

# Helping Your Child Learn **Responsible Behaviour**

*with activities for children*



\* **Our kindergarten children deserve to learn important lessons from us and to acquire important habits with our help.** They need help in learning what matters to us. We want our children to grow up to be responsible adults. We want them to learn to feel, think, and act with respect for themselves and for other people. We want them to pursue their own well-being, while also being considerate of the needs and feelings of others.

- Today, there is wide recognition that many of our children are not learning to act responsibly while they are young. Studies show that many children see nothing wrong with cheating on tests. Some see nothing wrong with taking things that don't belong to them.



- If proper attitudes and behaviour are not learned early, problems can mushroom with even worse consequences when children are older. As crime has increased, teen-age offenders have shown less and less feeling for their victims. But even for the youngsters who will never commit a crime, it is better to learn responsibility when

they are young, rather than when they are older and they have to change bad habits.

- Many parents will also want to share with their children deeply held religious and moral convictions as a foundation for ethical behaviour. We should encourage habits of fairness, respect, courage, honesty, and compassion that responsible people share, and it can be used in classes with different beliefs.

As teachers, we can give our children the best in us by helping them acquire habits and character traits that they can rely on in their own lives. If we help them learn to take pleasure in thinking and behaving well, they will have the best chance to lead good lives as individuals and as citizens in the community. This will be true no matter what unpleasant situations or bad influences they come across.

## **What Do We Mean by Responsibility?**

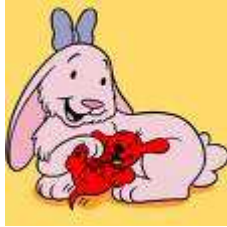


None of us is born acting responsibly. A responsible character is formed over time. It is made up of our outlook and daily habits associated with feelings, thoughts, and actions. Responsible people act the way they should whether or not anyone is watching. They do so because they understand that it's right and because they have the courage and self-control to act decently, even when tempted to do otherwise.

- **We want our children to appreciate the importance of being responsible.** We also want them to develop the habits and strength to act this way in their everyday lives.

■ **Learning to be responsible includes learning to:**

- \*respect and show compassion for others;
- \*practice honesty as a matter of course;
- \*show courage in standing up for our principles;
- \*develop self-control in acting on our principles;
- \*maintain self-respect.



■ **Respect and Compassion for Others**

As part of being responsible, children need to respect and show concern for the well-being of other people. Respect ranges from using basic manners to having compassion for the suffering of others. Compassion is developed by trying to see things from the point of view of others, and learning that their feelings resemble our

own.

■ Miss Silvia, why was Martha crying?

She is very sad. One of her closest friends just is ill. Come and sit with me. Do you remember how you felt when your sister, Anna was ill?

I felt sad and lonely.

I'm sure Martha feels that way, too. Maybe you can think of a way to help her.

I could give her a hug...

That's a great idea! I'm really glad you thought of it.



- **Respect for others** also includes the habit of treating people fairly as individuals, regardless of race, sex, or ethnic group. As we mature, respect includes realizing that not all our obligations to others, such as caring for a family member who is sick, are chosen

freely. And it includes tolerance for people who do not share our beliefs or likes or dislikes, as long as they do not harm others.

These habits are especially important because many of the wrongs people commit result from indifference to the suffering they cause.

■ **Honesty**

Honesty means telling the truth. It means not misleading others for our own benefit. It also means trying to make decisions, especially important ones, on the basis of evidence rather than prejudice. Honesty includes dealing with other people and being honest with ourselves.



To understand the importance of being truthful to others, our children need to learn that living together depends on trust. Without honesty, trusting each other becomes impossible.

Honesty with ourselves involves faring up to our own mistakes and biases, even when we have to admit them to others. It includes self-criticism. The point is to learn from our errors and to do our best to correct them, not to dwell on them.

## ■ **Courage**

Courage is taking a position and doing what is right, even at the risk of some loss. It means being neither reckless nor cowardly, but faring up to our duties. It includes physical courage, intellectual courage to make decisions on the basis of evidence, and moral courage to stand up for our principles.



Courage does not mean never being afraid. It can involve trying to overcome our fears, such as a fear of the dark. But our children also need to learn that sometimes it is all right to be afraid.

Miss Silvia, a man showed us money by the school playground today.

What did you do?

We ran for the teacher.

Why did you do that?

We were scared. Mommy and Dad and you said never take anything from grownups we don't know. Run away. Go and tell somebody we know.

Good for you. It was right to be scared. Lots of people are nice, but some are very mean. They can hurt you. The mean ones sometimes try to fool people by pretending to be nice. Now, tell me, what did the man look like?

Courage becomes especially important by the time children become teenagers. They often have to stand up against peer pressure to do the wrong thing, such as using drugs.



## ■ **Self-Control**

Self-control is the ability to resist inappropriate behaviour in order to act responsibly. It relates to all of the different aspects of responsibility mentioned so far, including respect and compassion for others, honesty, and courage. It involves persistence and sticking to long-term commitments. It also includes

dealing effectively with emotions, such as anger, and developing patience.

## ■ **Self-Respect**



People with self-respect take satisfaction in appropriate behaviour and hard-won accomplishments. They don't need to put others down or have a lot of money in order to respect themselves. People who respect themselves also view selfishness, loss of self-control, recklessness, cowardice, and dishonesty as wrong and unworthy of them.

As they mature, if they have learned the lessons of responsibility, they will develop a good conscience to guide them.

In addition, people who respect themselves respect their own health and safety. Similarly, they are unwilling to be manipulated by others. Patience or tolerance does not mean allowing others to mistreat us.

While we help children have high standards for themselves, we also need to let them know that failure is no embarrassment when we have done our best. For example, losing a game when we have played our best, and our opponents have simply played better, is no disgrace.