



Teach Your Teen to Be Accountable

1. One community in Massachusetts has proposed drug testing in schools. Ask your teen how teenagers can show more accountability in order to avoid such actions by authorities.
2. Many teens complain that parents invade their privacy. Talk with your teen about how parents feel accountable for the safety and well-being of their children, and how this may conflict with what teens believe is their right to privacy.
3. Share with your teen something you did as a teen that was irresponsible, how you felt afterward, and what you learned from it. Then, ask your teen to share with you.
4. Set up a regular time to talk with your teen. Share what's happening in your lives, and also discuss such questions as: "In what ways am I reliable and dependable?"; "How accountable am I for my actions?"; "To what extent do I make excuse and blame others instead of taking responsibility for what I did?"; "What attitudes or behaviors show I am being accountable?"; "What attitudes and behaviors do I need to change?"
5. It's a fact that a lot of parents don't hold their teens accountable for such things as underage drinking, despite the fact that alcohol use by teens is linked to falling grades, failing relationships, automobile crashes, sexual assaults, and suicide. Some parents think drinking is part of growing up and some don't want to turn their teen against them, but if teens are not held accountable, they will believe they can get away with bad behavior and it will increase. Provide consequences when they break the rules instead of rescuing them, require them to make restitution if they've caused damage, don't excuse or cover up illegal or inappropriate behavior, and don't accept the blame when they tell you it's your fault. Sometimes the most loving thing you can do may seem heartless.

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Cut and post this Positive Message in a visible place where your child can see it often.



***Being responsible, choosing to do right,
and following through with commitments
are all part of accountability.***





Accountable

I will hold myself
accountable.

July





Teach Your Students to Be Accountable

Character–Building Activities are aligned with Common Core State Standards (www.corestandards.org).

Literature/Writing (Writing W.9.1a)

Have each student write a letter to someone in the news who did something that he thought was irresponsible, being specific about why he doesn't think it was right and why the action sets a bad example. Have students send their letters and see what happens.

Research (Writing WHST.9.7)

There is plenty of evidence to conclude that teens need to learn financial accountability. One study found that in 2005, teens spent \$155 billion, up from \$2 billion in 1999. And a study by the Charles Schwab Investment Company found that 73 percent of teens believe they'll be earning "plenty of money" when they're out on their own and expect to be earning an average annual salary of \$145,500. The fact is, only five percent of the U.S. population currently earns a six-figure income, and the average national wage stands at approximately \$40,000. Give students the assignment of researching budget planning for teens. Resources include: www.aboutschwab.com, search "teen," www.themint.org, or visit www.betterbudgeting.com to find dozens of short articles on all aspects of financial accountability—or search "how to budget" and "teen."

Media/Computer (Writing WHST.9.8)

Have students spend 30 minutes searching the Internet for examples of teens who are accountable and 30 minutes searching for teens who are not. Discuss which kind of example was easiest to find, whether the most prominent examples really represent teens, what impression the public is likely to have, and what can be done to improve the media image of teens as being accountable.

Social Studies (Science & Technical Subjects RST.9.9)

Although juvenile crime was slowly declining until recently, it has begun to increase, as has the number of violent crimes among young people. This has brought a debate about the extent to which young offenders should be held accountable for their actions. Have students debate this issue, some arguing that children and teens who commit serious crimes should be treated as adults, and some arguing for leniency. Have each side support their arguments with pros and cons, facts based on statistics and examples, and discuss how the approach they support addresses the question of accountability.

Math/Science (Speaking & Listening SL.9.1a)

You have likely heard stories of how business and industry has harmed both humankind and the environment in their quest for profit. Some examples are the depletion of fish due to over-fishing or the estimated 47,000 people who die each year from toxic chemicals. Ask each student to find one example of this problem to share with the class. Lead a discussion on how to hold the offenders accountable for the consequences of their actions, without resorting to violence or breaking the law.

Arts (Reading: Information Text RI.9.7)

Whether you're working with talented artists or average students, everyone has something to learn and research says that personal choice can be a great motivator. Assign students a self-directed learning project in which they identify an art-related skill they want to master; a product they want to create; or an artist, art movement, period, or style they want to learn more about. Then, have students develop a plan of how they will carry out, document, and evaluate their project. The objectives are to capitalize on their interests and make them accountable for their own learning. At the end of the project, ask students to reflect on the positives and negatives of self-directed learning.



Teach Your Students To Be Accountable

Try these additional movies and books that are developmentally appropriate for your grade level. These additional movies and books have been researched and chosen to reinforce the monthly character trait. Preview movies and books prior to using.



Summer of the Monkeys: This is the story of a boy living in 1880 who dreams of getting enough money to buy his dream horse, and what happens when he finds some lost monkeys and thinks claiming the reward for their return is the answer to his problem.



Coach Carter: A true story of the man who took over a losing team and had them all sign contracts promising to maintain a certain GPA. When they didn't, he held them accountable by locking them out of the gym until they focused on their schoolwork.



Book of the Month: *Nobody Else Has to Know*, by Ingrid Tomey: Fifteen-year-old Webber is driving with his grandfather without a license when he accidentally hits a girl on a bicycle. Webb's grandfather takes responsibility for the accident so Webb won't get into trouble, but eventually, Webb comes to terms with what happened and decides to do the right thing.



Hard Time: A Real Life Look at Juvenile Crime and Violence, by Janet Bode: Real teens who have been incarcerated for various crimes share their stories about their difficult home lives and about their violent lives on the streets. There's also a discussion about how quickly the rate of violence is increasing among teens today.



Raiders' Night, by Robert Lipsyte: Matt, the co-captain of his high school football team witnesses a brutal hazing attack on a young teammate. Can he do the right thing and tell the truth, or will he play by the team rules and take part in the cover-up?



Truth, by Tanya Lloyd Kyi: Jen is at a party where a man is found dead. She discovers that everyone there knows who did it but no one wants to tell and get in trouble.



Day of Tears, by Julius Lester: In 1859, Pierce Butler sells his inheritance of 429 slaves to pay a gambling debt. That day is recorded in the voices of some of the people involved, families that are torn apart, greedy slave buyers and sellers.

Name _____

Date Received _____

Signature _____

July

Accountable

Student Character–Building Trait Overview

Message

Being responsible, choosing to do right, and following through with commitments are all part of accountability. So is paying the consequences when you don't do these things.

Set the Standard High

- Don't play the blame game. If you've goof up, own up to it. Don't make excuses.
- If no one in your family sets limits or holds you accountable for your behavior, do it for yourself.
- Look around and see the trouble people get in if they don't control their feelings and actions. Do you want the consequences of not being accountable? Take responsibility for doing the right thing.
- If you don't understand something, ask questions.
- Hold your friends accountable. Remind them if they promised to do something but didn't—but do it nicely.
- If there is something you need to get better at, like math, basketball, word processing, website design, public speaking, or bring up your grades, ask for help.
- Show some financial accountability by saving money from every allowance and monetary gifts you receive instead of spending it all.

Why It Matters

Accountability means doing the right thing and paying the consequences when you don't. It used to be that people really did get in trouble for doing wrong and that helped them learn not to do the wrong thing again. But, things have changed. Sometimes parents are too busy to teach their children that there are consequences when they misbehave. So, people have learned to put the blame on others when something goes wrong, like the woman who sued McDonald's because she got burned from hot coffee instead of taking responsibility for spilling the coffee. You can find lots of examples by searching "frivolous lawsuits" on the internet. The point is that people need to grow up, so to speak, and to own up to their behavior.



Name _____

Date Received _____

Signature _____

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Student Character–Building Activities

1. Define this month's character trait.
2. Why does this character trait matter?
3. How can this character trait make me a better person?
4. Some actions I will take to practice this character trait.
5. Who do you see around this facility modeling the trait?



Name: _____

Date Completed: _____

Signature: _____

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Student Mastery Activity

What's the Media Image?

Spend 30 minutes searching the internet for examples of teens who are accountable and 30 minutes searching for examples of teens who are not. Describe below what you found from each search. Which kind of example was easiest to find? Did the easy-to-find examples really represent teens as a whole? What impression is the public likely to have when they find these examples? What can be done to improve the media image of teens as being accountable?

Describe examples of teens who showed accountability.

Describe examples of teens who did not show accountability.

