

Character Matters

Show Kindness

Did you know that even the smallest act of kindness can change someone's entire day? Not only does being kind to others make them feel good—it makes you feel good too! Here are a few ways you can show kindness.

1. Smile and say "hello"

It seems simple, but offering a smile and a saying "hi" to someone in the hall or on the street can be enough to brighten their mood—and yours!

2. Sit with someone who is alone

Sitting by yourself in a crowded lunchroom can feel lonely and embarrassing. If you see someone sitting alone, ask to join them. Even better—introduce them to your friends and invite them to sit at your table the next day.

3. Give your time

There are many groups and organizations that need helpers. Find one that "speaks" to you and volunteer an hour or two each week. You can even spread the word to others and invite them to help too.

4. Have good manners

Open and hold the door for people. Say "please" and "thank you," and don't interrupt when someone else is talking. Just try to always do what feels right and good.

For more tips on building good social skills, watch this quick video.



VIDEO

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Be Fair

In middle school and high school, fairness means equal opportunities for everyone, having and following rules, and making judgments based on worthiness and ability. Here are some ways you can make sure that you treat others fairly and justly.

1. Stick to the rules

Rules—in school, in sports, at home, and in society—exist for a reason. Because rules apply to everyone, and everyone is expected to abide by them, they keep things orderly and fair. Just keep in mind that sometimes rules need to be changed based on a person's specific needs—so that everyone has an opportunity to be successful.

2. Pull your weight

Whether you're part of a group project in class or working at an after-school job, you should always strive to do your share of the work. It's very unfair to expect others to do things you should do. On the flip side, it's appropriate to expect your classmates and co-workers to do their share too.

3. Listen to all sides

Conflicts happen. When they do, it's important to not only share your perspective, but to also listen to what others have to say. Being open-minded might teach you something new and open your eyes to perspectives and ideas you hadn't considered.

For more information on conflict resolution, watch this quick video.



VIDEO

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Be Trustworthy

Trustworthiness is about more than being honest. Trustworthiness also means keeping your promises and letting others know they can count on you.

Here are some tips on how you can be a trustworthy person.

1. Make honesty a habit

When you get into the habit of always telling the truth, you don't have to remember the lies or excuses you've made, and others learn to trust and respect you as an honest person.

2. Do what you say you will do

Trustworthy people are dependable. This means that people can count on you to do what you say you will do. For example, a trustworthy person is on time for activities and appointments, returns the things they've borrowed, and does the work or chores they promised to do. Doing these kinds of things will show others that they can always depend on you.

3. Keep confidences

People who are trustworthy don't gossip or tell the secrets of others. For example, if a friend tells you something in confidence, they are trusting you not to share this information with others in person or online. Being a friend is being a person who can be trusted.

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Be Responsible

Responsibility can mean different things to different people. In general, being responsible means following through on your commitments, working hard, and being accountable for everything you say and do. Here are some tips to help you be more responsible.

1. Don't make excuses

No one is perfect, and we all make mistakes. How you respond to your mistakes makes all the difference. You can blame others or make excuses, or you can take ownership of your mistakes and do what you can to fix them. This is called being accountable, and it's key to being a more responsible person.

2. Give 100% to everything you do

When you commit to something, such as getting a better grade in a class or having a healthier diet, it's important that you do your best to make it happen. Even if you fall short, you'll know you tried your hardest.

3. Don't give up

When things get tough, you have two choices: you can give up, or you can persevere. Responsible people work toward a goal with a spirit that won't be defeated. Of course, this isn't always easy to do. To help you reach any goal, make a plan for how you will tackle the challenges you may face—and don't give up.

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Be Respectful

Being respectful includes accepting others for who they are, being tolerant of differences, and being open-minded to the thoughts and opinions of others. When we respect one another, it leads to feelings of acceptance, trust, and love. Here are some tips on how you can be a more respectful person.

1. Embrace differences

How boring would the world be if everyone looked, acted, and thought the same? Look at others' differences as an opportunity to learn and grow. For example, if you have a friend or classmate who practices a religion or observes a holiday different from your own, ask them to tell you more about it. Be open to new perspectives and experiences.

2. Be kind

Treat others the way you would want to be treated. This means being mindful of your words and actions and being kind and courteous to everyone you meet, regardless of their race, gender, or age.

3. Be respectful online

When you are online, people can't see your expressions or hear your tone of voice, so what you say can easily be misunderstood. Be careful with what you post, and only use social media for positive comments and to support others.

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Be a Good Citizen

Being a good citizen means making the world a better place for everyone. For you, this means being a good family member, friend, and classmate; lending a helping hand to those in need; being active in your community; and doing your part to care for the environment. Here are some ways that you can be a good citizen.

1. Share your time and talents

What strengths or talents do you have that could be helpful to a family member, friend, or classmate? For example, a simple offer to help a neighbor with some yard work or household tasks can mean so much. Older neighbors will especially appreciate this act of kindness.

What is one way you can help a neighbor?

2. Understand your civic duties

Even if you're not old enough to vote, you can stay informed about what is happening in your community, state, and country. Choose reliable sources of information, ask questions, and be open to different points of view.

What is a local or national issue you care about?
