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Responsibility Age 10 Summary

Why Responsibility?

Children age 5-10 are working on understanding what it means to act responsibly. Making responsible decisions can involve identifying problems, analyzing situations, solving problems, and considering the ethical implications or consequences of choices. Such an important skill takes a lot of planning and practice for a parent or those in a parenting role to teach and many opportunities for a child to try out and redo before it is mastered.



- *"Tell me about what you are doing (or what needs to be done) to take care of yourself?"* (exercise, eat healthy, get enough sleep, time for yourself, manage stress)
- *"Tell me about what you are doing (or what needs to be done) to take care of your possessions?"* (pets, clothes, room)
- "Tell me about what you are doing (or what needs to be done) to take care of your relationships?" (spending time with friends, connecting with family)
    - "How's all of this going?"
    - "What are you doing (or could be done) on your own?"
    - "What can I do to help you?"

Use your best listening skills. Listen closely to what is most concerning to your child without assuming your child shares your thoughts, concerns, and feelings.

Trap Avoid letting the question turn into an accusation. Remember to stay calm and that the goal of the question is to help the child uncover feelings.



- Learn together. The purpose of teaching responsibility is to grow the skills of taking responsibility through constructive actions such as making healthy choices, caring for your environment and possessions, caring for your relationships, and repairing harm.
- Model behaviors (and your child will notice and learn).
- Call out responsibility when you see it.
- Brainstorm ways you can take responsibility together. *"What are some ideas you have that would help to leave this space better than you found it?" Let's pick up the games we*

were playing before we leave. Can you think of anything else we should do before leaving?"

- Work on your family feelings vocabulary.
- Teach assertive communication through I-messages such as "*I feel _____(insert feeling word) when you_____ (name the words or actions that upset you) because_____.*"
- Teach your child to repair harm. When they damage or break an object or hurt a sibling's feelings, ask them what ideas they have to repair the object and help heal the relationship. Gain your child's input and allow them to decide how to repair harm in each situation.

Tip Create a ritual of sharing words of love and care at bedtime. Ending the day reflecting on how much you appreciate one another could be the best way to send your child to sleep.



- Allow your child opportunities to take responsibility for their tasks or relationships -- even when you know you could do it faster or better.
- Proactively remind. Before your nighttime routine starts, you might say, *"Remember how we talked about taking responsibility to get yourself ready for bed? What do you need to do to get ready for bed tonight? Brush teeth, get pajamas on, etc.?"*
- Use "Show me…" statements. *"Show me how you can take responsibility by improving things with your sister."*
- Offer limited and possible choices. *"Will you talk to her directly or write her a note?"*
- Recognize effort using "I notice…" statements like, *"I notice how you went back to your sister to talk to her after you fought to improve things. That's how you take responsibility and heal the relationship."*
- Follow through on repairing harm.

Tip Include reflection on the day in your dinnertime routine. You might ask, "What happened today that made you happy?" or "What were the best moments in your day?" Children may not have the chance to reflect on what's good and abundant in their lives throughout the day, yet grateful thoughts are a central contributor to happiness and well-being.



- Ask key questions to support their skills: *"You will see Julie today. How will you tell her you were sorry for your words yesterday?"*
- Promote an "I can" belief. Children need to hear that you believe in their ability to take responsibility.
- Foster friendships.

- Stay engaged. Learning to take responsibility after making a poor choice takes time. Children ages 5-10 may need your ideas, support, and guidance several times since each situation will be unique.
- Follow through on logical consequences to repair harm when needed.



Recognize Efforts

- No matter how old your child is, your positive reinforcement and encouragement have a significant impact.
- There are many ways you can reinforce your child's efforts. It is essential to distinguish between three types of reinforcement – recognition, rewards, and bribes. These three distinct parenting behaviors have different impacts on your child's behavior.
    - **Recognize** even small successes to promote positive behaviors and expand confidence: *"You fed the dog all week without being asked. I appreciate that!"* Recognition can include nonverbal acknowledgment such as a smile, high five, or hug.
    - **Rewards** can be helpful in certain situations by providing a concrete, timely, and positive incentive for doing a good job. A reward is determined ahead of time so that the child knows what to expect, like "*If you complete your chores this morning, we will go for a bike ride this afternoon*" (if you XX, then I'll XX). The goal should be to help your child progress to a time when the reward will no longer be needed. If used too often, rewards can decrease a child's intrinsic motivation.
    - Unlike a reward, **bribes** aren't planned ahead of time and generally happen when a parent or those in a parenting role is in a crisis (like in the grocery store checkout line and your children are arguing. To avoid disaster, a parent or those in a parenting role offers to buy a sucker if the children will stop the arguing). While bribes can be helpful in the short term to manage stressful situations, they will not grow lasting motivation or behavior change and should be avoided.
- Build celebrations into your routine. For example, snuggle together after a smooth bedtime routine and listen to relaxing music. Or, in the morning, once ready for school, leave a special note of gratitude in their lunchbox.

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