Champions of Character

Respect

Integrity

Sportsmanship

Responsibility

Part 2

Servant Leadership
Accepting responsibility

Everything we do comes with consequences. Study for a class? The consequence could be that you get a good grade and are able to participate in extra-curricular activities. Fail to study? The result could be missing out on activities – and dealing with disappointed parents.

No matter where you are – or who you are – you’re responsible for your actions.

It’s important to take ownership of what you do and what you say, whether you’re in school, at home or hanging out with friends. Your actions follow you wherever you go – and have a funny tendency to catch up with you, even when you think you’ve gotten away!

Making the right decisions

Every day is full of decisions. What kinds of decisions are you making? Will these decisions take you where you want to go? Or are they leading you in the wrong direction?

Follow your personal road map. Like making turns on the road, making decisions in life will dictate your destination. It’s hard to become a doctor when you flunk science class. And there aren’t many professional musicians who got there by deciding not to practice.

Make your decisions work for you. Put decision-making opportunities to good use. Determine what you want and what decisions will help you get there. Create your road map of decisions and then follow it.

What’s important to you?

What are your priorities? Do your daily decisions support these priorities or work against them? If it’s important to you to make the basketball team, shooting hoops is a better choice than playing video games.

Figuring out what’s important to you can be tricky – especially with peer pressure all around. But part of accepting responsibility for yourself and your actions is standing up for what you think is right.

Respect differences

What’s right for you may not be right for another person, and vice versa. Respecting those differences and acting on your own behalf is part of growing as a person – and growing up.

Accepting responsibility for yourself can be intimidating. But it’s part of the rush of being human. It’s like riding a bike for the first time. It’s scary, but the real fun begins once the training wheels are off and no one is steadying the seat for you.
Accepting responsibility means making effective decisions and prioritizing the things in your life that are important. What’s important to you? What do you spend most of your time on? Are the answers to these two questions the same?

Take a sheet of paper and draw a line down the middle.

On the left side of your paper, write down all of your everyday activities – the stuff you spend your time on. These items might include school, extra-curricular activities, time with friends or family, chores or homework. Write down everything that gets at least 10 minutes of your time on a daily basis.

Go over your list and write down how much time you dedicate to each of these activities every day.

We only have limited amounts of time every day. How we spend this precious commodity is an art and requires making some tough decisions. What is truly the most important thing in your life? What comes second? What about third? Making these choices is called prioritization.

Make a second list, this time on the right side of your paper. Write down all the things that are important to you. This list might include family, education, sports, church or any number of things.

Rank the things that are important to you. What’s the most important thing in your life? What about second? Rate all of the items in this list. These things are your priorities.

Compare your two lists. Draw lines matching the things that are important to you with the things you spend your time on. For example, if family is important to you and you eat dinner with your family every night, draw a line between the two. You’ll probably have priorities that have many lines going to different activities and activities that match up to more than one priority.

Take a look at your paper. Is it a mess of intersecting lines? Or are your lists of activities and priorities completely separate? If you’re making wise, responsible decisions about your time, the activities to which you dedicate the most time should match up to your top priorities.

Examining your life this way might cause you to make some changes. Part of accepting responsibility is spending the greatest amount of time on the things that are your top priorities. It can be a juggling act, but making the right choices will help you create the life you want.
Respect

Responsibility

4

Responsibility sounds like a trait that’s important for someone else. Someone who’s an adult and very important, who’s always going to meetings and making deals. Responsibility doesn’t sound like anything you need ... does it?

Funny, but responsibility is a key building block to pretty much any activity, no matter what your age.

“Responsibility isn’t complicated; it starts with the basics,” said Riann Woods, girls’ basketball coach at Oxford Middle School in Overland Park, Kan. “Be at practice on time. We have a lot of early morning practices, so I tell the girls they have to pay attention to the schedule. It’s your responsibility to get here. It’s your responsibility to not oversleep. Don’t blame it on mom or dad.”

Doing what needs to be done

Making sure you’re where you need to be when you need to be there sounds pretty simple, but it’s an example of how responsibility is often just doing what needs to be done. This basic concept is a difficult one for many people, students and adults alike. But those who master it enjoy the rewards.

“Responsibility also goes into being a good leader,” Woods said. “If you want to go out for a sport, you have to have responsibility. Your grades have to be where they need to be, so it requires responsibility in the classroom. When students are responsible, they do what they’re supposed to do in practice. They get there on time. They pay attention in drills and do what the coaches are asking them to do. That’s also a way to display leadership.”

Doing your job will make you stand out and make you a role model — whether you realize it or not. Just ask Coach Woods.

“I had some girls who blew off practices, who didn’t give drills their all,” she said. “And then during a game, they try to lead, and the other girls look at them like, ‘Why are you here?’ The leaders on my team were the responsible ones.

“The responsible members on my team start. They’re the ones that stand out. They’re the team captains, the ones who rally the other girls,” Woods said. “Our team went 8-0 this season, and I give that credit to the leaders. They weren’t late to practice, and they gave it their all because they took participating seriously.”

Lessons apply to life

These lessons apply not just to basketball, not just to sports, but to any activity – school, work, relationships. By being responsible and taking your duties seriously, you can achieve more and enjoy success. But this desire has to come from within.

“You have to want to do it — it starts with wanting to be responsible,” Woods said. “Mom, dad, teachers can all help along the way, but it has to start with you.”

Teams are built one leader at a time

“Few things help an individual more than to place responsibility upon him, and to let him know that you trust him.”

– Booker T. Washington, former slave and founder, Tuskegee Institute

Ten Ways to Show Responsibility in Your Community

1. Speak up. If you see something wrong, say so.
2. Volunteer. Whether it’s working in an organized group or by yourself, make a difference.
3. Take care of your property. Ownership means responsibility.
4. Teach others. Share your knowledge and skills.
5. Learn from other community members. Know that there is something to learn from everyone around you.
6. Take the initiative. Don’t wait for someone else to take charge. If you see something that needs to be done, do it.
7. Look out for your neighbors. Taking care of each other is key to being a responsible community member.
8. See the big picture. Understand your place in your community, and your community’s place in the world.
9. Be a role model. Whether you realize it or not, someone looks up to you.
10. Say thank you. Be grateful for your gifts and opportunities.
Responsible to whom?
To you!

You're responsible to many different people. Your family, your classmates, your teammates, your community are all depending on you in one way or another. That can be a lot of pressure. But don't forget the most important person to whom you're responsible — you!

**You're responsible for your own happiness.**

If you think another person can make you happy, then you've got it all wrong. Sure, friends, family and boyfriends or girlfriends can help us enjoy life. But each person is in charge of his or her own happiness.

Find what makes you happy and go after it. And remember: no one can make you unhappy without your permission. Why let someone get under your skin like that? Take charge and take care of yourself.

**You're responsible for your own health.**

It's all over the news: young people don't exercise enough. Young people eat poorly. Lots of kids blame it on school lunch, or too much homework or whatever the excuse of the week happens to be.

But the bottom line is that your body is your responsibility. Take care of it and it will take care of you. Abuse it and things will start falling apart. What type of future do you want? What do you need to do to prepare your body to get you there?

**You're responsible for your own education.**

In the U.S., we tend to take our education for granted. Everybody goes to school. It isn't a big deal. In fact, it's taken for granted to such an extent that we actually complain about school. Imagine: we complain about something that other people are literally dying to get!

It's your job to appreciate your educational opportunities and make the most of them. Think of education as the fuel that will take you where you want to go in life.

Accept responsibility for your life. Know that it is you who will get your where you want to go, no one else.

— Les Brown, swing band leader

“*You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today*”

— Abraham Lincoln, 16th president of the United States

### Game Plan

Five ways I can show more responsibility.

1. ____________________________________________  
2. ____________________________________________  
3. ____________________________________________  
4. ____________________________________________  
5. ____________________________________________
It's my job

From President of the United States to a cashier in a fast-food restaurant, most jobs carry with them responsibility to others. Look in the newspaper for two stories about persons whose jobs make a difference in other people’s lives. Then create a Venn diagram (two overlapping circles). Inside each circle list the responsibilities unique to each person or job. In the overlapping part, list the responsibilities that both examples share.

What if

What would happen if a surgeon, coach, waiter or automobile mechanic decided not to show up for work and didn’t tell anyone? Pick an occupation or leader and write a story about the worst-case scenario if he or she did not act responsibly. For example, what would happen if a movie star didn’t show up on the set for a crucial scene? Or imagine if a policeman skipped his shift one day? Whose lives would their actions affect?

Voices across America

Making character an everyday goal

“...I have the responsibility of using the gift of basketball the best that I can. Many athletes would give anything to be in the position many of us student-athletes are in, getting to play a sport we love everyday and gaining a valuable education. It is up to me not to take advantage of this gift and use it the way God would like me to.”

— Andi Mooneyham, basketball team member, Central Methodist University, Fayette, Mo.

Milestones in sports

Athletics are responsible for many of the most memorable – and groundbreaking – moments of the last 100 years.

1926 Gertrude Ederle becomes the first woman to swim the English Channel, almost two hours faster than any of the five men who had completed the 21-mile swim before her.

1936 Jesse Owens wins four gold Olympic medals. Competing in Germany, African-American Owens destroyed Adolph Hitler’s theory of Aryan supremacy.

1947 Jackie Robinson becomes the first African-American to play major league baseball, signing with the Brooklyn Dodgers.

1947 Wilma Rudolph wins three Olympic gold medals in track and field. She overcame polio to become known as the “fastest woman in the world.”
As a coach, you are responsible for your team. How you react, communicate, and speak, reflects on your team. Our team motto this year is “One Cause,” Cause standing for “Consistency, Accountability, Unity, Strength, and Effort.” We stress each of those qualities each day in practice and in a game.

— Doug Fessler, head coach, Central Methodist University Lady Eagles, Fayette, Mo.

My responsibilities are to always keep my integrity, work hard and to be a leader.

— Tony Fortune, mathematics major and team captain, Lyon College Cross Country team, Boca Raton, Fla.

It is my responsibility to give it everything that I’ve got on the soccer field as well as respecting myself, my team, my coach, and my opponent. I need to be honest and have integrity and show leadership to these people.

— Matt Mueller, senior, two-time NAIA Scholar-Athlete All-America and captain, Columbia College men’s soccer team, Columbia, Mo.

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President Nixon signs Title IX into law, leveling the playing field and providing never-before-seen opportunities for female athletes.

1997
Tiger Woods wins the Masters by 12 strokes. At 21, he became the youngest champ in the 61-year history of the tournament — an event that didn’t invite a black player until the year he was born.

1980
USA hockey team defeats the Soviet Union in the Winter Olympics. In what has been called the greatest upset of all time, a group of amateurs defeated the most polished team in the history of international hockey.

1999
U.S. captures the World Cup. After 120 minutes of intense, scoreless play against China, the U.S. women’s soccer team won 5-4 in penalty kicks in front of the largest crowd to attend a women’s sporting event.

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Responsibility is key to success in band

Woudn’t it be great if you could just pick up an instrument and make beautiful music? As anybody who has struggled through music lessons can tell you, it’s not as easy as it looks.

Being part of a musical group takes practice and responsibility. Just ask Jeremy Faust, band director at Northgate Middle School in the North Kansas City School District.

Work as a team
“Compared to other classes, band has some unique features that require students to work together as a team – by students immediately adjusting tempos and dynamics and making musical phrases through watching the music and the director,” Faust said. “Students in music learn teamwork skills, leadership skills and many other abilities that prepare them for college and successful futures.”

Doing your best in band is a responsibility not to be taken lightly. The director, other musicians and the audience are counting on you. It’s the responsibility of each musician to practice, to be where they are supposed to be on time and to be prepared.

Responsibility earns respect
“When band members act responsibly, they gain respect from their director, other students in the band and the audiences they perform for,” Faust said.

But the opposite is true as well. There are consequences for not acting responsibly.

“Preparations for performances include practicing at home and solid, focused rehearsals during the class periods,” Faust said. “If a student is irresponsible by not attending a performance or not knowing their music, they lose some trust with the director and their classmates,” Faust said.

Responsible communication is important in any situation with several people – including band. “Students must communicate with their parents and band director so there are no surprise conflicts,” Faust said.

Being prepared can make the difference between a successful performance and a big flop.

Responsible band members do what is expected of them. “Dependability is also needed,” Faust said. “When a student says he/she will do something, then the whole group expects him/her to follow through.”

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“In dreams begin responsibility.”
– William Butler Yeats, Irish poet and playwright