standards, rules**, and **fairness** when talking with your children.
4. Put rules, criteria, guidelines and standards for family life in writing.
5. Make sure your standards fit your children's ages and skill levels.
6. Practice equity by giving everyone a chance to meet the standards that have been set for them.
7. Give equal rewards to everyone who meets his or her standards.
8. Talk about things that must be considered when deciding what is fair. These include need, seniority, strength, merit and equality. Give children a "prize" (such as potato chips or other snacks) from time to time based on these difference factors. For example, one day, give the most chips to the strongest family member; another day, give the most chips to the one who is thinnest or hungriest.
9. Focus on fairness for an entire month.
10. Play a game by the rules.
11. Discuss fair ways to choose a movie, restaurant or vacation.
12. Discuss why choices seem fair when they put us at an advantage; unfair when they put us at a disadvantage.
13. As a family, discuss unfair practices and, together, develop fairer ways of doing things.

Ways to Teach Good Character at Home: Caring

Caring is being kind, helpful and generous to everyone. Caring people are not selfish; they are considerate and always think about how their conduct affects others. They have compassion and empathy; they care how others feel, and they are charitable and forgiving. They do good deeds without thought of reward.

1. Creating a caring climate in the home.
2. Be kind to each other, your children, their friends, guests and others.
3. Select at least one month to emphasize caring.
4. When needed, be firm but not harsh.
5. Create a caring home by not using sarcasm, name-calling or "put-downs."
6. Use words related to caring often: **kindness,, love,, concern,, warmth,, patience, friendliness,, care-giving,, nurturing, charity,, support,, giving** and **compassion.**
7. Visit or invite caring teens and adults into your home.
8. Encourage family members to recognize and point out caring behavior in each other and in friends.
9. Collect quotes, cards, articles, poems, comics and stories about caring. Share them with family members.
10. Talk about results of caring for the environment or failing to do so.
11. Select and discuss caring characters from books, movies and TV. Select uncaring examples and talk about ways to rewrite the scripts to show caring instead.
12. Give children a chance to show caring in an active way. Do one project each week.
13. Collect coats, food or blankets for people who need them.
14. Create your own kindness plan. Select a good deed to do secretly during the week. Talk with your children about how they felt after they did the good deed, or how the good deed affected the person they helped. The deeds don't count if the person helped finds out who did them.
15. Talk about what it feels like to be "left out."
16. When guests are in the home, ask them about caring acts that have affected their lives.
17. Send Valentines or holiday cards.
18. Take a special treat like ice cream or cookies to someone's home as a cheer-up surprise.
19. Watch how your children behave at home, and praise each other for caring behavior.
20. Share caring examples from your day's activities.
21. Have a family hug now and then. Children may complain or act embarrassed, but they will usually enjoy it secretly.

Ways to Teach Good Character at Home: Citizenship

Citizenship is doing your share to help your family and make your community a better place. Good citizens are good neighbors. They cooperate with others, obey laws and rules, respect the authority of parents, teachers and others, and they protect the environment.

1. Show good citizenship.
2. Vote!
3. Create a list of things you should do for your community and things you enjoy from being a part of the community. Work on the things you should do.
4. Select a citizenship emphasis month, if your community doesn't have one.
5. Use citizenship-related words like **rights, obligation, duty, pride, history, selflessness, law, government** and others in conversation.
6. Develop a list of citizenship goals as a family. Do something each month to work toward your goal.
7. Have a family meeting in which family members vote on local, state or national issues.
8. Select a service project each week to help someone in your community.
9. Keep up with news about community leaders, community needs and issues.
10. Watch the movie video "The Patriot" together and discuss how it relates to good citizenship.
11. Display a flag.
12. Go to the library and check out books about historical people.
13. Participate in local celebrations.
14. Make a photo collection about your community.
15. Have your child draw pictures of important places in your community. Display them in your home.