



# PEN Notes: Fact Sheet #8

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## Responsibility

**Responsibility** is respect and compassion for others through honesty, courage, self-control, and self-respect. Parents can teach responsibility through daily and weekly routines, personal hygiene, and life skills.

### Six principles in teaching children responsibilities:

1. Each child is unique and reacts to stimuli in different ways. Some require different motivation such as punishment, while others respond to sensitivity.
2. Children do exactly what is really expected of them---no faking.
3. Setting an example is the best teacher. If you show respect, the child watching will do the same.
4. Consistency and follow through are a must, and probably the hardest part of teaching responsibility.
5. We must teach principles and then give initiative and responsibility to our children instead of manipulating children. We must be genuine ourselves!
6. Children learn responsibility through pride in themselves and in their maturity and individuality. A parent's praise can lead a child to pride.



### Children should be responsible to

**Parents** for 1) obedience, 2) things they have received, and 3) work because they are part of the family.

**Society** for their actions, talents, and attitudes.

**Self** for inner motivation and strength of self-discipline.

**Others** as in caring for small children, being dependable, and contributing to the world around them.

Instead of being told what to think, kids need lots of information about themselves and the world around them, and the opportunity to make decisions based on that information.

Kids need support, explanations, opportunities to be responsible, and invitations to think for themselves.

We must treat our children in a way we ourselves would want to be treated. Use responsible, effective alternatives to threatening, hitting, psychologically or verbally abusing, neglecting or abandoning our children.

### **If it works and leaves a child's and your own dignity intact, do it!**

To feel responsible to parents and authority figures, and later to self, is obedience and maturity, but to feel responsible to others is love—responsibility of the purest form and the highest dimension. ("Teaching Your Child Responsibility" by Linda and Richard Eyre)

## Responsible people have three qualities:

1. They are able to initiate action; responsible people make decisions that set things in motion.
2. They are able to make a genuine response to the situation they are in; responsible people's actions are an answer to what is happening around them.
3. They are able to account for their actions; responsible people are willing to explain their answers.

(Source: Smedes, L.B., Choices: Making Right Decisions In A Complex World, p.. 93)



## Barriers To Taking Responsibility:

1. I'll seem "Goody-Goody." (goody two shoes)
2. I'll seem "Holier Than Thou." (do-gooder)
3. My morals will be questioned.
4. My motives will be suspected. (publicity-seeker)
5. It's not my responsibility. (I didn't cause it.)
6. I don't know what to do. (cop out)
7. I may make things worse! (Doing nothing is worse.)
8. I may look stupid. (This is the hardest barrier.)
9. Nothing I do makes a difference.

(Source: Babbie, E., You Can Make A Difference, p. 168-183)



Charles Sykes, author of Dumbing Down Our Kids volunteered a list of rules students don't learn in school. They are as follows:

- **Rule 1:** Life is not fair; get used to it.
- **Rule 2:** The world won't care about your self-esteem. The world will expect you to accomplish something before you feel good about yourself.
- **Rule 3:** You will not make 40 thousand dollars a year right out of high school. You won't be a vice president with a car phone until you earn both.
- **Rule 4:** If you think your teacher is tough, wait until you get a boss. He doesn't have tenure.
- **Rule 5:** Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your grandparents had a different word for burger flipping; they called it opportunity.
- **Rule 6:** If you screw up, it's not your parents' fault, so don't whine about it, learn from it.
- **Rule 7:** Before you were born your parents weren't as boring as they are now. They got that way paying your bills, cleaning your room, and listening to you tell how idealistic you are. So before you save the rain forest from the blood-sucking parasites of your parents' generation, try delousing the closet in your own room.
- **Rule 8:** Your school may have done away with winners and losers but life has not. In some schools they have abolished failing grades; they'll give you as many times as you want to get the right answer. This, of course, bears not the slightest resemblance to anything in real life.
- **Rule 9:** Life is not divided into semesters. You don't get summers off, and very few employers are interested in helping you find yourself. Do that on your own time.
- **Rule 10:** Television is not real life. People actually have to leave the coffee shop and go to work.
- **Rule 11:** Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one.