

Empowering Adolescents to Take Responsibility



“Who me?” Most parents have gotten this reaction from a child at least one time. Being able to accept responsibility for our actions is an essential, and sometimes difficult, part of growing up. Parents have an important role to play in training and supporting their children to accept responsibility for their actions in order to become responsible, contributing members of the community.

We all make mistakes. We all have the potential to make poor choices. The most important reflection of our character is how we respond *after* we make those mistakes or poor choices. The first step in moving past mistakes or poor choices is to accept responsibility for our actions. The next, and most intimidating step, is facing the consequences. It is often the fear of facing consequences that stops someone from taking responsibility for what they’ve done or said. Taking ownership of their actions and behaviors empowers individuals to learn from the experience and use what they’ve learned to grow more resilient. Failing to take responsibility for something we’ve done wrong may delay the consequences, but eventually, those poor choices will catch up with us and the delayed consequences can be more difficult than if we had accepted responsibility right away. When our children fail to accept responsibility for their actions, they often deal with guilt, worry about getting caught, blaming others and most importantly, they fail to learn from their mistake putting them at risk of continuing to make poor choices. Failing to accept responsibility can also have a negative effect on how they see themselves. When we protect our children from taking responsibility for their actions, we prevent them from growing and becoming more independent. It can take away little pieces of their self-respect until they feel pretty small inside. Individuals who make a habit of avoiding responsibility, can also lose the respect of peers, teachers, and friends.

Learning to take responsibility for their actions empowers adolescents. It gives them control of the situation and allows them to make corrections and move beyond their mistakes. Taking responsibility builds character. The lessons they learn through this process will then give them tools they can use to make healthier more positive choices in the future.

Use the “5 A’s” in this month’s Power Tips to help you as you guide your child in this process and put the power back in their hands.

Parenting Power Tips: Steps to Accepting Responsibility

- ⇒ **Acknowledge** - take ownership of your own behavior and admit your behavior or failure-to-act when you should have
- ⇒ **Apologize** - offer a sincere apology to those you’ve wronged
- ⇒ **Amend**- make it right or do what is needed, if possible, to correct what you’ve done
- ⇒ **Accept** - take whatever consequences are connected to the poor choice you made
- ⇒ **Advance** - think about how you can learn from this situation and use the lesson to move on and make more positive choices in the future

Conversations that Count

When we’ve done something wrong, we can choose to accept responsibility or not. Taking responsibility builds character. If we take steps to accept responsibility for our actions, we can learn how to make better choices in the future. It can be difficult, but learning to accept responsibility is part of growing up.

As a family, use this month’s [PowerTalk](#) to review the steps that help us to [take responsibility for our actions](#) and then practice applying them in a variety of scenarios.



Prevention Principle

Taking responsibility for one’s actions allows an individual to take control of his/her life and develop healthy relationships.

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