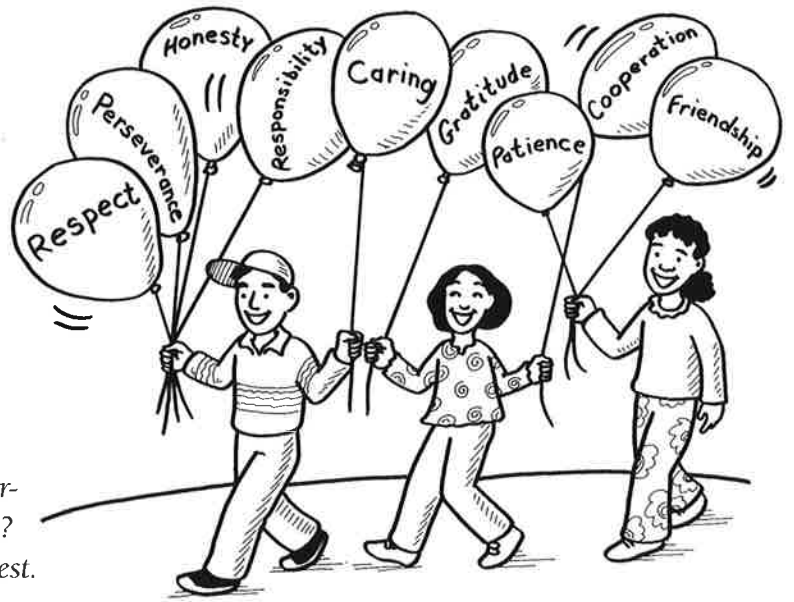


Clever Character Builders

How can you help your child learn honesty, perseverance, responsibility, and other positive character traits? Try these activities to encourage her to bring out her best.



Perseverance

Use a poster board to start a “We did it!” poster, and appoint your youngster as the family “goalkeeper.” She can ask each person to choose one goal. Then, let her list the goals on the poster and have family members add notes about their progress. If

her brother is studying for an exam, he might note that he got an A on his pre-test. If her sister is learning to skate, she could draw a big smiley face when she makes it around the rink without holding on. Hang the poster where everyone can see it. When your child struggles with something new, the poster can remind her that sticking to a goal pays off.

Respect

Ask your youngster what he thinks “respect” means. To help him figure it out, you might point out respectful things that you have seen a relative, teacher, or neighbor do. Suggest that your child choose someone who is especially respectful and make a “character trading card” about that person. He can draw and color a picture of him on the plain side of an index card. On the lined side, he can list things the person says or does that show respect for others (listens and doesn’t interrupt, shares his opinions without putting others down). *Idea:* Tell your child that if *he* is respectful, maybe someone will make a trading card about him!

Responsibility

This colorful paper chain can help your child keep up with her responsibilities. Have her cut construction paper into 2” x 6” strips—a different color for each responsibility. She might

cut blue strips for feeding the cat, red strips for cleaning her room, and green strips for doing her homework. Each time she does a chore, she takes a colored link that matches the task. When she has two, show her how to connect them to begin a chain: glue or tape the ends of the first strip together to form a loop, slip one end of the next strip through the loop, and then glue or tape its ends together to form a second loop. Hang the chain on her bedroom wall, and encourage her to make it grow.

Honesty

Let your youngster turn a paper plate into an honesty award for a person he reads about. He can write a slogan on it, such as “Honesty is the best policy!”

Then, he can use crayons or markers to decorate it any way he likes. Whenever he or a family member reads about someone who displays honesty (historical figure, citizen in the newspaper), he can write that person’s name on the back of the plate along with the honest deed. *Example:* “Mr. Spencer returned a lost diamond ring.”



Caring

Volunteering in the community is a great way to practice kindness. Ask your child to help make a list of different activities your family enjoys, and brainstorm ways to use them to help others. If your youngster likes to draw and cook, you might suggest making greeting cards for a senior center one day and working at a bake sale another day. If she loves animals or the outdoors, you might decide to donate towels and blankets to an animal shelter or pick up trash at a park. Once a week, choose an activity from the list and do it together. *Tip:* Find more ideas online at doinggoodtogether.org.



Gratitude

What is your child thankful for? He can start a gratitude journal to remind himself. To make the journal, have him cut two sheets of paper into fourths and staple the eight pieces together. Suggest that he decorate the front and label each of the remaining pages with a day of the week. Every night, he can write something he was grateful for that day. (“I’m thankful for my cousin Chad. We had so much fun making a fort today.”) *Idea:* Have him make a new journal each week.

Patience

Help your youngster wait for a special event such as a birthday, a special trip, or a holiday by creating this countdown jar. Give her two clear plastic containers, such as empty peanut butter or mayonnaise jars. Have her fill one jar with a marble or button for every day she has to wait. Before she goes to bed each night, she can remove one token from that jar and put it into the other jar. Being able to see the days pass can help her learn to be patient.

Friendship

If your child had a recipe for friendship, what ingredients would it contain? Take turns naming things that make a good friend (sense of humor, loyalty, helpfulness). Then, help him use the traits to write a recipe. *Example:* “Take one part humor, add a dash of loyalty, and mix with a cup of helpfulness. Bake in a large dish. Cool before sharing.”



Cooperation

This game can show your youngster how much fun it is to work together. Spread a piece of newspaper on the floor and find a way for your whole family to stand on it together. You might link arms or let your child stand on your feet. Too easy? Have her fold the paper in half, and try again. Keep making the paper smaller and smaller so you’ll have as many chances to practice teamwork as possible.

Characters with character

Children’s books often feature characters who struggle with doing the right thing. Use books like these to open the door to conversations with your youngster about your values.

Edwurd Fudwupper Fibbed Big
(Berkeley Breathed)

Edwurd is in the habit of telling outrageous fibs. One day, the consequences are bigger than he expected. This silly rhyming story shows how a lie can spiral out of control.

Say Something (Peggy Moss)

A young girl sees her classmates being bullied, but she doesn’t do anything about it. When she finds herself being made fun of, she suddenly realizes how bullying victims feel. Her new understanding inspires her to befriend a girl who is often bullied.

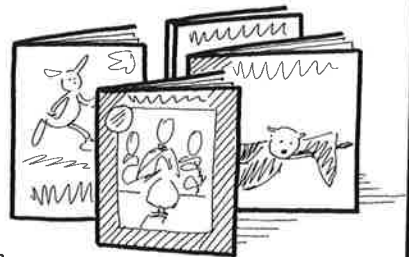
Stellaluna (Janell Cannon)

A baby bat falls into a bird’s nest.

Even though it’s hard to eat bugs and stay awake all day, she changes

her habits to fit in

with her adoptive family. When her mother finally finds her, she is happy to learn that it’s okay to eat fruit and sleep during the day. A story about accepting differences and being yourself.



Babushka’s Doll (Patricia Polacco)

Natasha often whines when her busy grandmother can’t help her right away. One day, her grandmother lets her take care of a magical doll who teaches Natasha about the importance of being patient.

Judy Moody Declares Independence
(Megan McDonald)

Judy’s new friend has a lot of freedom and does “grown-up” things—she even has her own phone. When Judy resolves to become more independent, she discovers that freedom comes with responsibility.

Frog and Toad Are Friends (Arnold Lobel)

Toad takes care of Frog when he is sick. Frog helps Toad find his lost button. The five stories in this book show how two different creatures can be best friends and treat each other with kindness.

Recipes for Success