

COUNSELING CORNER

Monthly School Newsletter from Lutheran Counseling Services



Car Conversations

In the car, classroom or dinner table, try some of these ideas to build in yourself, your family or your class.

- ◆ Watch a movie or read a book as a family or class and pause to talk about a character's choices and if they showed responsibility. Talk about how you know if it was or was not an example of responsibility. If not, talk about what that character could do to show responsibility in their choices.
- ◆ With young children, discuss what ownership means. Talk about children's toys, pets, or other important possessions. Discuss how to show responsibility for these items. Talk about potential consequences of not being responsible. Talk about what power young children have to choose how to care for these items with good choices.



Responsibility

This quality is one that often comes up in a parent's or teacher's wish-list for their children or students. Responsible kids take ownership of their lives and acknowledge their power to choose what they think (including their attitudes and mindsets), and what they say and do. Responsible kids are also accountable for the consequences of their choices. ([Character Counts](#)) Sounds like a great list for a family or classroom!

Stephen Covey, author of The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, talks about this character trait in this way: as Response-Ability: or having the Ability to choose your Response. This can be a paradigm shift for many of us, and a great conversation starter with our children or students. If you had the ability to choose how to respond to a situation, how would you want to make that choice? Stephen Covey guides us to make these choices based on our values and the 7 habits (Ex: Be proactive, Begin with the end in mind, Put 1st things 1st, Think Win-win, etc.). What values would you want for your children or students to use as a guide in their choices?

In addition to helping kids and adults manage their work, behavior, and speech, responsibility can also relate to taking ownership of mistakes or poor choices as well. When this was researched by Drs. Dweck and Schulman, they found that people who viewed their personality as malleable, or changeable, were more likely to accept responsibility for a transgression or offense. They proposed that this view allowed them to accept responsibility with a perspective that they can grow from this experience and support a positive relationship with the target of their transgression. Conversely, they proposed that being influenced to think their personality was fixed led them to be less likely to take responsibility for mistakes or harming others as this



◆ With tweens and teens, talk about these developmental stages of taking on more responsibility while moving toward adulthood. Ask t(w)eens to share what that looks like from their perspective and talk about their increasing power to make choices in social, family, school, work, extracurricular activities, and even online presence. Ask about a cause important to your t(w)een and how (s)he shows responsibility in that cause and how the family can support it as well.

◆ Talk about what it would feel like for someone to take on a chore, job or responsibility adults or kids have. Discuss as a family or as a class how Jesus took responsibility for all sins. Discuss how that feels and what Jesus wants us to do with that gift.

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seemed more of a fixed trait in them that says something about who they are as a person.

Another important finding from their studies is that beliefs about the malleability of personality can be influenced! This means that for adults or children, beliefs about change can, well, change. And the researchers found that if a person was presented with information that they could change, they were more likely to take responsibility for their mistakes. Helping students or children realize that acknowledging the consequences of their choices allows them to change and grow, both in themselves and in their relationships, can help foster this trait.

As parents and teachers, showing responsibility may mean making choices to promote children’s ways of recognizing their ownership in their choices. And, as with many things in parenting, a great place to start is for parents and teachers to look at ways we show responsibility and what we model to our kids and students. How do we acknowledge the consequences of our choices, attitudes, actions, and words? Model accepting responsibility and identifying other choices that could have been made. (Ex: “I realize that I was impatient about leaving on time and I was snappy with you which started both our days out rough. I realize I could have spoken more calmly or given you a 5 minute warning. Let’s try that tomorrow.) Acknowledging our own responsibility models for kids to do the same, and they can start to see the choices they made that contributed to the outcome.

Covey, S. R. (1989). *The seven habits of highly effective people: Restoring the character ethic*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Markman, A. (2015). *Why Some People Own Mistakes and Others Don't*. Retrieved from https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_some_people_own_mistakes_and_others_dont

Schumann, K., & Dweck, C. S. (2014). Who accepts responsibility for their transgressions? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 40(12), 1598-1610.

Students, parents or school staff can sign up for counseling online.

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