



A monthly publication provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education.

Resources for Families

Teaching kids to be accountable

Did you hear about the American mom who responded to her children's rowdy and disrespectful behavior toward a stranger in a movie theater with an apology on Facebook?

In a social media post on the sheriff's office page, she asked the woman to contact her about the incident. It was shared more than 50,000 times, liked more than 256,000 times and received almost 11,000 comments in support. <http://on.fb.me/1G2yg4O>

In her post, she offered an apology from her daughters and a movie and snacks that her daughters were to pay for out of their allowances.

The overwhelming response in support of this mother's actions is a sign that courtesy isn't dead and old-fashioned parental involvement is recognized and appreciated.

In her post she said, "I can assure you that these girls are being strongly dealt with and appropriately punished. This rude, disrespectful and awful behavior is unacceptable and they owe you an apology."

While the choices the girls made weren't good, it didn't make them bad kids. Their mother helped them to learn about being accountable.

Why personal accountability is important

Accountability means taking responsibility for our actions. Publicly apologizing to the woman in the theater and handing over allowance money for new movie tickets was certainly not easy for those girls, but they will surely remember the lesson. And, more importantly, they had the opportunity to learn that their actions have consequences and they have the power to address their mistakes.

Taking personal responsibility allows students and, later in life, workers to take ownership of their role in a project, job or team. Personal responsibility is also important in families. When we understand that mistakes inevitably happen, we are not as apt to make excuses for them. We can fix them and move on.

Teaching accountability

"Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths, but the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands." —*Anne Frank*

Ensuring that children learn right from wrong and take responsibility for their actions is one of the most important lessons of childhood. But these lessons are not easy – for parents or children.

As parents, it can be equally difficult to teach and enforce accountability. While it is easier to assume that children will understand their mistakes and make better choices next time, it is more effective to provide a culture of expectations and accountability that set them up for success.

Accountability at home

Children should live in a culture of accountability, said counselor Megan Devine on the Empowering Parents website.

"When you have created a culture of accountability in your home, your child will know that no matter *who* started it or what happened first, everyone is responsible for their own behavior and everyone has to follow the rules...blaming someone else doesn't change the rules."



Resources for Families

Tips include:

- Using consequences
- Being clear about expectations and setting clear limits
- Talking to your child to help them figure out how to follow the rules
- Using cues or reminders about expectations
www.empoweringparents.com/How-to-Create-a-Culture-of-Accountability-in-Your-Home.php

Holding children accountable

Michael Manos, PhD, offers more guidance for parents who want to focus on their child's behavior and increase accountability. He suggests using the "4 WHATS" to identify and change behavior:

1. What did you do? Identify the behavior
2. What happened when you did that? This helps the child monitor and describe their behavior and observe the effect of their actions.
3. What could you have done instead?
4. What would have happened if you had done that? This helps the child think about how to change their behavior.

Manos believes this is an effective behavior management strategy, but he does not recommend using the 4 WHATS when either parent or child is upset. Be sure to have this conversation when you are both in a calm and neutral mood where there is little chance of placing blame.

<http://add.about.com/od/parentingadhdchildren/a/The-Four-Whats.htm>

Accountability at school

The Alberta government has, after consultation with the public, outlined its intention to help youth develop three key qualities and abilities. According to this framework, future Albertans should be:

- Engaged thinkers
- Ethical citizens
- With an entrepreneurial spirit
<http://education.alberta.ca/media/6581166/frame-work.pdf>

To achieve these ideals, children will need to develop a sense of accountability and responsibility for their own success at school.

An educational organization offers several strategies to help students with this:

- **Stress the value of participating in a positive and respectful group atmosphere.** Students who understand how they contribute to the group or team will be more motivated to do their part, without excuses.
- **Help students understand they are partners in their own success.** Students who can take responsibility for their mistakes, avoid excuses or blaming, and make a plan for improvement will learn skills for succeeding in school that will carry through after graduating.
- **Set targets and encourage students to rate their progress and effort toward meeting them.** Self-reflection through a rating system or checklist of learning targets helps students identify strengths and areas for improvement.
www.nea.org/tools/54212.htm