

Learning Responsibility Moves Adolescents Toward Independence

Adolescence is a time for our children to begin to explore their own individuality. It's natural for them to seek independence and their own identity. An important part of developing independence is finding a healthy balance between freedom and responsibility. Giving adolescents age-appropriate responsibility builds independence and confidence and allows them to begin to take control of their lives. It's important for us to use this time to teach the skills that will guide our children to make positive, healthy choices as they become independent, responsible, and successful individuals.

Sometimes letting go of childhood is more difficult for parents than it is for the adolescent. As your child tries out their newly developing independence and responsibility, it's important for parents to begin to "let go". They still love you and need you, but they are becoming the person you are raising them to be— independent, productive young adults who will be ready to contribute their amazing talents to the world. Use this month's Power Tips as a guide to help you reinforce those skills of independence and responsibility.

Power Tips

Time Management— Adolescents can begin to manage school and home obligations on their own. Homework, chores, and other commitments should be completed without parental "nudging". When those expectations are met, then they can begin to discuss increased levels of freedom.

Accountability— As they develop more independence, adolescents need to be able to recognize and accept that choices have consequences. As parents, we need to allow them to face those consequences without interference and help them to acknowledge the connection between the choices they make and the consequences (positive or negative) that follow.

Work— It's important to invest time and effort into something we want. Working toward a goal will help to make that goal more valuable to the individual and enhance independence.

Self-help— We can (with good intentions) be too quick to rush to our children's aid. Sometimes, we need to step back and give them time to accomplish tasks on their own—even if it means they might make some mistakes along the way. Adolescents need to begin to learn to solve problems, communicate with teachers about school related problems and manage their time (including getting themselves up for school). It's not easy to step back and let our children struggle through a situation that might be so easy for us to handle *for* them. However, allowing them the space and time to do it on their own, will show them that you believe in their ability and the experience will give them a sense of accomplishment that will move them toward a more independent future.

The Power of Choice 6th-8th Grade Campaign uses marketing materials designed to encourage students in the 6-8th grade community to keep making healthy choices as they move toward their future goals.

This year, The Power of Choice will focus on building and reinforcing skills that help students to take responsibility for important areas of their lives. Topics include:

- ⇒ Goal setting
- ⇒ Decision making
- ⇒ Emotional awareness
- ⇒ Communicating their needs effectively
- ⇒ Words they use and how they can affect others
- ⇒ Accepting responsibility for their actions
- ⇒ Using technology and social media responsibly

Each month, students will learn about a different way they can begin to take responsibility in their lives. Through monthly [Parents Use Your Power newsletters](#) and [PowerTalk Activities for Families](#) (distributed through school email communication), parents and families have the opportunity to learn about and reinforce those skills at home. [ThePowerofChoice.info](#) website provides resources and information to support parents as they guide their children toward a healthy future.

Prevention Principle

Individuals who recognize that they have personal power are more likely to use that power in responsible ways that influence others.

Conversations that Count

Peer behavior, both positive and negative, has a powerful influence on adolescent decision making. When adolescents associate with positive social peers, they are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors and make responsible decisions. Use this month's [PowerTalk for Families](#) to discuss and reinforce Strategies for Dealing with Peer Pressure.

[ThePowerofChoice.info](#)



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