

INTRODUCTION

*Discipline is like a bridled horse with
the reins held lightly.*

Longfellow

The major issue facing adults in the training of children is how tight or loose the reins need to be in order to satisfy control needs while at the same time focusing on the major aspect of discipline, "Responsibility." Often, control of youth becomes not only the end, but also the entire focus of discipline. If the focus of discipline is simply on fulfilling adult control needs, we may never train our children to become responsible. Kids have similar control needs and will behave if their met and misbehave if they are not met! The final test is what kids do when they are outside an adult's influence, not what they do when adults are around. Parents who center their discipline exclusively on "When we are around" often are shattered when they leave. Too often adults merely become a traffic light for children instead of providing training, insight and encouragement that enables the children to accept responsibility for their actions.

Since behavior is maintained by its consequences, we must help children realize that responsibility pays off. Children who are responsible at home are taught that responsibility pays off with more privileges, i.e., staying out later, going further away from home, or receiving a drivers' license. Children who are responsible at school can be given special privileges. The question is, "Do kids get more attention for being responsible or for being irresponsible?" Healthy relationships and positive discipline include clear, concise rules and expectations. Boundaries that reward Responsible behavior when adhered to. Adults win when they bring attention to responsible behavior.

Kids learn responsibility best when they are called upon to be responsible. It is then, and only then, that they learn the cause and effect of their behavior. In the end, those who demonstrate responsible behavior recognize and acknowledge responsibility for everything they do. Responsibility gives kids freedom, friends, and a positive self concept. Responsibility also finds a way while irresponsibility finds excuses. Adults who encourage and recognize responsible behavior create a purpose by focusing on finding a way not making excuses.

***Responsibility happens when children are involved in a program on
Responsibility.***

Environments that are overly restrictive or overly permissive do not create responsible behavior, but rather create dependence and game playing.

Discipline is like holding a wet bar of soap. If you squeeze it too tightly, it will propel itself away (i.e.. overly strict.) If you hold the soap too lightly, it will fall from your hand (i.e.. overly permissive.) If you grasp it firmly, but gently, it will serve the purpose for which it was designed (training for responsible behavior.)

It is to our collective advantage to have more responsible people.

The purpose of this book is to provide parents and teachers with specific tools that will assist children in becoming responsible. This is a book not of right and wrong, not of what is legal and what is illegal, but of conscience, choice and consequence. We are responsible for our actions and we must live with them.

Obedience without understanding is a blindness. - Gene Bedley

This book will not enlighten you on new and improved ways to tell your children to be responsible. We've already spent too much time telling and not enough training kids to BE responsible. For example, we can continually tell kids to turn off the lights. This, typically, will not increase responsibility for turning out lights.

It could even increase inappropriate behavior. Children don't conjure up plans on how to waste electricity. They don't sit around and create different ways to leave lights on. They simply forget. People who are responsible about turning out lights have either developed a good habit, built an automatic switch into a self closing door, or hung a sign or two on the door to help them remember to turn the lights out!

Simply put, if you want a child to be responsible for turning out the lights so that YOU don't become the "reminder" in his life, you should lead him into a discussion that will end with him designing a picture of a light bulb that can be hung on the back of a door or a child made reminder that triggers responsible behavior.

Self designed signs are a sure way to guarantee more responsible behavior. Invite a child to create a sign and acknowledge them for taking responsibility for following through. Encourage them continually and you'll see a responsible person emerge.

Children need reminders more than they need to be informed.

- Gene Bedley

BEING A RESPONSIBLE PERSON MEANS:

1. IDENTIFYING AND WRITING GOALS FOR MY LIFE.
2. PROCESSING MY EMOTIONS THROUGH MY BRAIN BEFORE RESPONDING.
3. FINDING A WAY RATHER THAN MAKING EXCUSES.
4. PUTTING SIGNS IN MY LIFE TO HELP ME REMEMBER WHAT TO DO.
5. DEVELOPING INTROSPECTION AND SELF-REGULATION SKILLS FOR SELF IMPROVEMENT.
6. KEEPING AGREEMENTS.
7. ACCEPTING WHAT MY ATTITUDES PRODUCE.
8. MAKING TIME EVEN THOUGH I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH.
9. GAINING KNOWLEDGE ENABLING ME TO BE MORE AUTONOMOUS.
10. DEVELOPING MUTI-FACETED APPROACHES IN RELATING TO PEOPLE
11. SEEING THE PRESENT AS THE BEST TIME TO ACT.
12. TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY FAILURES.
13. ACCEPTING THAT MY CAPACITY TO MAKE THINGS BETTER EXCEEDS MY CAPACITY TO MAKE THINGS WORSE.
14. FINDING ACCEPTABLE SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS WHILE AVOIDING WIN-LOSE SITUATIONS.
15. MOVING BEYOND MY THINKING TOWARD ACTING.
16. GROWING ONE DAY AT A TIME IN BECOMING MORE RESPONSIBLE.
17. RECOGNIZING THAT THERE IS NOTHING MORE POWERFUL THAN THE WORD "BY."
18. RECOGNIZING THAT WITH EACH RIGHT AND FREEDOM I ENJOY, I ALSO HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY.
19. BEING SELF-DISCIPLINED. TO BE DISCIPLINED IS TO ACT IN A GOOD WAY. TO BE SELF-DISCIPLINED IS TO ACT IN A BETTER WAY.
20. ACKNOWLEDGING WHAT I DO.

GENE BEDLEY

PHILOSOPHY

All children can become responsible. There are four major elements that enable children to develop responsible behavior. All four elements are essential if children are to become more autonomous. Training for responsible behavior includes a child's attitude, knowledge, practice and adults providing feedback.

$$RB = A + K + P + F$$

Responsible Behavior = Attitude + Knowledge + Practice + Feedback

The critical attribute is attitude.

Attitude is fundamental in achieving responsible behavior and can be positive or negative. If a child's attitude is positive, accompanied by knowledge and practice of behavior, and the child receives frequent and specific feedback through acknowledgement and encouragement, then responsible behavior will be achieved.

When a child develops irresponsible behavior, there are four adult behaviors that will reinforce the inappropriate behavior. Vagueness in identifying what responsibility means; hovering over children; rescuing children by making excuses for them; and simply telling kids to be responsible.

$$IB = V + H + R + T$$

Irresponsible Behavior = Vagueness + Hovering + Rescuing + Telling

RESPONSIBILITY -- ONE PERSPECTIVE

Since the beginning of time, man and woman have struggled with the concept of responsibility. In Genesis 2 and 3, God established guidelines for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Gen. 2:15 states, ³The Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it; and God commanded the man saying, from any tree of the garden you may eat freely, but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.

"The serpent wasted no time in convincing Eve that she would gain great insight if she would eat from the tree of good and evil. Eve believed the lie and took and ate from the tree and gave to Adam to eat with her

"God called to the man and said, 'Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' And the man said, 'The woman whom thou gavest to be with me' Then God asked Eve that same question and she said, 'the Serpent deceived me and I ate.'

Neither Eve nor Adam took responsibility for their own behavior. Sound familiar?

The term RESPONSIBILITY means personal, individual acceptance of the fact that every human being is accountable for his behavior, including thoughts, choices, decisions, speech and actions. Taking Responsibility means that we

acknowledge that we cause our own effects.

If Adam and Eve had chosen not to eat from the tree of knowledge, and God had commended them for their behavior, it would have been very easy for them to accept the responsibility. Instead they fixed the blame for their actions elsewhere.

From the beginning, it's clear that irresponsible behavior finds excuses and places blame, and that responsible behavior finds a way.

Responsibility finds a way --- Irresponsibility finds an excuse.

RESPONSE STYLES FOR RESPONSIBILITY TRAINING

When we respond to children, we typically do in different ways with different consequences. It's our approach and our response that decides whether or not children will eventually become responsible. There are three ways to respond to children. We can ...

- a) Tell them to be responsible.
- b) Sell them through rewards and incentives.
- c) Consult them through goal setting and plan writing to help them see that responsibility pays off.

Level 3
Consulting

Self
Management

Focus: Intrinsic Value for good of our name, our school, our class. Increased responsibility. Goal of Student Plans. Behavior is Child Initiated.

Level 2
Selling

Contingency
Management

Focus: Behavior is maintained by external consequences. Contracting & Agreements.

Level 1
Telling

Bigness
Management

Focus: Psychological or physical bigness - Black & White Car relationship - Control.

that all responsible behavior is learned and maintained by its consequences.

If the tall trees in the forest spread their limbs wide and hover over the young trees, the young trees eventually lose their desire to grow and mature. We can be like the hovering tree -- literally smothering all desire to become responsible.

When adults become their children's keeper they tend to teach children dependence rather than responsibility. Let kids learn that when they leave their school lunches at home Mom won't come rushing to school to deliver them.

If responsibility doesn't work, then children and adults eventually lose. The following letter is one I sent to parents in my school encouraging them not to bail their children out when they were irresponsible, but rather to help them by training them to recognize the habits responsible people manifest.

Responsibility Recipe

Take a generous amount of practice, season with plenty of time, flavor with self discipline and garnish with guidance. -- Gene Bedley

Parent Responsibility Newsletter

Dear Parents:

Developing individual responsibility in ourselves and in our children is an essential part of education. If a child does not learn responsibility, we can predict failure.

In order to encourage responsibility we need to understand ways to reinforce it when we see it happen. Often adults tend to take care of children's forgetfulness by bailing them out. Kids learn quickly that they can count on others rather than accept responsibility for their own actions. When children forget books, homework, musical instruments, lunch money, permission slips, etc., both teachers and parents generally bend over backwards to help. Yet we need to ask, "Are we really helping?" rather than letting them experience the consequence of their behavior.

The results of responsible behavior need to be taught. We need to ask, "Are we continually reinforcing unwanted behavior? Are we becoming our children's keeper?"

School Staffs can continually work at communicating to children activities they consider important. Classroom teachers can establish weekly routines for homework, spelling assignments, math assignments, etc. Parents can help ...

1. by talking with children about designing their own plan in order to finish important work.
2. by designing a weekly schedule for rest, recreation, TV viewing, (invite kids to select programs like they select food from a menu.)

3. by teaching children different ways to write themselves reminders. Children need reminders (written displayed notes) to themselves more than they need to be informed.
4. by teaching children to place important materials in a designated place every night (so they won't forget.)

You have to work at being responsible. Excuses make us irresponsible. Working at being a responsible person is a very important trait to transmit to our children

REINFORCERS OF IRRESPONSIBILITY

Change will occur when we increase children's awareness of responsibility and present the benefits for being responsible. Children tend to do whatever works for them. If being irresponsible gets more attention, then they will not learn responsibility.

Avoid bail-outs. Listed below are a few examples of NOT to do if you want to teach children to be responsible.

- 1) Pick up clothes
- 2) Take lunch to school when forgotten
- 3) Do homework for them
- 4) Make excuses for children
- 5) Do chores that are assigned to them
- 6) Purchase everything for them
- 7) Give children too many toys
- 8) Clean their rooms
- 9) Remind them to brush their teeth, turn out lights, etc.

Anything that a child should do and can do, and we do for them takes away an opportunity to learn responsibility. --- Gene Bedley

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Responsible people draw upon their past experience and knowledge when contemplating the challenges of the future. Their maturity is evidenced by insight and problem solving skills. Rather than doing things out of convenience, they are willing to make commitments and follow through. Their independence causes them to reach out to undertake tasks and accept the results of their risks. Goal setting and achieving goals are daily adventures. They are great doers. They

seldom react, but rather process their emotions and knowledge through their brains. You can count on them when others procrastinate or merely sit back and complain. They are catalysts causing things to happen. Responsible people make a difference. You can understand a responsible person by understanding responsible characteristics in contrast to irresponsible characteristics.

Irresponsibility ----- Responsibility Continuum

Immaturity <----->Maturity
 Convenience <-----> Commitment
 Dependence <-----> Independence
 Role Oriented <-----> Goal Oriented
 Failure <----->Achievement
 Acted Upon <-----> Act

LANGUAGE OF RESPONSIBILITY

You can identify a responsible person by his comments.

Responsible Comments

Each moment is a beginning

Responsibility moves beyond thinking to acting.

You never have enough time, you just make the time.

I can do anything. The things I can't presently do I just haven't learned yet.

I take full responsibility for my actions.

I can take this and a lot more.

I can change myself.

I am capable, I can Handle it!

Irresponsible Comments

If I could just start over then everything would be different.

I know I need to do something.

I don't have enough time.

I can't do it.

He made me do it.

I can't take it anymore.

You can't change people.

I'm not capable.

Life is an education. My experience will enable me to be successful.

I can be a catalyst that causes people to listen.

This is it.

Today.

NOW.

I don't have an education.

No one will listen.

This is not it.

Tomorrow.

LATER.