

SEPTEMBER CHARACTER TRAIT OF THE MONTH

RESPONSIBILITY

When asked what traits parents would like their children to have now and as adults, one of the most common responses is “to be responsible.” This is a broad term which means many different things, including:

1. being dependable so people know they can count on you,
2. keeping one’s word and agreements,
3. meeting one’s commitments,
4. doing something to the best of one’s ability,
5. being accountable for one’s behavior,
6. accepting credit when you do things right and acknowledging mistakes,
7. being a contributing member of one’s family, community and society.

Tips for Parents and Building Responsibility at Home

Being responsible is a key to children’s success both in school and in the larger world when they grow up. At the end of the day, it’s the student’s responsibility to do their schoolwork, but as the homeschool parent you need to set them up for success and work closely communicating and collaborating with your supervising teacher. The idea that a kid is responsible for things is not inborn—it doesn’t just happen by itself. It needs to be taught, coached, and learned. Most responsibilities are time-consuming and boring for a child. As a result, kids naturally seek excitement and try to stay away from boring things like: *“Clean your room. Make your bed. Put your books away. Do your schoolwork.”* It takes a lot of discipline and maturity for a kid to stay on task when something isn’t fun. It takes practice. And it requires that you coach your child to be responsible and that you hold your child accountable for their responsibilities.

How can parents instill a high sense of self-esteem and responsibility in their children? One way is by providing messages that build each of the two essential components of self-esteem, feeling lovable and feeling capable. You can increase your child’s sense of responsibility by helping them to feel that they are capable by sending “Doing” Messages. These messages refer to all the things your children can do, their special areas of talent, and also to their potential and their growth. If your child comes to you saying that they can’t figure out their math assignment. Take a deep breath in their presence and then connect: “Let’s take a moment. This problem is tricky. You are doing it right if it feels hard – things feeling hard are a sign that our brain is really working, not a sign of not understanding. Let’s remind your body of that.” If your child is still stuck, maybe offer, “I wonder if you can tell me everything you **do** know about this problem. Let’s start there.” We want our kids to associate us with being in their tough times *with* them. This association both strengthens our relationship with our child and helps a child build resilience, confidence and responsibility. Parents may have to give up having things done exactly as they would like them to be done and on their exact timetable in order for a child to move from obedience to responsibility. But allowing a child to “do it their way” will encourage a feeling of pride in accomplishment and foster a sense of responsibility.

If you decide you’re going to start using more responsibility and accountability language when you talk with your kids, sit down and clearly state that fact. In a calm time, say to your kids individually: “From now on, I’m going to start to point out how we meet responsibilities around here. That way, you’ll have a clearer idea of how many responsibilities I meet and why I think it’s important that you meet your responsibilities.” Discuss why meeting responsibilities are important to your success in life. Good luck!!

Tips to Help Kids be Responsible Home School Students

Set up an at-home school station:

1. Find a quiet spot with a desk or table
2. Stock your spot with supplies: pencils, paper, books, timer, etc.
3. Decide what your daily schedule will be, and stick to it

Independent work:

1. Set a daily schedule
2. Complete the most difficult assignments first
3. Decide on a plan: who will you ask for help and when?
4. Try to complete the work on your own before asking for help
5. Set a timer, and work until it goes off. If you want to keep working after that, great!
6. Take a short break if you need to, and then come back to finish up

Conferences and small group meetings:

1. Call/Google Meet from a quiet place where you can concentrate--away from family distractions (NO pets/ toys/food/drinks!)
2. Come to the meeting on time and with supplies needed for that session
3. Ask the meeting leader about rules for participation (should you raise your hand?)

Whole class meetings:

1. Call/Google Meet from a quiet place where you can concentrate--away from family distractions (NO pets/toys/food/drinks)
2. Come to the meeting on time with supplies needed for that session
3. Wait for the leader to call on you before speaking

