

Character Conversation Citizenship

Citizenship

Participation, involvement, and contribution are traits of character. Good citizenship is not doing what “looks good.” It means helping others, knowing more than how the government works and working to make our community, country and world a better place to live. A good citizen:

- Does their share
- Cooperates
- Stays informed and votes
- Is a good neighbor
- Obeys laws and rules
- Respects authority
- Protects the environment

Infants and Toddlers

Even infants and toddlers can learn about citizenship. Not only is taking them for walks in the neighborhood healthy, it also shows them a larger world than home and CYS. As your infant becomes a toddler, talk to them about what you see on your walks. Toddlers may not understand all that you explain, but the more you talk, the more they will understand and will want to become a part of the community.

Preschoolers

Preschoolers can start learning about citizenship by being a citizen of their family and their CYS classroom. Help them understand the importance of getting along with others. They can also show good citizenship by doing chores around the house – picking up their toys – or by feeding animals.

Birdfeeders Activity

Supplies: pine cones, string, yarn or pipe cleaners, peanut butter, and bird seed

Help your child make a bird feeder by attaching a string, yarn or a pipe cleaner to a pine cone. Then smear peanut butter on it and roll it in bird seed. Hang it by the string. Explain how important it is for us to take care of our feathered friends.

School-Age

Help your school-ager (6 to 10 years) understand that a community can be defined in many ways. The entire town is a community; the installation is a community; even the CYS program is a type of community. An important part of citizenship is taking pride in your community by helping keep it clean, by following the rules, and doing your part to see that everyone is safe.

Chore List Activity

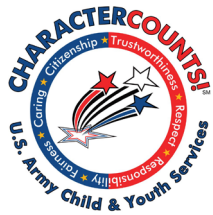
Have everyone in your family brainstorm a list of chores that need to be done to keep your family “community” running smoothly. Assign each family member specific chores on the list. Talk about why these chores are important and what will happen to the “community” if someone decides not to do their chores.

Middle-School and Teens

As your child becomes older, he should take an even more active role in citizenship. Middle schoolers and teens in CYS programs do an amazing job of giving back to their community through service. Whether planting flowers, cleaning up a playground, or baking holiday cookies for the MPs at the gates, encourage your child to take an active role in service projects.

Who, What, When Activity

Help your child to learn more about the community or installation. Find out how it got its name and some of the early history that makes it a special and unique place to live and work. This could be a great family activity. When you have completed the project, share it with others so they can learn what you found out about the community.



Character Conversation Competitive Activities

Competition plays a large role in our current culture. It is not uncommon to hear of very young children being engaged in competitive activities. We know that every child develops at their own pace. If you are wondering if your child is ready for competitive events, consider these points.

Children Under 8 – Competition can be risky. Highly competitive events can cause these children to be fearful, insecure, and frustrated, and eventually they may drop out of organizations.

What we should know about young children

- Centered on self
- Likes to play or work next to someone
- Needs to learn the importance of sharing, taking turns, and cooperating

For Adults – Help them learn about:

- Being cooperative
- Helping and being helped
- Being a team member

8 to 10-year-olds are still not ready for intense competition

What we should know about 8 to 10-year-olds

- Have boundless energy
- Coordination is increasing
- Interests change rapidly
- Comparisons with others are difficult

For Adults – Help them learn about:

- Cooperation over competition
- Doing their best

11- to 15-year-olds can consider not only their own perspective but also others'.

What we should know about 11 to 15-year-olds

- Experiences rapid changes in physical appearance
- Exhibits less dependency on parents
- Takes more responsibility for planning and evaluating work
- Can be painfully self-conscious and critical
- Moves from “me” attitude to collective “we”

For Adults – Help them learn about:

- Advancing their skills
- Finding balance between work and fun

16 and older are experiencing competition in many aspects of their lives.

What we should know about youth 16 and over

- Overcomes the awkwardness of puberty
- Desires status in their peer group
- Wants adult leadership roles
- Wants to belong to a group, but also wants to be recognized as a unique individual
- Reaches a high level of abstract thinking and problem-solving
- Develops a community consciousness and concern for others

For Adults – Help them learn about:

Serving as a role model for younger members
Understanding that people will remember how they behaved in a competitive situation longer than whether they won or lost.

(Adapted from “Sports Plus Positive Learning Using Sports, Developing Youth Sports Programs that Teach Positive Values”, Jeffrey Pratt Beedy, Ed.D., 1997)

Keep winning in perspective

Help your child understand:

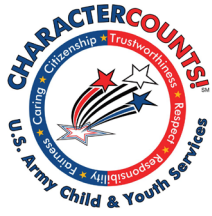
- Honor is more important than winning
- Strive to win but not at any cost
- Try to win it means you have given it your all
- Following the rules is essential
- Cheating and bad sportsmanship are not options.
- Principles of ethics and sportsmanship are the group rules.
- Follow the Six Pillars of Character

The Bottom Line

Unfortunately, adults have created much of the overly competitive, winning-is-everything, regardless of the cost environment. A number of sports studies show that the number one reason children play sports is to have **fun**. Winning, getting rewards, and pleasing others are much lower on their list.

This information was produced by the USDA Army Youth Development Project, a collaboration of the US Army Child and Youth Services and the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, US Department of Agriculture under Auburn University Special Project # USDA-EXCA-3-0930. Users are encouraged to use all or parts of this information, giving credit to the US Army Child and Youth Services and the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service in all printed materials.

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Character Conversation

Fairness

Fairness

“That’s not fair!!” Sound familiar? It’s commonly heard from people of all ages. We often think of situations that put us at a disadvantage as “unfair.” Although some decisions are clearly unfair, the fact is that there is usually more than one fair choice. Being fair means you:

- Play by the rules
- Take turns and share
- Keep an open-mind and listen to others
- Avoid taking advantage of others.

Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers

How can I teach my very young child about fairness? Remember, young children are very impressionable. They watch everything you do. If they see you following the rules, sharing with and listening to others, and not placing blame, they will likely follow your example. It is important that you model the behavior you want to see in your child.

One important way to build a foundation for teaching fairness is by listening. When your baby babbles, copy her sounds. Not only are you encouraging language development, but also encouraging character development. Infants who are listened to will learn they are important and valuable, and they will be likely to listen to others when they are older.

Fairness is not easy for toddlers to understand. There are a number of things you can do to help them.

1. Listen. Get down on their level so they know you are listening.
2. Share. Toddlers love to hand toys and other objects to adults, which is an early form of sharing.
3. Rules. Some of the first rules toddlers learn revolve around safety (don’t touch the stove). This helps set boundaries and helps them begin to understand fairness.

The number of rules may increase as your toddler

School-Age, Middle School and Teens

As your child gets older, issues of fairness will be a part of daily life. Help your child to understand that decisions should be made carefully, honestly and objectively. Make sure she understands that you want fairness from her just as she wants fairness from you and others.

Again, modeling fairness is one of the best ways to teach fairness to your child – no matter their age. Since applying the rules of fairness is not always easy or clear, it is important that your child see you making the effort to be open, honest and objective in making decisions.

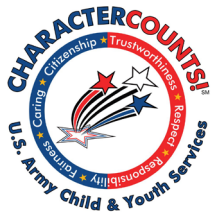
Walk a Mile Activity

Select an issue or topic you and your child are both interested in – it might be something you have heard on the news or read in the paper. For example, a talented high school basketball player moves into your school during mid-season and promptly replaces one of the original starting five. Discuss the issues from all points of view and consider closely the issues of fairness.

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becomes a preschooler. It is also a good idea to involve them in setting some of the rules.

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Character Conversation

Infants

Are you a parent of an infant, toddler, or preschooler? If so, start now teaching your child to be a person of character. At CYA, even the youngest children learn about character. Working together, we can teach, model, and reinforce character in all children. The following table provides guidelines on what you can expect developmentally from your child (remember, all children develop at different rates, so use this only as a guide), along with suggestions for introducing character.

What they do...	What that means for us...
Infants	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin the “bonding” process essential for human emotional development. • Begin to develop trust as they learn that needs will be met. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tune-in to child’s needs so you can make accurate guesses about what the child needs to respond. (Caring, Responsibility)
<i>Adapted from: Bright Futures Family Tip Sheet, Infancy; National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health</i>	

Trustworthiness (blue)

- ★ Tell the truth
- ★ Don't take things that don't belong to you
- ★ Follow the rules
- ★ Do what you say you will do

Infants

The first years of life are trust-building years. Infants don't have the capacity to actually exhibit trustworthy behaviors; however, they do have the capacity to learn from others.. Consistent interactions with your infant over time will help them understand trustworthiness and to act in a trustworthy manner. Every time you respond quickly and appropriately to your infant's cries, coos, and smiles, you are building trust.

Respect (gold)

- ★ Be kind to your friends and family
- ★ Don't hit or hurt others
- ★ Use good manners
- ★ Talk about your problems

Infants

The foundations of **respect** begin in infancy. When you talk to your infant in response to their cries and coos, you are showing them that their situation is important. When your baby cries, you might say, "I know that you are crying. You must be hungry. I am fixing you a bottle right now. It's almost ready." This probably will not stop the baby from crying, but it will reassure her. It is also the first step in teaching the baby to talk about her problems.

Responsibility (green)

- ★ Do what you're supposed to
- ★ Always do your best
- ★ Keep on trying
- ★ Help your friends and family

Infants

Once infants start on table food, give them the opportunity to feed themselves. They will learn the satisfaction of "keep on try" by picking up every piece of banana in their bowls. They can also learn to use a spoon at a pretty early age (9-12 months) if you provide a plastic baby spoon with a big easy grip.

Quick responses to the child's calls and cries will teach him that he is important and that it is important to help friends and family.

Fairness (orange)

- ★ Know and follow the rules
- ★ Listen to your friends and family
- ★ Share with your friends and family
- ★ Don't blame your family and friends

Infants

One important way to establish a foundation for teaching fairness to a child is by listening. When your baby is awake and alert, listen to her different sounds and respond to them. When the baby starts babbling, she will love to hear you copy her sounds and will probably babble some more. You will be encouraging language development.

Remember that listening is character development. Babies who are listened to will learn they are important and valuable, and they will be more likely to listen to others when they are older.

Caring (red)

- ★ Be kind to people
- ★ Say please and thank you

- ★ Show others you care
- ★ Help people

Infants

When infants cry, coos or smiles and you respond in the appropriate way you are teaching them about caring. Holding your baby and playing is another way to be kind and demonstrate that you care.

If you are frustrated by a situation - perhaps your baby is crying a lot because she is getting sick - then talk to another adult rather than taking your frustration out on the child. The crying is a signal that she needs your help, and it is your job to help her. This is part of being a caring individual.

Citizenship (purple)

- ★ Cooperate
- ★ Respect people in charge

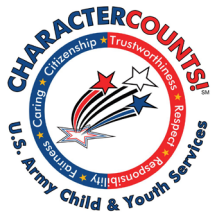
- ★ Obey rules
- ★ Don't litter

Infants

You can introduce infants to citizenship by making them a member of the community. Go for walks in your neighborhood to expose them to a world larger than your home. These early experiences in the community are important. A child who feels connected to the outside world through exposure to it will want to be an active member of that world.

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Character Conversation

Middle School

What they do...

- Experience rapid changes in physical appearance; growth spurts happen earlier for girls than for boys.
- Show interest in sports and active games.
- Show concern about social graces, grooming, and being liked by peers.
- Exhibit less dependency on parents to more dependency on the opinions of peers.
- Become interested in activities that involve boys and girls.
- Tend to reject solutions from adults in favor of their own.
- Begin to think more abstractly and hypothetically. Can think about one's own thinking and becoming skilled in the use of logic and cause-and-effect.
- Take more responsibility for planning and evaluation of work.
- Can be painfully self-conscious and critical. Vulnerable to bouts of low self-esteem.
- Changes in hormones and thinking contribute to mood swings.
- Desire independence, yet need their parents' help.

What that means for us...

Physical

- Talk about physical changes because new teens are often uncomfortable with and embarrassed by their changing bodies. (Respect, Caring)
- Encourage active, fun learning experiences.

Social

- Encourage learning experiences related to self-discovery, self-understanding, and getting along with others. Be patient with grooming behaviors that may seem excessive. (Trustworthiness, Respect, Fairness)
- Help family members understand that this is a sign of growing maturity, not rejection of family. (Responsibility, Respect)
- Provide opportunities for boys and girls to mix without feeling uncomfortable—seems to work best if youth plan activities themselves. (Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Caring)

Intellectual

- Involve young teens in setting rules and planning activities for your group or program. (Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness)
- Ask questions that encourage predicting and problem solving. Help youth to find their own solutions by providing supervision without interference. (Ethical Decision-making)
- Allow young teens to plan activities and expect follow-through. Help them to evaluate the outcome. (Trustworthiness, Responsibility, Citizenship)

Emotional

- Plan many varied opportunities to achieve and have their competence recognized by others. Concentrate on developing individual skills. (Trustworthiness, Responsibility)
- Remember that early adolescents are known for their drama and feelings that seem extreme to adults. Accept their feelings and be careful not to embarrass or criticize. (Caring)
- Encourage youth to work with adults and older teens. (Responsible, Fairness, Citizenship)

Source: Volunteers...the foundation of youth development, Internet course, University of Missouri 4-H Youth Development Programs

Trustworthiness

- ★ Be honest
- ★ Be tolerant of differences
- ★ Be considerate of the feelings of others
- ★ Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements

- ★ Don't deceive, cheat or steal
- ★ Use good manners, not bad language
- ★ Don't threaten, hit or hurt anyone

🕒 *What Kind of Person?*

Talk with your child about the kind of friends they want to have. Is it important that they are popular, an athlete, a musician, honest, and loyal? Help your child understand that selecting friends who are people of character is an important step in becoming a person of character. Ask her to consider these questions:

1. Imagine yourself in the future as a parent. What kind of person would you want your child to be?
2. What kind of person do you think we (parents) want you to be?
3. What kind of person do you think you are?

- A perfect person
- A person who makes some mistakes
- A person who tries not to make the same mistake twice
- A person who tells the truth, even when he or she makes a mistake
- A person who doesn't let his/her parents know about mistakes so they won't worry
- A person who lies to cover up a mistake

Do you think most people expect others to be perfect?

Do you think it is important to be able to trust the people with whom you interact?

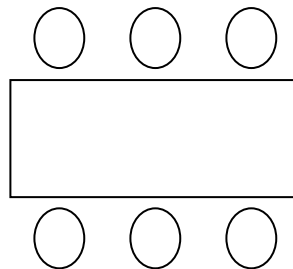
Respect

- ★ Treat others with respect
- ★ Use good manners, not bad language
- ★ Don't threaten, hit or hurt anyone

- ★ Be tolerant of differences
- ★ Be considerate of the feelings of others
- ★ Deal peacefully with anger, insult and disagreements

🕒 *Board of Directors*

A Board of Directors generally influences a company or organization's decisions. The table itself usually sits in the middle of a room and is very sturdy. The chairs around the table are reserved for only the most influential and respected of people. Encourage your teen to think about the individuals whom they respect or who have influenced the decisions in their life. As a parent, you might also think about who sits at your Board of Directors table. Some suggestions might include family members, friends, teachers, children, or someone you don't even know, but their actions have influenced you.



Responsibility

- ★ Do what you are supposed to do
- ★ Always do your best
- ★ Be self-disciplined
- ★ Be accountable for your choices

- ★ Persevere-keep on trying
- ★ Use self-control
- ★ Think before you act

🕒 *The Frog*

Share the following poem with your teen and talk about how it relates to responsibility.

Two frogs fell into a can of cream—or so I've heard it told.
The sides of the can were shiny and steep; the cream was deep and cold.
"Oh, what's the use?" said No. 1, "'tis fate—no help's around—
Goodbye, my friend! Good-bye, sad world!" And weeping still, he drowned.

But No. 2 of sterner stuff, dog-paddled in surprise.
 Then, while he wiped his creamy face and dried his creamy eyes.
 "I'll swim awhile, at least," he said—or so it has been said—
 "It wouldn't really help the world if one more frog was dead."
 An hour or two he kicked and swam—not once he stopped to mutter,
 But kicked and swam, and swam and kicked, then hopped out, via butter."

Fairness

- ★ Play by the rules
- ★ Be open-minded; listen to others
- ★ Don't blame others carelessly
- ★ Take turns and share
- ★ Don't take advantage of others

🌀 Fairness Journals

For a specific period of time – a day or two or up to a week – ask your child to keep a journal of things that happen during that time that she thinks are fair or unfair. It might be something like having to clean her room (unfair), sharing a shopping trip with a friend (fair), knowing someone cheated on a test (unfair), working on a group project for school where everyone worked really hard and did their part (fair). Talk about how she decided if things were fair or unfair. Help her understand that fairness is determined by many things. For example, there are written and unwritten rules, and it is important to know and understand these rules. There are also a number of ways to recognize fairness such as knowing that if you work or do something, you will get something in return; taking turns; understanding the rule of privilege (being allowed to use a calculator for a test, line up first, etc.)

Caring

- ★ Be kind
- ★ Express gratitude
- ★ Help people in need
- ★ Be compassionate and show you care
- ★ Forgive others

🌀 What Are Your Gifts:

"Give what you have. To someone else it may be better than you dare to think."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Visit with your child about what he thinks this quote means. Encourage him to think about the "gifts" he has within himself, such as the ability to listen, a talent for art, or a sense of humor. Challenge him to think of at least three gifts and how he might share these gifts with other.

Citizenship

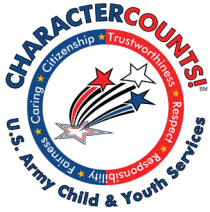
- ★ Do your share to make your school, center, and community better
- ★ Cooperate
- ★ Be a good neighbor
- ★ Respect authority
- ★ Stay informed; vote
- ★ Obey laws and rules
- ★ Protect the environment

🌀 Family Volunteering

Become part of the current national trend – volunteer as a family to help an organization or your community. Family volunteering allows you to spend quality time together and do something that makes a difference for someone else. Also, statistics show that children who volunteer at an early age are more likely to volunteer throughout their lifetime. Family volunteering suggestions might include: working at a food pantry, planting flowers or cleaning yards, recording books on tape for the local library, visiting a local nursing or retirement home and writing letters for residents.

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Character Conversation

Pre-schoolers

Are you a parent of a preschooler? If so, start now teaching your child to be a person of character. At CYS, even the youngest children learn about character. Working together, we can teach and reinforce character in all children and along the way we will remind ourselves that modeling character is a critical part of the journey. This Character Connection will provide you with general guidelines on what you can expect developmentally from your child (remember that all children develop at different rates, so use this only as a guideline), along with suggestions for introducing character. You will also find information on each of the Pillars of Character and some ways to encourage the pillar at home.

What they do...	What that means for us...
Social and Emotional	
Three-Year-Olds	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy dramatic play with other children. • Begin to learn to share. • Need clear and consistent rules and consequences. • Emotions are usually extreme and short-lived. • Need encouragement to express feelings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give the child simple tasks and praise what he is able to do. (Respect) • Praise and attention encourages good behavior. (All pillars) • Always reassure your child that you care for him. (Respect, Caring)
Four-Year-Olds	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want friends and enjoy being with other children but can be aggressive. • Tend to brag and be bossy. • Learn to take turns and to share. • Enjoy pretending to be important adults (mother, father, doctor, nurse, police officer, mail carrier, etc.). • Need to feel important and worthwhile. • Need opportunities to feel more freedom and independence. • Appreciate praise for their achievements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give child simple tasks and praise what he is able to do. (Respect) • Praise and attention encourages good behavior. (All pillars) • Always reassure your child that you care for him. (Respect, Caring) • Play games that help teach about taking turns. (Respect, Caring)

Trustworthiness (blue)

- ★ Tell the truth
- ★ Don't take things that don't belong to you
- ★ Follow the rules
- ★ Do what you say you will do

Preschool children need to learn about rules and need to follow rules. Preschoolers can learn about telling the truth, respecting property of others, and following through. When you pay attention to and model these behaviors every day, your child will develop into a trustworthy individual.

🔗 Visit <http://www.charactercounts.org/booklist1.htm> to find books that teach about the Six Pillars of Character. Books are identified by each pillar. Check out the trustworthiness books.

Respect (gold)

- ★ Be kind to your friends and family
- ★ Don't hit or hurt others
- ★ Use good manners
- ★ Talk about your problems

Aspects of respect, such as using good manners and not hitting others, can be very difficult for preschool children to practice. Positive reinforcement is a good way to encourage your child to use good manners. When your child says please or thank you at the appropriate time, say "I like the way you said please" or "thank you for saying please." These messages make it clear what behavior you like and that you are paying attention. Be sure you model saying "please" and "thank you." Practicing these manners during family meals is an ideal time.

Teaching young children not to hit takes time. They hit to solve problems because they are frustrated and don't have the language skills to stop the problem another way. Encourage your child to use words and to tell others what they are feeling. Helping your child develop problem-solving skills now will benefit her for the rest of her life.

Responsibility

- ★ Do what you are supposed to do
- ★ Do your best

- ★ Keep on trying
- ★ Help friends and family

There are many ways you can help your preschooler learn to be responsible. Preschool children enjoy having jobs at which they can succeed. Simple chores are important. Try these:

- setting the table
- clearing their plates after a meal
- serving themselves
- reporting the weather
- watering plants or feeding pets
- "reading" a book to you

- 🔄 Combine Respect and Responsibility and have your pre-schooler help plan a special dinner for your family complete with table decorations, place cards and of course an apron for your little cook.

Table Place Cards

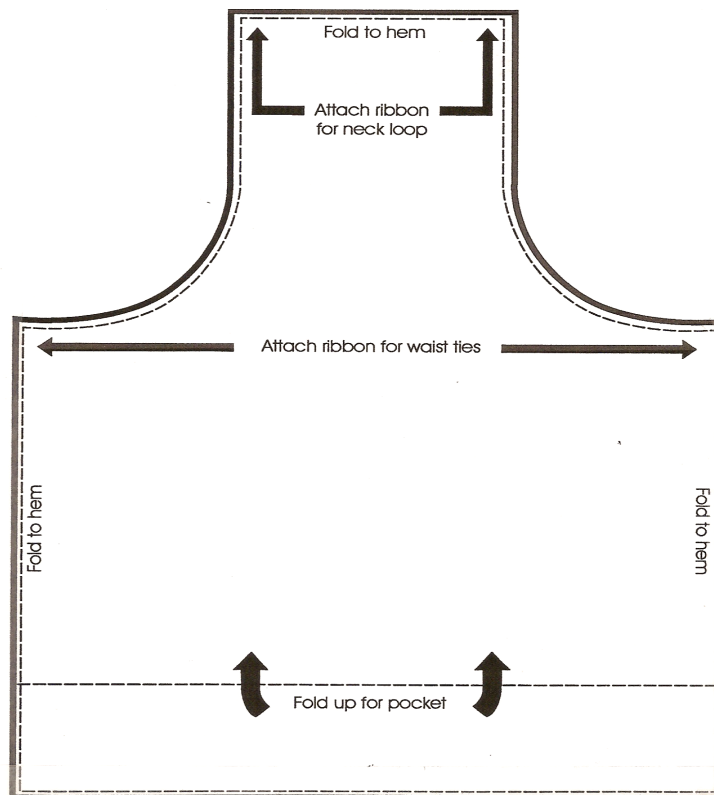
Materials: heavy weight 8½ x 11 paper (1 piece for each family member), markers, paint, crayons, glue, glitter, scissors.

Fold the paper in half using the 11 inch side of the paper. This will give you a 5½ x 11 piece of folded paper. Have your pre-schooler decorate each place card.

Child's Apron

Use this pattern to enlarge on a copy machine to any size. Trace your pattern onto fabric, heavy paper or a bath towel. Fold the bottom of the apron to create a pocket, stitch the pocket and hem the edges all the way around the apron. Attach some ribbon (any desired length) for the neck loop and waist ties.

(Activities adapted from: "Step into Your Child's World Activity Book, ParentLink, University of Missouri)



Fairness

- ★ Know and follow the rules
- ★ Listen to others

- ★ Share with others
- ★ Don't blame others

Preschool generally have rules like pick up your toys when you are through with them or be kind to your friends.

☉ *A Cookie for Everyone*

Bake or purchase a large cookie. Explain to your pre-schooler that the cookie needs to be cut so that every member of the family has a piece of cookie. Ask your child to help you determine how to cut the cookie in two different ways:

1. Everyone gets the same size piece
2. Larger pieces are given to members of the family who are older

Explain that both ways of cutting the cookie are fair as long as everyone understands why it was cut a specific way.

Caring

- ★ Be kind to people
- ★ Say please and thank you

- ★ Show others you care
- ★ Help people

There are many things you can do every day to encourage your preschooler to develop into a caring individual. You can...

- Spend individual time with each of your children each day.
- Get on your child's level to talk or listen.
- Tell your child that you like what he is doing.
- Softly touch your child on the shoulder.
- Listen to your child.
- Read to your child.

☉ *Blow Art Note Cards*

Writing and sending handwritten notes to friends and family is an important way to show you care. Help your child use blow art to decorate cards.

Materials: drinking straw for each person blowing, watercolor paints, sheets of white paper to be decorated.

1. Put a drop of paint on a piece of white paper.
2. With a straw, blow on the drop of paint.
3. When you are finished blowing the first spot, you can repeat step 2 as many times as you desire.
4. Let paint dry and use immediately or store as stationery.

(Activities adapted from: "Step Into Your Child's World Activity Book, ParentLink, University of Missouri)

Citizenship

- ★ Cooperate
- ★ Respect people in charge

- ★ Obey rules
- ★ Don't litter

You can introduce you pre-schooler to citizenship by making them a member of the community. Go for walks in your neighborhood to expose them to a world larger than your home. These early experiences in the community will be important later. A child who feels connected to the outside world through exposure to it will want to be an active member of the outside world.

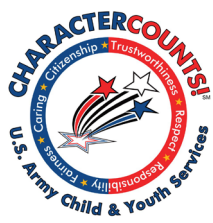
☉ *Birdfeeders*

Materials: Pine cones, string, yarn or pipe cleaners, peanut butter and bird seed

Help the preschoolers make bird feeders by smearing peanut butter onto pine cones that have had either string, yarn or a pipe cleaner connected to the it so it can be hung. Then roll them in bird seed. Explain how important it is for us to take care of our feathered friends.

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Character Conversation

Respect

Respect

Aretha Franklin's song "R-E-S-P-E-C-T!" made the word famous, but do we know what it really means? Ethical people are respectful of others and demonstrate it by recognizing and honoring everyone's right to be themselves, to make decisions, and to have privacy and dignity. Respect means:

- Following the Golden Rule
- Using good manners, not bad language
- Practicing tolerance
- Being considerate of the feelings of others
- Not threatening, hitting, or hurting anyone
- Dealing peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements

Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers

The foundation of respect begins in infancy. The best way for you to begin teaching your child respect is by modeling the behavior. How you show respect to other family members and friends will influence the ways your child is respectful of others. Even in infancy, your child will benefit from experiencing kind words and actions.

Keep in mind that toddlers may find that the easiest way to solve problems is with a hit or grab because they are not skilled at using language. Continue to let your toddler know what behavior you want to see.

As your toddler grows to be a preschooler, you will want to have her show respect by using good manners. Praise and encourage your child when she says please or thank you at the appropriate time.

School-Age, Middle School, and Teens

Respect is an essential foundation for good relationships. Being respectful means respecting others' differences. This should begin at an early age by learning about the differences of children at CYS and learning how they are unique and special. You should encourage the same respect as they grow older. Children and teens who know how they are unique and special will be better prepared to handle an encounter with someone who is not respectful of individual differences.

Praise her when she handles difficult people or circumstances respectfully. Likewise, immediately explain why other behaviors are disrespectful.

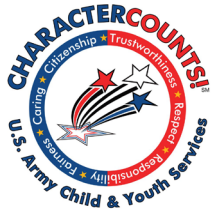
As always, modeling respectful behavior and treating your children with respect are important.

Respect in Movies Activity

Watch a current movie with your teen. Agree before the movie starts that everyone will watch the movie, particularly watching for both respectful and disrespectful behavior. When the movie is over, compare your results. Do you agree with your teen's assessments? If not, take time to discuss your differences, considering everyone's point of view.

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Character Conversation

Responsibility

Responsibility

“You can count on me!” We’ve all said it – and we meant it at the time. But have we always carried through? Responsibility means:

- Doing what you are supposed to do
- Persevering; keep on trying
- Doing your best
- Using self-control
- Being self-disciplined
- Thinking before you act and considering the consequences.

Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers

Modeling responsible behavior is one of the best things you can do. If your children see you being responsible, they will want to act responsibly too. Once infants start on table food, give them the opportunity to feed themselves. Yes, it will be messy, but they will learn the satisfaction of trying.

Toddlers enjoy completing small tasks you give them like picking up toys, find their shoes, choosing between two stories to read. Give your toddler the chance to choose what to wear. This also teaches him that his opinion counts. These activities help your toddler feel confident, and they also learn to be responsible.

Your preschooler wants to help. Give him jobs at which they can succeed; it will make him feel that he is contributing and he will also learn about being responsible.

Seed Planting Activity

Help your child select flower or vegetable seeds. Using a Styrofoam cup or small pot filled with soil, help him plant the seeds. Explain that it is his responsibility to remind you every day that the plant needs water and light. Have him help you water the plant and place it somewhere that it gets adequate light.

School-Age, Middle School and Teens

As you can see from the list of traits, responsibility

child understand that being responsible means choosing his words and actions carefully. It also means he is responsible for his actions and must take responsibility for the consequences of his choices.

Choosing either a positive or negative attitude is also a responsibility. Help your teen understand that a negative attitude can be harmful and people don’t like to be around others with a bad attitude. Viktor Frankl, survivor of a Nazi concentration camp during World War II, once said, “Everything can be taken from man except the last of the human freedoms, his ability to choose his attitude in any given set of circumstances...” Encourage your child to have a positive attitude. You may be viewed as the enemy but be persistent – solicit help from another adult that your teen admires. Here are some suggested messages to stimulate a change in attitude:

1. Attitudes are products of feelings and always acting on feelings is unhealthy and unwise. A person of character takes time to make good decisions.
2. While initial emotional responses (anger, sadness, etc.) occur spontaneously, with reflection and willpower it is possible to change one’s perspective.
3. How we react to an incident is determined by how we perceive facts and intentions. Our perceptions can often be based on erroneous assumptions produced by negative attitudes.
4. Accept what you cannot change.
5. Selfishness is self-destructive.
6. Bad things do happen, but the happiest and most successful people in life learn to put tragedies, failures, and hurt feelings behind them.

(Parenting To Build Character in Your Teen – Josephson, Peter and Dowd, 2001)

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is an important aspect of character. Help your

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Character Conversation School Age

“Schoolagers” is the category at CYS for your child between the ages of 6 and 10. It is a time of boundless energy and excitement. It is also an important time to stress character and making good decisions. The following table provides guidelines on what you can expect developmentally from your child (remember that all children develop at different rates, so use this only as a guideline) along with suggestions encouraging character at home.

What they do...	What that means for us...
Physical	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spirited with boundless energy Girls will be maturing faster than boys; some may be entering puberty Large and small muscle development, strength, balance, and coordination are increasing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide active learning experiences Avoid competitions between girls and boys (Respect, Fairness) Plan activities that allow youth to move about and use their bodies
Social	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enjoy group activities and cooperation. Feel loyal to group or club Prefer to be with members of the same sex Admire and imitate older boys and girls Need guidance from adults to stay on task and to perform at their best 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasize group learning experiences and form groups to plan activities together (Responsibility, Respect) Plan learning experiences to be done with members of the same sex. (Trustworthiness, Respect, Citizenship) Work closely with this age group and enlist older youth to help you with this task. (Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility)
Intellectual	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interests often change rapidly and do best when work is presented in small pieces. Vary greatly in academic abilities, interests, and reasoning skills. Easily motivated and eager to try new things. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow for many brief learning experiences and give simple, short directions. (Respect) Offer activities appropriate for a wide range of abilities so that all children have a chance to succeed. (Respect, Fairness, Caring) Provide a variety of different activities.
Emotional	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparisons with other youth are difficult and erode self-confidence. Prefer recognition and praise for doing good work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instead of comparing youth with each other, help youth identify their own successes by comparing present and past performances for the individual. (Trustworthiness, Respect)
Source: Volunteers...the foundation of youth development Internet course, University of Missouri 4-H Youth Development Programs	

Trustworthiness

- ★ Be honest
- ★ Be tolerant of differences
- ★ Be considerate of the feelings of others
- ★ Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements

- ★ Don't deceive, cheat or steal
- ★ Use good manners, not bad language
- ★ Don't threaten, hit or hurt anyone

Respect

- ★ Treat others with respect
- ★ Use good manners, not bad language
- ★ Don't threaten, hit or hurt anyone

- ★ Be tolerant of differences
- ★ Be considerate of others feelings
- ★ Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements

☛ Table Manners

It's never too early to help your child understand that using good table manners is an important way to show respect for others at the table and for the person who prepares the food. Make learning table manners fun by using road signs to help your child remember what to do:



Don't begin eating until the host or person at the head of the table begins eating or you are told to begin eating.



Always pass food to the right to prevent accidents.

Don't slurp drinks, soups or spaghetti.



Meal time is a special time to spend with the family. Slow down and enjoy eating with the family.



Don't grab for food; wait until it is passed.



Don't leave the table until you are excused or everyone is finished eating.



Passing food in all directions can cause accidents.

Responsibility

- ★ Do what you are supposed to do
- ★ Always do your best
- ★ Be self-disciplined
- ★ Think before you act – consider the consequences

- ★ Persevere-keep on trying
- ★ Use self-control
- ★ Be accountable for your choices

🕒 Responsibility Calendar

Supplies: Blank calendar page or calendar page of a specific month.

As a family, make a responsibility calendar which lists everyone's tasks. Each family member may be assigned a color so it is easier to see who has specific responsibilities. Talk about how important it is for everyone to do their tasks. You might want to talk about how difficult it was to remember to mark the responsibilities down on the calendar. (That is an important first step in being responsible.) Discuss whether it is always easy to complete all the jobs that you know you need to do; and whether or not responsibilities were completed on time and how delays affect the rest of the family. Also look at the amount and type of tasks each person has (this is also a good way to talk about fairness).

Here's some ideas to include on your calendar:

- Attend monthly organization meeting
- Take out the trash on Friday
- Finish project for school

Fairness

- ★ Play by the rules
- ★ Be open-minded; listen to others
- ★ Don't blame others carelessly
- ★ Take turns and share
- ★ Don't take advantage of others

🕒 Does Fair Mean Equal?

At this age it is common to consider equal and fair as the same thing. As a family discuss, the following questions:

1. Is it fair to have different bedtimes for different family members?
2. Is it fair for some family members to have more chores than others?
3. Can you think of a time when it would be fair for one family member to get more attention than someone else?

Help your child understand that fairness is based on more factors than just equality and that, in many cases that is a good thing. The important thing for your child is that he understands why decisions are being made as they relate to fairness.

Caring

- ★ Be kind
- ★ Express gratitude
- ★ Help people in need

- ★ Be compassionate and show you care
- ★ Forgive others

🌟 Caring Coupons

Supplies: Photocopied and cut out “caring coupons” (enough for each family member to assemble a book of 5-10 coupons); pencils or pens; stapler and staples

Help your schoolager make a book of “caring coupons.” Suggest that he think of caring acts that others would appreciate. Have him list one act on each of the coupons; for example, a coupon redeemable for one morning so their parents could sleep in; a coupon for yard work or one for extra house cleaning chores. Even a good hug and kiss would be great. When the coupons are completed, they can immediately be given to someone special or save some for a special occasion “thank you.” You might suggest that the entire family make caring coupons to share.

CARING COUPON

TO: _____

This coupon can be redeemed for:

FROM: _____

(Good Ideas to Help Young People Develop Good Character – 2002/2003 ed.)

Citizenship

- ★ Think before you act – consider the consequences
- ★ Stay informed; vote
- ★ Obey laws and rules
- ★ Protect the environment
- ★ Cooperate
- ★ Be a good neighbor
- ★ Respect authority
- ★ Do your share

🌟 Family Help Day

Supplies: trash bags, gloves, rakes, (supplies depend upon the work you decide to do)

As a family, select a project that will help clean up the community. It might be picking up trash as you go for a family walk, cleaning up the neighborhood park or helping an elderly neighbor or friend with yard work – raking leaves, planting flowers or mowing the lawn. Remember, this is a family project so make sure everyone, especially your school-age child, has a job to do.

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Character Conversation

Character Goes to Work

(Helping teens prepare for summer or part-time work)

After school and summer jobs provide teens with a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the work environment, earn money, learn skills and develop a positive work ethic. While the principles of character remain the same, it is helpful to talk with teens about how their character applies to the workplace. (All of the points may not apply to your child's work situation.)

Trustworthiness

- Work scheduled hours
- Provide honest feedback on progress and problems
- Work with little supervision
- Give proper notice of anticipated absences
- Keep confidences; never reveal proprietary information, and honor a person's right to privacy
- Be honest, reliable and ethical in all business dealings
- Refuse to steal, misuse or abuse company time, property or equipment
- Refuse to lie, cheat, deceive, manipulate, exploit or take advantage of others
- Build confidence between employer, employees, vendors and customers

Respect

- Treat supervisors, co-workers, vendors and customers with courtesy, honor and respect
- Build mutual respect and long-term relationships by listening to and communicating openly with others within the workplace and with customers
- Be friendly and cooperative
- Value and honor all people; follow the Golden Rule
- Have an open mind and act justly by listening to and acknowledging the opinions and differences of others
- Work as a team member
- Be open to and accept instruction or correction
- Accept instruction and modify behavior when necessary
- Respect the dignity, privacy and freedom of all
- Submit to the authority of a supervisor and to workplace rules
- Use good manners; be courteous and polite

Responsibility

- Take pride in work—show initiative, recognize what needs to be done, pay attention to detail, pursue excellence and be prepared
- Be loyal in attendance and always punctual
- Follow instructions
- Strive to improve abilities, learn new skills and take on broader responsibilities
- Assert personal views in a reasonable manner
- Be accountable for the services and products provided; fulfill commitments
- Persevere and get the job done
- Manage time and resources wisely
- Don't promise more than you can provide to internal or external customers
- Set realistic goals and strive diligently to achieve them

Fairness

- Understand and respect the customer-supplier relationship that exists between the employer, employees, vendors and customers
- Make decisions based on facts and strive for win-win situations – consider all stakeholders and the possible short-term and long-term consequences of a decision
- Promote and model a positive attitude
- Be free of bias, remain open-minded; be just, without favoritism or prejudice; listen to and respect the opinions and differences in others
- Be willing to negotiate and exercise give and take to achieve group success
- Use tact and courtesy
- Use only your share of available resources and equipment
- Share knowledge, ideas and skills with others
- Be flexible regarding diverse expectations, situations and leadership styles
- Establish policies in a manner that will not encourage employee dishonesty in reporting expenses, time and absences

Caring

- Understand and strive for harmonious, mutually beneficial, ethical business relationships between employer, employees, vendors and customers
- Demonstrate a positive attitude
- Show kindness and sensitivity to the feelings of others
- Express gratitude
- Take time to help others
- Do quality work and attend to details
- Be a team player
- Take time to talk to people face-to-face about issues
- Evaluate work performance accurately
- Demonstrate confidence without arrogance
- Show a personal concern for fellow employees, customers and vendors

Citizenship

- Show initiative by being a helpful, resourceful, cooperative and supportive team player
- Demonstrate a positive and enthusiastic work attitude
- Understand and contribute to the organization
- Follow company policies, regulations and procedures
- Ensure compliance with regulations
- Accurately report hours worked and expenses incurred
- Take care of equipment and resources
- Demonstrate interest in ethical, political, economical and environmental issues that affect the company, your career, your community and our nation
- Maintain an active role in school and community activities
- Pursue life-long learning
- Volunteer without expectation of recognition or reward when help is needed
- Be a role model and a mentor to new employees
- Consider the effect of workplace activities on the environment

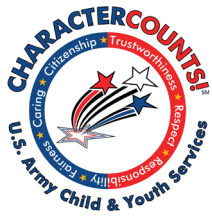
Printed with permission from Workplace Ethics, Lessons to Strengthen Character, LSU AgCenter, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803

For additional information on ethics in the workplace for teens visit

www.goodcharacter.com/NFS/SchoolToWork.html

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Character Conversation Toddlers

Are you a parent of an infant, toddler or pre-schooler? If so, start now teaching your child to be a person of character. At CYS, even the youngest children learn about character. Working together we can teach, model and reinforce character in all children. The following table provides guidelines on what you can expect developmentally from your child (remember that all children develop at different rates so use this only as a guideline) along with suggestions for introducing character.

What they do...	What that means for us...
SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL	
One-Year Olds	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Want to do things independently. Temper tantrums are common. Enjoy playing alone or beside (not with) others. Have difficulty sharing toys. Cannot remember rules. View self as the center of the world. Become more self-aware. Express new emotions like jealousy, affection, pride, and shame. Show increasing fears. Continuously ask for their parents. Have rapid, intense, short lived mood shifts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use character language. (All pillars) Use the character colors and refer to them. (All pillars) Offer choices whenever possible so they make decisions without defying you. (Respect, Decision-making) Remind children of the rules and relate them to being a good citizen and being responsible for following the rules. (Respect, Responsibility) Encourage positive behavior. (Respect) Encourage them to be kind to others and share—even when it is hard. (Respect, Caring) Create character games that encourage their new physical achievement. Routines are very important.
Two-Year Olds	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally self-centered; sharing is difficult. Enjoy playing near other children. Try to assert themselves by saying "no." Sometimes do the opposite of what is asked. Imitate the behavior of adults and others. Want to help with household tasks. Become frustrated easily. Refuse help. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage them to be kind to others. (Respect, Caring) Encourage them to talk to express their feelings rather than hit or grab. (Respect) Role model desired behaviors. (All pillars)
INTELLECTUAL	
One-Year Olds	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use "no" frequently. Begin to include a second person in pretend play. Have short attention span. Because of their developing imagination, have trouble knowing what is real and what is pretend. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage them to use simple words of courtesy—please and thank you. (Respect) Sing simple songs.
Two-Year-Olds	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow simple directions. Express their feelings and wishes. Can memorize short rhymes. Join in simple songs. Begin to think about doing something before doing it. Have trouble making choices, but they want to make choices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage children to express their feelings in appropriate ways using appropriate language. (Respect, Caring) Help children think about ways to make good choices. (Decision making) Role model desirable decision making.
Source: National Network for Child Care, www.nncc.org	

Trustworthiness (blue)

- ★ Tell the truth
- ★ Don't take things that don't belong to you

- ★ Follow the rules
- ★ Do what you say you will do

Toddlers

During the toddler years, you can begin to teach your children trustworthy characteristics. Toddlers need to learn simple rules (don't touch: that's hot; they are very interested in property rights (mine!); and they need to see you being consistent (reading a story every night before bed). Patience and persistence on your part will help your toddler develop characteristics of trustworthiness.

Respect (gold)

- ★ Be kind to others
- ★ Don't hit or hurt others

- ★ Use good manners
- ★ Talk about your problems

Toddlers

During the toddler years, you may find that you spend a lot of time talking about not hitting or hurting others. Sometimes toddlers find that the easiest way to solve a problem is with a hit or a grab because they are not as skilled at using language to solve problems. Continue to let the toddler know what behavior you want to see, and the toddlers will eventually exhibit this behavior.

Responsibility (green)

- ★ Do what you are supposed to do
- ★ Always do your best

- ★ Keep on trying
- ★ Help others

Toddlers

Toddlers like being responsible. They enjoy completing small tasks you set up for them, for instance, picking up toys, finding their shoes, choosing between two stories to read. Activities such as these help toddlers feel confident and capable of completing tasks.

Getting dressed is another way to help children feel capable. You can start by giving toddlers opportunities to choose clothes. If young children learn that their opinions are important, then when they become preschoolers they will want to help others. They will also learn the feeling of accomplishment from completing tasks.

Fairness (orange)

- ★ Know and follow the rules
- ★ Listen to others

- ★ Share with others
- ★ Don't blame others

Toddlers

Concepts of fairness are not easy for toddlers to understand. During this time, think of building a foundation of fairness. Many things you do for your child will help in their later understanding of fairness. Listening to the toddlers is a good example. When a child wants your attention, let her know you care by getting down on her level and listen to her. She will learn from this that she is important and that listening to others is important. Toddlers love to hand toys and objects to adults. This is an early form of sharing. Pay attention to these moments and to the toddler's sharing behavior and the toddler will learn the value of sharing (take note that this probably will take all year to develop). Remember that part of being fair is following the rules. The first rules toddlers usually learn revolve around safety issues, for example, don't touch hot pots on the stove or stay away from the street. The rules may not be easy to enforce, but toddlers need boundaries. Enforcing rules is a good way to do this.

Caring (red)

- ★ Be kind to others
- ★ Say please and thank you

- ★ Show others you care
- ★ Help people

Toddlers

Toddlers are very interested in their ever-expanding repertoire of movements. Toddlers are also sometimes frustrated because they want something and have trouble expressing themselves. These two characteristics may lead to two common activities: hitting and biting. Such events are perfect opportunities to teach toddlers about caring. Explain to your toddler in simple language that soft touches are better than bites or hits. Explain that we must be kind to our friends and family. You may find that you are repeating yourself often, but one day you will be

surprised to notice that the toddler has become a preschooler and really was listening and knows how to act in a kind manner toward others.

Citizenship (purple)

★ Cooperate

★ Respect people in charge

★ Obey rules

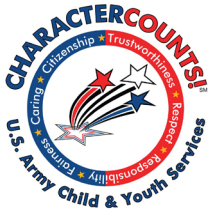
★ Don't litter

Toddlers

Begin teaching toddlers the connections between the members of the community and their daily life. You can do this by explaining a little bit about various things you see on outings in the neighborhood. When you see the police car drive by, explain that the police officer helps keep us safe. Toddlers may not understand all that you explain to them but the more you talk about the community, the more they will understand, and the more they will want to be members of the community.

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Character Conversation

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness

“I trust you.” Doesn’t it feel great when you know people trust you? Have you ever thought about how you get someone’s trust? You can’t just tell them you are trustworthy. Trust is earned one trustworthy deed at a time, but it can be lost very quickly. Trustworthiness means:

- Being reliable; do what you say you’ll do
- Having the courage to do the right thing
- Being loyal; stand by your friends
- Being honest
- Not deceiving, cheating or stealing

Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers

Teaching your child to be trustworthy doesn’t happen overnight. Instead, it is something you should model every day. How do you do that? Consistent interaction. Infants have the capacity to learn from others. The first years of life are trust-building years. Every time you respond quickly and appropriately to your infant’s cries, coos and smiles you are building trust. Children who learn to trust others will build trustworthy characteristics in themselves.

Toddlers need to learn simple rules (don’t touch, etc); they are very interested in property rights (mine!); and they need to see you being consistent. Patience and persistence will help your toddler develop trustworthiness.

Your preschooler can learn about telling the truth, respecting property of others and following through. When you pay attention to and model these behaviors every day, your child will develop into a trustworthy individual.

School-Age, Middle School and Teens

Trust is an especially big deal to a teenager. Teen relationships are vulnerable to real and perceived betrayals of trust. Help your teen understand that trust has two sides. One is to trust, to have faith and confidence in the intentions and actions of others – to believe that he will do the right thing. The other is to be trustworthy – to demonstrate by

Your child should understand that trustworthiness is a complicated idea but it is essential to meaningful relationships, long-lasting friendships, and successful associations in school and in the workplace. Talk to your child about the four major qualities of trustworthiness and discuss situations that you both face that challenge each of these qualities.

Integrity – being true to yourself and living up to your highest and best personal values

Honesty – telling the truth and doing what is right even if no one else is doing it

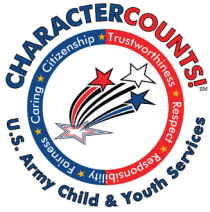
Promise-keeping – keeping your word and being dependable

Loyalty – standing by, sticking up for and protecting family, friends and country; being a good friend and looking out for those who care about you

Tower of Trust Activity

“Towers of trust are built stone by stone; yet no tower is so tall or so strong that it can stand when lies and deceptions undermine the stones at its base.” Talk about this quote with your child. Each of you think about individual actions that build trust and those actions that erode trust. For example, trust builders might be: meeting curfew, coming to watch your teen play ball; going to work on time. Trust eroders might be: saying homework is completed when it really isn’t, promising to help with a school project and then not helping or leaving the car windows open when you were asked to close them.

words and acts that people can trust him



Character Conversation Character Counts at CYS

Character Counts at CYS

Have you noticed the character banners and posters at the CYS Centers? We certainly hope you have because in CYS good character does counts! In fact, it is so important that this April during the Month of the Military Child, a character education initiative will begin focusing on the character development of its young people.

Ask your child(ren) to tell you about the Six Pillars of CharacterSM— trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. The Six Pillars are the framework for the CHARACTER COUNTS!SM Coalition, a nonpartisan and nonsectarian alliance of hundreds of schools and youth-servicing organizations across the country. They were chosen for CYS because the six pillars mirror the Army values.

Loyalty (trustworthiness)

Duty (responsibility)

Respect (respect)

Selfless Service (caring and citizenship)

Honor (trustworthiness and fairness)

Integrity (trustworthiness)

Personal Courage (trustworthiness)

Practice Character At Home

- Give each child time, attention and affection.
- Treat others with mutual respect.
- Model and teach good manners.
- Share your ethical beliefs
- Expect and demand good character.
- Utilize moral reasoning and good ethical decision-making.
- Evaluate whether the TV shows, videos and movies are teaching lessons you want your children to live by.
- Look for daily ways to encourage and reinforce behaviors demonstrating good character.
- Develop high expectations, predetermined rules and consistently applied consequences for your child's behavior.
- Read to your children and keep character related literature in your home.
- Bring up developmentally appropriate topics for discussion and ask, "What is the right thing to do?"
- Help your child enjoy non-material rewards.
- Discuss the meanings of holidays and the true spirit behind the special day.
- Look for daily teachable moments.
- Demonstrate kind acts and help people in need.

Improving Our Moral Landscape: A Plea to Parents to Promote Good Character, Mark J. Britzman, Ph.D., South Dakota State University, National CHARACTER COUNTS! faculty member.

The Six Pillars and What They Mean

Trustworthiness

- Be honest.
- Don't deceive, cheat or steal
- Be reliable – do what you say you'll do
- Have the courage to do the right thing.
- Build a good reputation.
- Be loyal – stand by your family and friends

Respect

- Treat others with respect
- Be tolerant of differences
- Use good manners, not bad language
- Be considerate of the feelings of others
- Don't threaten, hit or hurt anyone
- Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements.

Responsibility

- Do what you are supposed to do.
- Persevere; keep on trying!
- Always do your best.
- Use self-control; be self-disciplined
- Think before you act – consider the consequences
- Be accountable for your choices.

Fairness

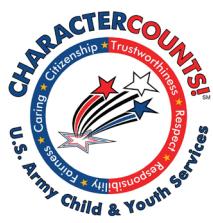
- Play by the rules.
- Take turns and share.
- Be open-minded; listen to others.
- Don't take advantage of others.
- Don't blame others carelessly

Caring

- Be kind,
- Be compassionate and show you care.
- Express gratitude.
- Forgive others.
- Help people in need.

Citizenship

- Do your share to make your school and community better.
- Cooperate.
- Stay informed; vote.
- Be a good neighbor.
- Obey laws and rules
- Respect authority.
- Protect the environment.



Character Conversation

Caring

Caring

Caring people love, help, give and are kind. They are caretakers of people, pets, plants, possessions and even the planet. Caring people show their concerns for others in active ways.

They are:

- Kind
- Compassionate and show they care
- Express gratitude
- Forgive others
- Help people in need

Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers

You are constantly teaching your child something. When your infant cries and you respond, you are teaching them about caring for others. When they coo or smile and you respond in a similar way, you are teaching about caring. As your infant grows and becomes a toddler, she becomes interested in so many things around them, yet they can also become frustrated because they want something and have trouble expressing themselves. Using simple language explains to your toddler that soft touches are better than hitting or biting. Explain that we are kind to our friends and family. You may find that you are repeating yourself often, but one day, you will be surprised to notice that the toddler has become a preschooler, is listening and knows how to act in a kind manner toward others. There are many ways to encourage your preschooler to be a caring person. Spend individual time with her each day; get down on her level to talk or listen; tell her that you like what she is doing; or read books about kindness and caring to her.

Thank You Note Activity

Even little ones can tell someone “thank you”. Help your child decorate a piece of paper with crayons or paints – you might want to add a footprint or hand print of your infant. Ask her what she would like to say to that special person and then read back what you have written. Include your child in mailing the note.

School-Age

Help your school-age child understand caring with the following activity.

How I Can Help Activity

Give him a piece of paper and pencil or crayon and help him draw a gingerbread type figure on the paper. Or have your child lie on a large piece of paper and trace around them.



- Have him tell you five things he can do to help someone else. List those on the fingers
- Have him tell you five places he can go to help someone else. List those on the feet.
- Have him draw a shirt pocket on the figure and think of five things he can give to someone else to show he cares. List those on the pocket.

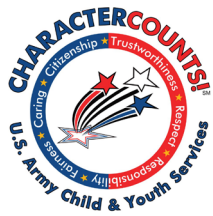
Middle-School and Teens

Saying thank you to others for the kindness they show is important. It may not always be necessary to send formal, written thank-you notes but it is a thoughtful gesture to thank someone who has spent money, sent a gift or taken time to do something special. Even though e-mail plays a big part in our lives, the skill of hand-written notes is important for young people to learn. Help your child using the following as a guideline.

A thank you note should include:

- Reason you are writing the thank you note
- The occasion for the recognition or gift
- Reference to the gift
- Why the gift is important to you

CHARACTER COUNTS! and the Six Pillars of Character are service marks of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a project of the Josephson Institute of Ethics.
www.charactercounts.org



Character Conversation

Sports and Choices

Character and Sports

The crack of the bat, the splash of the water and the swoosh of the soccer ball; all sounds of exciting sports events. You may also hear the yelling of the coach, the jeers of the crowd and the name calling by athletes. The news of a sporting event turned violent or athletes doing whatever it takes to win are common. CYS works hard to make sports fun. And, because “character does count” in CYS it is important for all of us to constantly encourage sportsmanship instead of gamesmanship.

Gamesmanship means doing whatever it takes to win including encouraging athletes to bend, evade or break the rules to gain a competitive advantage. You may have heard, “It’s only cheating if you get caught,” indicating there is no ethical reason for following the rules. Sadly, there are many examples from professional sports that show gamesmanship – the infamous corked bat or winning the Soccer World Cup with an illegal move.

The good news is there are also wonderful examples of athletes who encourage sportsmanship – making the way one plays the game central. For example the Illinois high school quarterback who asked to have his name stricken from the record book when he discovered both coaches had agreed to let him successfully pass the football for the state record. Because he did not make the passes on his own merit, he did not want the recognition. Or Luz Long, the German athlete who shared his secret with Jesse Owens on how not to foul on the long jump line. Owens went on to win the Gold Medal and Long the Silver in the 1936 Olympics. Sportsmanship means giving 100% to the game with the commitment to integrity, fair play, respectfulness and grace.

It is the responsibility of everyone in CYS – staff, parents and children – to encourage sportsmanship and good character.

A Little Summer Reading

Summer is a great time for your child to read just for fun. Help your child pick books that emphasize character. For a list of these books, check out: <http://www.charactercounts.org/booklist1.htm>

Adapted from CHARACTER COUNTS! – Army CYS training information. CHARACTER COUNTS! and the Six Pillars of Character are service marks of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a project of the Josephson Institute of Ethics. www.charactercounts.org

Choices

Everyday we are faced with many decisions. Most are relatively easy, but there are others that are more critical and take more thought. While all choices reflect who we are, those critical decisions can really test our character. Hard choices aren’t just reserved for adults. Our children also are faced with difficult decisions. It’s our job to help them think about how to make decisions that reflect good character. We must help them understand that making the right decision is not necessarily the popular decision. Making the right decision can cost us in terms of friendship, prestige, pleasure or money. Making good choices is hard work and takes courage.

One way to think about the choices is to ask these five questions:

1. Is there possible danger of physical harm to you or anyone else?
2. Could you or someone else suffer serious emotional pain?
3. Could the decision hurt your reputation?
4. Could the decision impede achieving any important goal?
5. Could you or someone else suffer significant monetary or property loss?

Example: A group of teens decides to remove a STOP sign from an intersection and then hide in the bushes to see what happens. It isn’t long before they find out. A car proceeds through the intersection, hits another car and everyone is killed. The teens were arrested, tried and imprisoned. OK, although this is a true story it is a pretty drastic example. It is also easy to see that there is a “yes” response to each of the 5 questions. Wouldn’t it have been much better had the teens thought about these questions before removing the STOP sign?

Help your child make good choices. Talk to them about decisions they make in their lives. Consider these examples:

- Not completing and turning in a homework assignment.
- Copying a paper directly from the Internet.
- Encouraging friends to not use playground equipment properly – jumping off equipment, etc.
- Encouraging your friends not to play with the new student because you decide you don’t like them.



Character Conversation Teens

What they do...

- Most have overcome the awkwardness of puberty, but some boys are still growing at a fast pace. Many are concerned with body image.
- Strong desire for status in their peer group.
- Interested in coeducational activities. Dating increases.
- Often want adult leadership roles.
- Want to belong to a group, but also want to be recognized as unique individuals.
- Reach high levels of abstract thinking and problem solving.
- Developing community consciousness and concern for the well-being of others.
- Demonstrate increased self-knowledge; personal philosophy begins to emerge.

What that means for us...

Physical

- Avoid comments that criticize or compare stature, size, or shape.

Social

- Establish a climate that is conducive to peer support.
- Allow teens to plan coeducational and group oriented projects or activities.
- Provide opportunities for teens to plan their own programs.
- Place emphasis on personal development whenever possible.

Intellectual

- Put youth into real life problem-solving situations. Allow them to fully discover ideas, make decisions and evaluate outcomes.
- Encourage civic projects that are a service to others.
- Allow time and plan activities for youth to explore and express their own philosophies.

Source: Volunteers...the foundation of youth development Internet course, University of Missouri 4-H Youth Development Programs

Trustworthiness

- ★ Be honest
- ★ Be tolerant of differences
- ★ Be considerate of the feelings of others
- ★ Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements

- ★ Don't deceive, cheat or steal
- ★ Use good manners, not bad language
- ★ Don't threaten, hit or hurt anyone

✪ Building Trust

As a family, spend some time talking about actions that build trust and those that tend to destroy trust. Start with these:

- Committing to help a friend and deciding at the last minute not to help.
- Helping with yard work without being asked.
- Promising to attend your teen's sports event but deciding at the last minute that you are too busy.
- Taking colored markers from your office so your child can complete a project.

Keep in mind building trust is important for both adults and youth.

Respect

- ★ Treat others with respect
- ★ Use good manners, not bad language
- ★ Don't threaten, hit or hurt anyone

- ★ Be tolerant of differences
- ★ Be considerate of the feelings of others
- ★ Deal peacefully with anger, insult and disagreements

🌟 *Table Etiquette*

As your teen nears adulthood, it is important for him to understand that many decisions are made during a meal. For example, your teen may be interviewed for a scholarship or job over dinner. This practice is done not only to learn about the teen but to also see how he behaves in a social situation. Encourage your teen to use and practice proper table etiquette. Having this skill mastered before an important dinner meeting allows your teen to keep his mind on answering questions and carrying on an interesting conversation.

Here are some general rules:

- Don't wear hats at the table
- Turn off cell phones and do not leave them on the table.
- Hold silverware like a pencil or chopsticks – not like a pitchfork.
- To determine what is yours at the table, remember solids (roll or salad plate) is on the left; wets (all beverages) are on the right
- When there are multiple forks or spoons, start from the outside and work your way in.
- A spoon or fork at the top of the table setting usually is for dessert.
- The napkin goes in the lap – not tucked into a shirt.
- Pass food to the right. (Wait staff will usually serve from the left and remove from the right.)
- Beverages are served from the right because they go on the right side of the place setting.
- Cut only one piece of meat at a time.
- Remember your manners – please, no thank you and thank you.

Responsibility

- ★ Do what you are supposed to do
- ★ Always do your best
- ★ Be self-disciplined
- ★ Be accountable for your choices

- ★ Persevere-keep on trying
- ★ Use self-control
- ★ Think before you act

🌟 *"There is no wrong time to do the right thing." H. Jackson Brown, American writer*

Remind your teen that responsibility, in part, means that we do what we say we will do. This means that, if she agrees to help with spring clean-up at the youth center on Saturday, she should, in fact, be there regardless of plans or other activities she would like to do instead. Making that commitment means that there are others counting on her to help.

Fairness

- ★ Play by the rules
- ★ Be open-minded; listen to others
- ★ Don't blame others carelessly

- ★ Take turns and share
- ★ Don't take advantage of others

🌟 *Determining what is Fair*

We all seem to know what is or isn't fair (it's fair if I benefit) yet understanding what truly makes a decision fair is difficult. Talk with your teen about fairness. Help her understand that there are two parts to fairness – the procedure or how one goes about reaching a decision and the actual decision or fair result where people are given what they are due. Help her understand that in determining the procedure it is important that there is fair notice (the rule or expectations regarding an issue are known – for example the rule and consequence of staying out past curfew); impartiality in analyzing the situation; gathering facts rather than jumping to conclusions; fair hearing or providing the opportunity for someone to explain their side of a story.

It's important to have this discussion when all is going well and there are no current issues of fairness being debated. It will make the discussion easier for everyone. And, don't forget, fairness also applies when a parent makes a decision affecting their children too.

Caring

- ★ Be kind
- ★ Express gratitude
- ★ Help people in need
- ★ Be compassionate and show you care
- ★ Forgive others

☛ *"If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one." Mother Teresa*

Discuss this quote from Mother Teresa with your teen. Help her understand that Mother Teresa is not talking literally about food but about any small thing that can be done for another person. Teens lead busy lives. Help her realize how important it is to take the time to make a difference. Remind her that little acts of kindness mean lots to the person who receives them.

Sharing a smile

Picking up mail or the paper for an elderly neighbor

Taking a few minutes to play with a younger child so their mom can have a break

Citizenship

- ★ Do your share to make your school, center and community better
- ★ Cooperate
- ★ Be a good neighbor
- ★ Respect authority
- ★ Stay informed; vote
- ★ Obey laws and rules
- ★ Protect the environment

☛ *But I can't Vote*

Many young people tend to think that voting is the only way to show citizenship. Encourage your teen to become active in the political process at an early age. They can do this by supporting an issue they believe strongly in like environmental legislation or they may want to volunteer for a political campaign. This work will help them to understand the political process and to look objectively at opposing points of view.

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