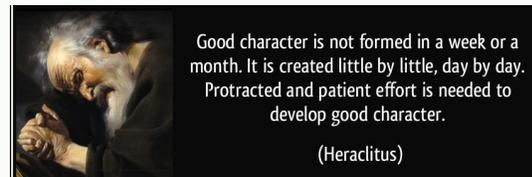


Strength of Character Leads to Success in Life

We spend a lot of time planning for our children's futures. We want them to be successful in school so they can get into great colleges and have successful careers. We often think about success in relation to accomplishments and goals. An often overlooked, yet vital part of helping our children become successful, is building and developing the character traits that will lead them to a productive and fulfilled life. Some researchers and educators believe that character strengths are "just as important to a child's success, and in many cases more important, than IQ and test scores." (Paul Tough in [Forbes](#)) Your child will someday be the parent of your grandchild. What traits would you want *THAT* person to have?

The dictionary defines character as a "complex of mental and ethical traits that are distinctive to an individual and are built into that individual's life." Character may include a fundamental sense of right and wrong that will ensure an individual is prepared to make wise choices, contribute to the world and become a stable adult. Character creates a strong sense of self-worth and confidence. Character traits determine a person's response in any given situation. Success or failure depends, more than anything else, on how we respond to events and circumstances. It has been said that it is our character that determines our success.



Good character is not formed in a week or a month. It is created little by little, day by day. Protracted and patient effort is needed to develop good character.

(Heraclitus)

Character traits are those that help us to be cooperative, productive members of our families and our community. Positive character traits help us to respect ourselves and others. Character makes each of us a better person "on the inside," which affects us as individuals, but it also impacts the world around us. How can we help our children to become a person of character? We can start by asking ourselves a few questions.

- ⇒ **Do I help my child understand how his/her behaviors affect others?** Each of us has the ability to impact the world around us. That impact can be positive or negative. Teaching our children that they have the ability to impact the world in positive ways can empower them to respond accordingly.
- ⇒ **Do I model the traits I want to see in my child?** Our children learn about how to live their lives by watching us. They develop caring, trust, respect, fairness and a sense of right vs. wrong by watching how we display those traits. We need to be living our lives in a way that we want our children to emulate.
- ⇒ **Do I allow my child to clarify his/her own values?** Our children learn about values by watching the values displayed by adults around them. Ultimately, our children need to identify what it is *they* believe in and why. It's important for us to allow them the freedom they need to clarify and discuss their developing beliefs and values.
- ⇒ **Do I help my child to consider right vs. wrong and look beyond immediate satisfaction or selfish needs?** The adolescent brain is wired to focus on the needs of "me." Often, adolescents are most concerned about what they want right now. We can help them begin to look at the decisions they make in relation to the greater good and individual long term goals.
- ⇒ **Am I clear how I respond to racist, ethnic or hateful comments or stereotypes whenever and wherever my child is exposed to them?** People of character treat one another with respect. Unfortunately, there are times when our children may witness or experience behavior from others that is disrespectful or hurtful. It is important to point out these instances and discuss them so that our children don't become desensitized and think these behaviors are acceptable.
- ⇒ **Do I identify positive character traits we observe in others?** Since our children learn from watching others, it can be useful to point out positive character traits when we see them displayed in others. This can be people they observe in their lives or even situations on TV shows or movies.

Conversations that Count

Families play a crucial role in character development. Children cultivate their core values by observing the behaviors and character of the people in their families.

Use this month's [PowerTalk Family Character Check-in](#) to begin the conversation about character with your family.

Tech Tips for Parents: Demonstrating character online

Demonstrating strength of character is just as important online as it is in real life. It can be easy to "become" someone else or to treat others in a different way online than we do in real life because of the anonymity and distance that the internet can provide. Parents can use the following questions to guide their adolescents to develop online character traits that reflect those they display in the real world.

Before sending a text or posting a message, ask these questions:

- * **T-H-I-N-K** —Is it **T**ruer? Is it **H**elpful? Is it **I**nspiring? Is it **N**ecessary? Is it **K**ind?
- * Would you say that to (or about) the person if they were standing in the room?
- * Would you be happy if someone said or posted those words about you?
- * Can the message make someone else look or feel bad?
- * Does the message share a secret or story that isn't yours to tell?
- * Is this a message that should be shared with many people? Anything that is shared electronically—even if it's only intended for one person—has the potential to be forwarded and seen by many.
- * Is this something that should be said on social media or a text? Some things are better communicated in person.
- * Will I feel the same way about this post/text in 1 hour? Sometimes we impulsively respond to a situation in an emotional moment and later wish we hadn't.

If the answer to any of these questions makes you uncomfortable, then the text, post or message may not be a respectful display of good character and it would be wise to pause before sending or posting.



Click [here](#) to learn more!

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A project of 360 Youth Services, Naperville Community Unit School District 203, Indian Prairie School District 204, Naperville Police Department, KidsMatter and District 203 & 204 parents. Funding provided in whole or in part by the Illinois Department of Human Services and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

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