

# MARKS OF CHARACTER ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES



TRUSTWORTHINESS • RESPECT • ACCOUNTABILITY • CITIZENSHIP • KINDNESS

## Activities for Families

Keeping promises is one part of being trustworthy. It also means that we are loyal to our family and friends. Being honest by telling the whole truth is another way to show we are trustworthy. We are also trustworthy when the things we do match the things we know are right, which is showing integrity. It takes a long time to build trust, but it doesn't take much time to destroy it.

### Trustworthiness is an important part of being a family

Being trustworthy means that you:

- Live life according to your beliefs
- Are an honest person
- Are loyal to family, friends and community
- Do what you say you will do
- Resist negative peer pressure – (smoking, drinking etc.)

### Let's talk about trustworthiness:

- Tell about a time you told a lie and the trouble that resulted from it
- Share an example of someone being loyal to a friend
- Share a news article or book that shows an example of trustworthiness. Read it together and talk about the importance of being trustworthy and what happens if you are not.
- Give an example of a promise kept
- Recognize family members for their honesty at family meetings.

### Trustworthiness family activities:

- **The Gossip Game**

Seat the group in a circle and whisper a statement to one person. Don't repeat it if they do not understand it the first time. That person repeats it to the next person and so on. The last person tells what they heard out loud. Did the statement end up as it began? Was it close? How does it relate to "real life"? Why can gossip be so harmful?

- **Dominos**

Use dominos set up in a row to illustrate what happens when one lie is told. Begin by asking a pretend problem, "Did you break the cookie jar?" Have the first person answer with a make-believe lie and each successive person adding to the lie to cover up the last one. As each lie is told, add a domino to the line. When the last lie is told, push the last domino over and watch them all collapse.

- **Stacking Blocks**

Stacking blocks, like Jenga, can also illustrate trustworthiness. Brainstorm behaviors that show trustworthiness and those that don't. Guide the discussion about the four components of trustworthiness- honesty, promise-keeping, loyalty and integrity. Try to identify more positive behaviors than negative ones. Write each on a separate piece of paper. To begin, stack the blocks as the game instructs. Taking turns, let each person draw a behavior and then remove a block. Those who draw positive behaviors should try to increase the stack by replacing their blocks at the top. Those who draw negative ones should only remove a block, not caring if it makes the stack tumble. Or try to build a tower. Those who draw positive behaviors should add to the tower. Those who draw negative ones should take a block away. How long does it take to build a tower with much height?

Discuss how long it takes to rebuild trust after it has been broken. Talk about the extra steps a person needs to take in order to rebuild trust when it has been broken with parents, teachers and friends. Be sure to include honesty, promise-keeping and loyalty.

- **Trust Walk**

Prepare an obstacle course inside or out with furniture or toys. Divide into pairs. One person is blindfolded, and the other is a guide. The guide can turn the blindfolded person a time or two and then take the person through the obstacle course. A trustworthy person will keep the blindfolded person safe. At the end of the course, the partners can trade places and repeat the activity. At the end of the walk, discuss questions like these:

- Was it easy to trust your partner? Why or why not?
- What did the guide do to make you feel trust/distrust?
- Did the guide let you down?
- Did you want to peek? Why?
- How is this activity like real life?
- What can you do to help others trust you?
- Send notes to family members that have shown they trust you.
- Remember your promises to family members and carry them out.
- Return items that you might have borrowed from other family members.

**Trustworthiness Community Service ideas:**

Volunteer to help at a recycling center, food pantry, community event or festival. Carry through on your commitments

**Trustworthiness books to read together:**

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| (Easy Read level)    | Crow Boy – <i>T. Yashima</i>                          |
|                      | Pelle's New Suit- <i>E. Beskow</i>                    |
|                      | Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel – <i>V. Burton</i> |
| (Upper grades level) | Is That You, Miss Blue – <i>M. Kerr</i>               |
|                      | Summer of My German Soldier – <i>B. Greene</i>        |

## **RESPECT**

### **Activities for Families:**

Respect is showing consideration or regard for someone or something. It takes many forms including self-respect, respect for others, respect for property and respect for earth and the life it supports. Teaching children respect is an on-going, critical process, because respect is the foundation on which many other character traits are built. It also means we treat others the way we want them to treat us.

### **Respect is an important part of being a family.**

Being respectful means that you:

- Are courteous and polite
- Accept others without prejudice
- Don't insult, abuse, hurt, put down, mistreat or harass others
- Don't make unwanted comments about anyone
- Don't take advantage of people
- Don't use people to get what you want

### **Let's talk about respect:**

- How does the tone or volume of our voices show respect or disrespect?
- Has the way we address elders changed? How can we show them respect?
- Why are words of courtesy important? How do they show respect?
- How does swearing show lack of respect for others?
- How can our language show we are respectful of other people's abilities and feelings?
- How can our language show we respect other people's heritage, ethnic group, religion or personal beliefs?
- How do you think our language could change depending on to whom we are speaking?

### **Respect family activities:**

- Respect or Disrespect?

Think of 10 things you have done today. List each in the appropriate box. Mark a star beside something if it showed respect. Mark an X if you think it showed disrespect. For example, getting a good night's rest shows respect for yourself and your body's needs. Let each family member fill in a chart and then discuss other ways to show respect. For yourself. For others. For property. For nature.

- Squirms

Cut apart the following “squirm” situations. Divide into groups of two or three and have each group draw two “squirms”. Ask each group to act out their scenario and what would happen next.

After each role play, ask the group whether the squirm was acted out respectfully or disrespectfully. Ask how they decided to carry out their squirm. Was it difficult or easy? How could the response to the squirm be more respectful? What disrespectful actions have you seen in real life? How could we change our actions to show more respect?

Remember, it’s easy to put people down. Use your head and build up people around you.

**SQUIRM SITUATIONS**

While waiting for the bus, a boy who is not very popular comes and sits beside you. You notice the other kids laughing when they see you both talking.	You spill juice on someone at a party.	Your mom’s friend comes over to visit and brings her daughter. You don’t enjoy spending time with this girl, but your mom asked you to play with her.
You are playing with a baseball and accidentally throw it through a neighbor’s window.	You are brushing your teeth when your sister says she’s late and needs to use the bathroom right away to put on makeup.	Your father says he’s expecting an important phone call. Five minutes later the phone rings. It’s a friend of yours from school.
You’re in front of a bank selling raffle tickets for your school club. A man with crutches is struggling to open the door.	Friends are playing basketball after school. A new student asks if he can join the game.	You interrupted your brother while he was speaking
Your older brother has asked you to stay out of his room. You really like his stamp collection and you want to look at it.	You sit down on a bench with friends. You have a bag of chocolate chip cookies that you enjoy very much.	Your sister has a great collection of school supplies in her desk drawer. You need some graph paper and you are sure she has some in her drawer.
Friends are planning to spray paint the school doors. What do you do?	A friend approaches you with uncomplimentary jokes about ethnic group.	A classmate makes a major mistake in class.

**Respect community service activities:**

- Help at the local food pantry or homeless shelter
- Plant flowers, trees or shrubs at your school, library or county fairgrounds.
- Help pick up trash after a local parade or event.
- Provide trash barrels for a community celebration
- Paint park playground equipment
- Host a foreign exchange student.

**Respect books to read together:**

(Easy read level)      *The Grouchy Ladybug – E. Carle*

*Arthur’s Eyes – M. Brown*

(Intermediate level)      *Nothing’s Fair in 5<sup>th</sup> Grade – B. DeClements*

(Upper level)      *Hand-Me-Down-Kid – F. Pascal*

*Cricket in Times Square – G. Selden*

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Activities for Families:**

“You can count on me!” How many of us have said that? But do we always mean it? Do we carry through on what we say we will do? People of character are accountable. They are responsible, show self-restraint and pursue excellence. They mean it when they say, “You can count on me!”

We are all part of families that depend on us to do our part. As we start take accountability for our actions, and ourselves we take an important step away from the “give me, do for me” stage of infancy towards becoming mature young people.

Being accountable is part of growing up and becoming a person of character. It means we do the right things even when no one is looking. We do the right thing just because it is right and not because we will get credit or praise for doing it. To have good character we have to do more than say we are accountable –we must take action. Accountable people take care of themselves as well as others and can always be counted on to do the right thing, even when the right thing is hard to do.

**Accountability is an important part of being a family**

Being accountable means that you:

- Do what you are supposed to do
- Keep on trying and always do your best

- Use self-control
- Think about what you say or do and consider the consequences
- Are reliable
- Do not blame others for your mistakes

**Let's talk about accountability:**

- Describe a time when you saw someone being accountable. What were they doing?
- Name one way you could show you are an accountable or responsible in your family
- Name ways to show accountability as a member of a sports team
- What are your responsibilities at work? At home?
- Talk about people in your community that are accountable and what would happen if they did not take responsibility or be accountable for their actions.
- Discuss what it takes to do your part and not blame others
- Discuss how to deal with frustration and anger responsibly. Consider pounding clay, talking about feelings, running or punching a pillow.

**Accountability family activities:**

- Make a listing of family members' names and daily household chores and agree on daily or weekly assignments. Even the youngest can be involved in putting away toys, picking up dirty clothes and setting the table. Use special stickers to let people know their accountability was noticed or point out behavior, i.e, "Thanks for feeding the cat. You really were a person of accountability."
- Divide any recipe into steps and have family members take responsibility for doing certain steps. Homemade pizza or salads are great for this activity. Keep safety in mind as tasks are distributed.
- Visit the library, borrow books and discuss that they need to be accountable to get them back on time so others can use them
- Talk about financial responsibility and how to be accountable for the budget. Develop a family budget or a monthly budget for each person. Consider saving money together for a special outing or treat
- Take turns being accountable for a weekly or monthly family night. The person in charge can plan the meal, make assignments and select a fun family activity
- Watch *The Wizard of Oz* and decide who was responsible and who was not

**Accountability community service activities:**

- Be accountable for clean-up in a neighborhood park
- Be accountable for organizing a play day for neighborhood children
- Pick up litter in your yard, neighborhood or community

- Be accountable for planting and caring for a section of garden, flowerbed or plant in your yard, school, park or neighborhood

### **Accountability books to read together**

(Easy read level)	Berenstain Bears Trouble at School – <i>S. Berenstain</i> Katy and The Big Snow – <i>V. Burton</i> The Very Busy Spider – <i>E. Carle</i> Horton Catches the Who – <i>Dr. Suess</i>
(Intermediate level)	All Alone – <i>C. Bishop</i> Family Under the Bridge – <i>N. Carlson</i> If Wishes Were Horses – <i>J. Doty</i> Henry and the Clubhouse – <i>B. Cleary</i>
(Upper read level)	Karen’s Sister – <i>E. McHugh</i> Welcome Home Jellybean – <i>M. Shyer</i> Downwind – <i>L. Moeri</i>

## **CITIZENSHIP**

### **Activities for families:**

Being a good citizen means going beyond our own interests and demonstrating a concern for the needs of others. Good citizens recognize their obligations to make their homes, schools, neighborhoods, communities and country the best they can be. Good citizens can learn they can make a difference when they follow rules, voice opinions, vote, work and play cooperatively with one another. They stay informed, listen, do their part for community endeavors, respect authority and volunteer.

### **Citizenship is an important part of participating in a community.**

Practicing citizenship means that you:

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

### **Let’s talk about citizenship:**

- Name someone who is/was a good citizen and explain why you think so
- Talk about how good citizens demonstrate dependability

### **Family citizenship activities:**

- Addressing community problems, list problems you might find in your neighborhood. Your list might include homelessness and hunger, drug abuse, gang violence, vandalism and graffiti, litter, theft, domestic violence and child abuse.

Discuss the following:

- What circumstances might lead someone to contribute to this problem?
- Do certain people contribute to this problem? If so, why?
- Who suffers most as a result of this problem?
- Does anyone suffer indirectly? If so, who?
- What will it take to solve the problem?
- How can concerned citizens contribute to the solution? Make a family plan to work on the problem.
- Identify ethnic groups in your community and find out about them. Where is their country of origin? Find out about their clothing, food, recreation, agriculture and technology. How do they celebrate special events?
- Get acquainted with a family from a different ethnic background. Invite them to your home; share an activity or meal with them.
- Attend an ethnic celebration in your community.

### **Citizenship community service activities:**

- Help at a paint-a-thon or a Habitat for Humanity construction project
- Think about a solution to a problem and present your idea to a city council or board of education meeting.
- Choose a project to do regularly as a family; help at a homeless shelter, deliver meals-on-wheels, take care of a vacant lot, or mow lawns and shovel snow for those who need help.

### **Citizenship books to read together:**

(Easy read level)	Swimmy – <i>L. Lionni</i>
	Old Henry – <i>J. Blos</i>
(Intermediate level)	Hawk, I'm Your Brother – <i>B. Baylor</i>
(Upper read level)	Present Takers – <i>A. Chambers</i>
	House of Sixty Fathers – <i>DeJong</i>
	My Side of the Mountain – <i>J. George</i>



## **KINDNESS**

### **Activities for families:**

Being kind means being considerate, kind, loving, helpful, compassionate and generous. It means living by the Golden Rule by treating others the way you want them to treat you. It also means that we think about how our decisions, works and actions affect others.

When we have a genuine concern for others, it means that we are growing up. Kind people have grown from being self-centered by being other-centered, from me-minded to we-minded, from you-give-me to I-give-you and from you-help-me to I-help-you.

In families we show that we a kind person in many ways. Practice being considerate, kind, loving, helpful, compassionate and generous with your family.

### **Kindness is an important part of being a family**

Being kind means that you:

- Consider other people's feelings and ideas
- Communicate care through words and actions
- Do acts of kindness and service to others
- Care for yourself and others by making healthy choices

### **Let's talk about kindness:**

- Describe the most caring person you know and tell why you think they are caring
- Tell something you did for someone else to show you are a kind person
- Discuss a news story about a kind and caring person

### **Kindness family activities:**

- Give everyone seven small candies and a piece of paper. On the paper write the answers to the following questions:
  - Something you like to do for others-an example of an act of kindness
  - I would like to share \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_
  - I wish you could help....
  - I would love to....
  - I am concerned about....
- A considerate person is someone who....Find a partner and take turns telling items from your list. After each answer, eat once candy.
- Have family secret pals and do special things for your "pal" for a week or a month.

- Care for family pets
- Send thank you notes to family members who've been caring to you

**Kindness community activities:**

- Visit residents in the care center; play checkers, read, sing or bring lap animals to pet
- Make cookies for someone who is homebound
- Help out a soup kitchen, food pantry or homeless shelter
- Line-up a roadside trash clean-up near you home
- Contribute to "Toys for Tots" at the holiday
- Put together a food basket for a needy family
- Write thank you notes to your teachers, club leaders or coaches
- Host a softball game, sledding party, pool party or other appropriate activity for families in your area.
- Bake something to share with the family next door
- Prepare a welcome basket for new people in your neighborhood
- Make a "quillow"(a pillow with a scrap material top) for a homeless shelter

**Kindness books to read together:**

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|----------------------|---|
| (Easy read level)    | <i>Corduroy –D. Freeman</i>                         |
|                      | <i>Mooch the Messy –M. Sharmat</i>                  |
| (Intermediate level) | <i>The Patchwork Quilt –V. Flourney</i>             |
|                      | <i>Best Christmas Pageant Ever –B. Robinson</i>     |
| (Upper read level)   | <i>Look Through My Window –J. Little</i>            |
|                      | <i>Secret Life of the Underwear Champ –B. Miles</i> |