

Accepts Responsibility for Choices and Actions

What does “Accepts Responsibility for Choices and Actions” mean?

This skill is about a child showing ownership over what they say and do. When children learn to take responsibility for their choices and actions, they are able understand that no one else is to blame for what they say or do. They admit their mistakes and accept the results of their actions. This skill is important because it shows that children are learning that they are in charge of how they act.

TIPS for FAMILIES

How can I explain this skill to my child?

Let your child know that we all make mistakes. The most important thing to do when you make a mistake is to tell the truth and try to make it right. Pretend you are playing with your friend’s favorite toy and you break it. Your friend starts to cry, and your mom comes over to see what happened. You may be afraid to tell the truth about what happened because you might get in trouble. You may be afraid that your friend will be mad at you. You may want to tell your friend and your mom that it wasn’t your fault that the toy broke and find someone else to blame. But none of these things will make the situation better. The best thing you can do is admit your mistake, and say you’re sorry. Admitting your mistakes and apologizing can be hard, but it’s an important part of growing up!

What are some things I can do to help my child learn this skill?

TIP1

Model responsibility. Show your child that it’s OK to make mistakes, as long as you take responsibility for them. During your daily routine, talk through your mistakes out loud. Take responsibility for them and talk through solutions so your child can hear you. For example, if you forgot to buy your child’s favorite lunch snack for the week, you can say, “I forgot to buy your favorite snack at the store today. I’m sorry. I meant to get it for you, but I forgot. I will write myself a note so I don’t forget it next week, OK?” Showing your child that you make mistakes too helps them feel comfortable admitting they were wrong. Modeling how you take responsibility and try to fix the problem gives them steps to copy when they are trying to fix a mistake.

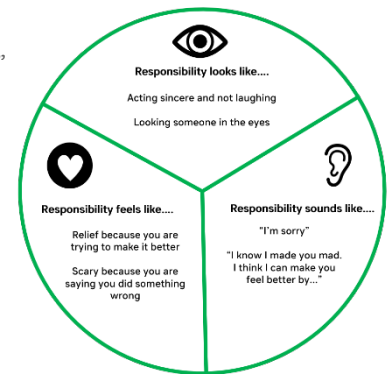
TIP2

Be consistent. It can be hard for children to accept responsibility for what they say or do, especially when others hurt them first. For example, if your child's sister hits them, they may feel angry or upset and want to hit back. What their sister did was wrong, but that doesn't give them the right to hit back. If the rules in your family are that hitting is wrong and leads to a punishment, be consistent when enforcing the rules. Your child's sister should receive the consequence for hitting, and your child should also receive a consequence. For example, the consequence for hitting in your house could be a time out for ten minutes. The child that hit first would receive the full time out and the child that hit back would receive a shorter time out.

It is important for your child to learn that they aren't in charge of what other people do or say to them. They are in charge of how they react to what others say and do. Teach them that they are still responsible for themselves even when another child has made them angry or upset. Try to remember to remain calm and in control when you enforce the rules. It is important that your child doesn't feel scared or ashamed about admitting their mistakes or accepting the consequences for what they've done.

TIP3

Responsibility chart. Show your child what it means to be responsible for the things they say and do. Create a "Y chart" that shows them exactly what responsibility looks, feels, and sounds like. Brainstorm examples of what responsibility looks, feels, and sounds like with your child. Write down their answers on the chart and hang it somewhere they can see it. When your child is not showing responsible behavior, remind them to look at the chart and think about how they can be responsible for what they say and do. To the right is an example of a responsibility chart:



TIP4

Help your child reflect. When your child breaks a rule and gets punished, it is important that they understand what they did wrong, what the consequences are, and what they can do to fix the problem. When your child makes a mistake, help them think through these things by asking them questions like the ones below. Remember to try and stay calm and neutral when asking these questions so your child doesn't feel ashamed or scared about their mistake.

- Can you tell me what you did that wasn't the best choice?
- How do you feel about the choice you made?
- How do you think your choice made the person you hurt feel?
- What are some other choices you can make next time?
- What do you want to say to the person you hurt?
- Is there anything you can do to make it better?

TIP5

Turn responsibility into a game. To keep responsibility from feeling like a chore, try turning it into a game. At the start of each week, give your child five points. Every time your child blames someone else for something they have done or tries to make an excuse for a mistake they make, they lose a point. The goal of the game is to get through the week without losing all your points. Your child can also earn a lost point back each time you see

them take responsibility for their actions and apologize for their mistakes. If your child makes it to the end of the week and still has at least one point left, give them a reward, like a trip to the park or an extra story at bedtime. As your child gets better at learning to accept responsibility for things, you can lower the number of starting points each week to make the game more challenging.

How can I encourage my child when I see them trying to learn this skill?

Acknowledge your child for their efforts! For example, tell your child, “I think it’s great that you cleaned up the mess you made, Tia!” or “Darrius, you must be proud of yourself for taking responsibility for what you did and apologizing.”

To learn more about the tips and where they came from, please visit our references page: ckphilly.org/citations