





# A Family's Guide to Teaching Good Character

Presented by



The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center Home of CHARACTER COUNTSI®









# **Use T.E.A.M. to Build Good Character**



#### Teach the Six Pillars of Character

Help your child understand what each Pillar means and what it looks like in action.



#### **Encourage the Six Pillars of Character**

Give praise to encourage good behavior and use fair, consistent consequences to stop unwanted behavior.



#### Advocate for Good Character

Continually encourage children to live up to the Six Pillars of Character by explaining and showing why their character matters.



#### **Model Good Behavior**

Everything you say and do (or do not do) sends a message about your values. Be sure that these messages reinforce your lessons about doing the right thing, even when it is difficult. When you slip, be accountable; apologize sincerely and do better.

#### How to Use This Guide

This guide is organized by the Six Pillars of Character. You'll find:

- a family pact activity to help your family focus on what is most important in your lives and relationships,
- an introduction to each Pillar,
- ideas for how to be a role model for your children at home,
- conversation starters, and
- real-world scenarios to explore together, broken down by grades K-6 and grades 7-12.

# **Six Helpful Tips As You Get Started**

## You don't have to do it all.

We've provided a few conversation starters. Pick one or two that feel right. Use the questions as a guide and let the conversation flow naturally.

## Find the right moment.

Try bringing up a question during car rides, meals, or bedtime. Kids tend to open up when things feel relaxed and low-pressure.

# 3

5

6

## Speak their language.

Use words and examples that make sense for their age. Simple and specific works best for little ones, while older kids may like deeper questions.

## Show you're listening.

Let them know their thoughts matter. Say things like "That makes sense." or "Thanks for sharing." Be curious and ask questions to better understand their thoughts and feelings. It helps them feel heard and safe.

## Share a bit of yourself.

When it feels right, share your own stories or feelings. Being open helps kids feel more comfortable opening up, too.

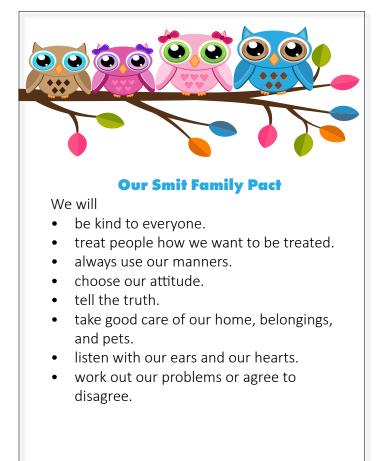
## Focus on connection.

These conversations aren't about fixing or correcting. Just be present, listen, and build trust over time.

# **Start with a Family Pact**

A family pact focuses on your family's values and is a reminder of the expectations in your home. Every family's values are different and so every family's pact will be different.

Here are two examples from real families.



## The Davidson Way

We don't whine, complain, or make excuses; instead we work hard, focus on the positive, have a can-do attitude, and hustle while we wait.

We commit to be honest and trustworthy, kind, and fair. We don't lie, cheat, steal, or intentionally hurt others.

We work to keep our minds, bodies, and souls healthy, strong, and pure. We discipline ourselves so that others don't have to.

We are fun-loving, healthy risk-takers. We live deliberately with an attitude of gratitude and joy. We laugh often, and love generously, wisely, and well.

#### Remember who you are wherever you go, whatever you do.

## How to Create Your Family Pact

Explain that a pact is an agreement between everyone in the family. This pact will be an agreement on what values are most important in your family.

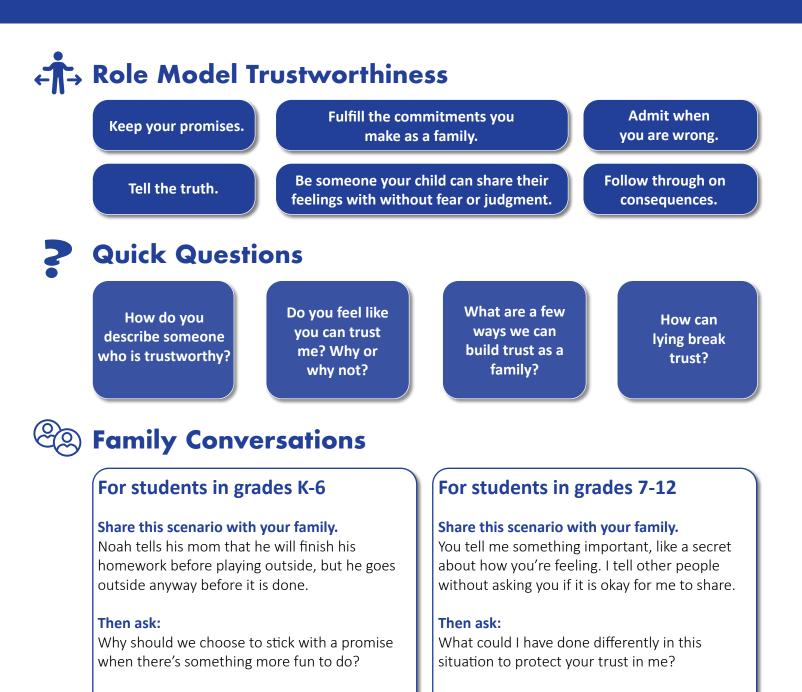
- 1. Ask each family member to contribute ideas to the pact. As a family, go through the ideas and decide which values are most important to your family.
- 2. Turn those values into statements. How will you act?
- 3. Post your family pact in a prominent place in your home. Or, you may want to make multiple copies and give them to each family member.
- 4. You could have each family member sign the pact.
- 5. Don't forget to talk about your pact regularly and make any updates to it as needed.

#### How to Use It

Your family can use your family pact as a reminder of expected behavior. You can also refer back to it as issues arise. For example, "Our pact reminds us to care for our pets; I would like you to please feed the dog." Or, "We agreed in our pact that we would always tell the truth. I would like you to please tell me the truth about what happened at the park."



When others trust us, they believe that we will keep our promises and do what we say we will do.

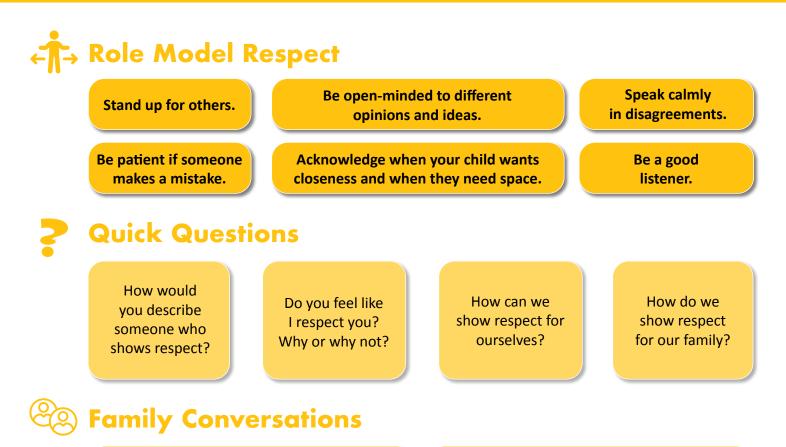


Can you think of a time when I did not keep my word? How did that make you feel?

How can we rebuild trust when it is broken?



Showing respect means recognizing everyone's right to be treated with dignity. We can show respect to others even if we disagree with them or do not admire them.



# For students in grades K-6

#### Share this scenario with your family.

Lucy left her toys and snacks all over the living room. Later in the day, someone else in her family needed to use that space.

#### Then ask:

How can we take care of the places we all use and the things we share at home?

What's one thing we can start doing to take better care of each other and our home?

# For students in grades 7-12

## Share this scenario with your family.

Imagine that I have a funny photo of you and posted it online without asking you first.

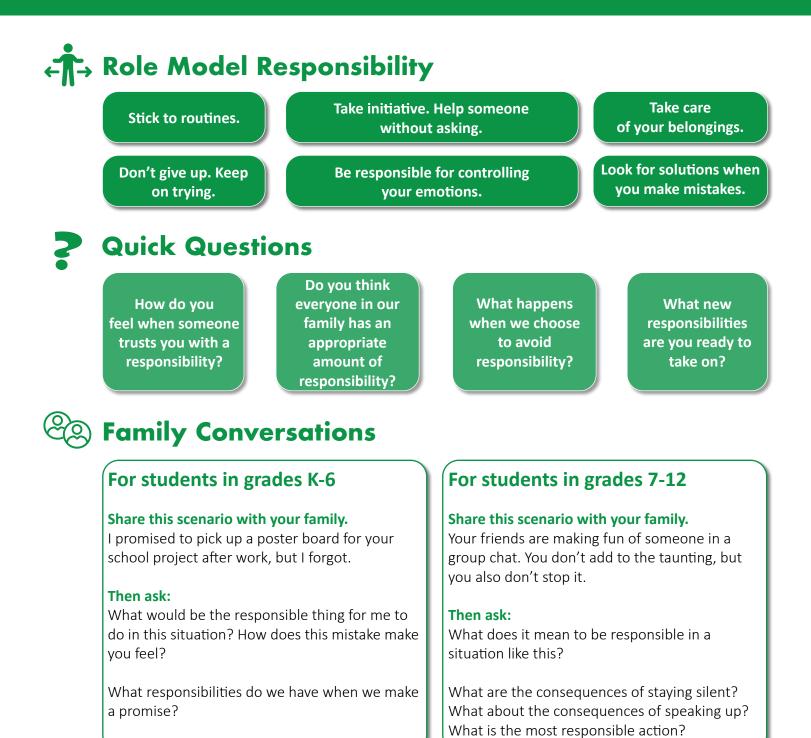
#### Then ask:

What should I have done differently in this situation to respect your privacy?

What things can we do for each other to maintain respect in our relationship?



Being responsible means getting things done on time, staying organized, and trying your best. Being responsible also includes handling your emotions in a healthy way and looking for ways to help others.



A Family's Guide to Teaching Good Character 6 ©2025 The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center at Drake University



Fairness means sharing, taking turns, and following the same rules as everyone else. When we are fair, we do not judge others and we try to understand others' feelings and needs.

# ← Role Model Fairness

Stand up for others.

Include children in decision-making.

Consider other people's perspectives so you can understand what they need.

Respectfully acknowledge when something is not fair.

Seek out and learn from different opinions.

Be consistent with rules and expectations.

# **Quick Questions**

Think about our rules at home. What rules feel fair, and what rules feel unfair? Why?

What does fairness look like, sound like, and feel like? What can you do to make your school more fair for everyone?

When is it difficult to listen to different opinions?

# **Family Conversations**

# For students in Grades K-6

#### Share this scenario with your family.

You and your friends are playing soccer at recess. Amir asks to join, but your group says no because your friends feel like he is not a good enough player.

#### Then ask:

Is this a fair reason to leave someone out? Would there be a fair reason to leave someone out in this example?

When can you can include others more often?

# For students in Grades 7-12

#### Share this scenario with your family.

Your friend talks to you about their problems a lot. When you want to talk about yours, they do not listen or make time for you.

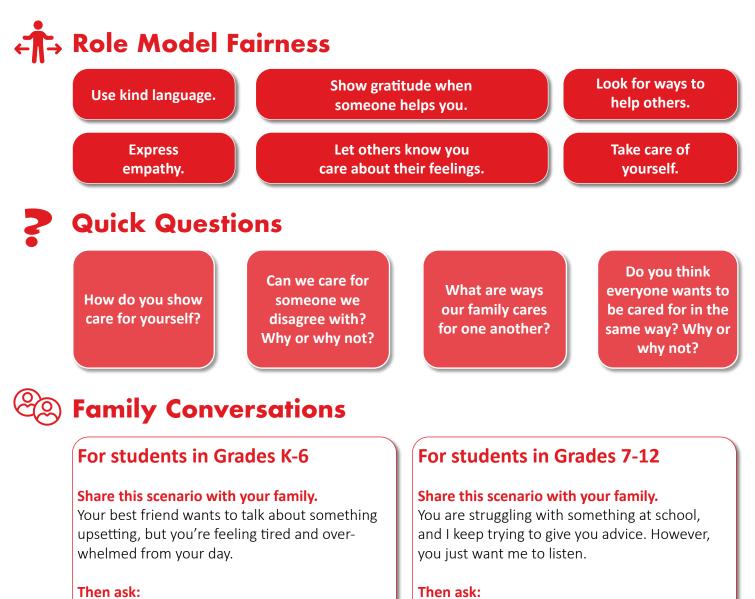
#### Then ask:

Does this feel fair? How can you share your feelings without damaging the relationship?

Are there times when this happens in our family? How can we make sure each family member gets the support they need?



We can show that we care through our words and actions. This includes offering praise and encouragement, standing up for what is right, and helping others.



What could you say to your friend that is both kind and honest?

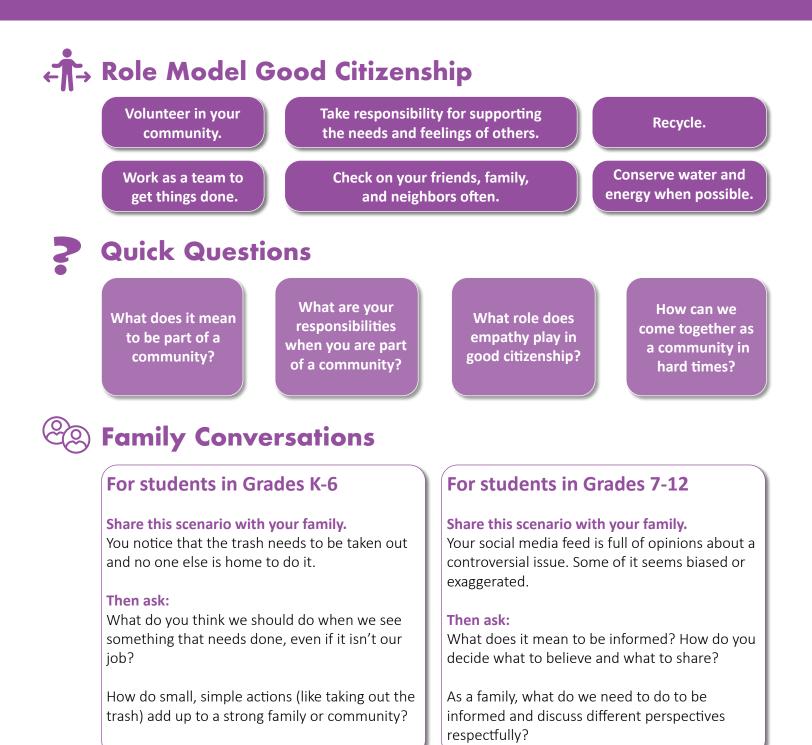
How could you support your friend while also taking care of yourself?

# How could you tell me (in a kind and respectful way) that I am not being helpful?

How could I be more caring in my responses when you have a problem?

# **Good Citizenship**

Being a good community member means being involved in our schools and neighborhoods to make life better for everyone.



This guide is produced by The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center at Drake University, the global home of CHARACTER COUNTS! Learn more at TheRayCenter.org or call us at 515-271-1910.

CHARACTER COUNTS! and the Six Pillars of Character are trademarks of the Josephson Institute of Ethics. CHARACTER COUNTS! was founded by Michael Josephson through the Joseph and Edna Josephson Institute of Ethics.