

Opelika Character Education word for May - Responsibility

The Opelika Character Education word of the month is responsibility. The root word of responsibility is response. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines response as an act of responding or something constituting a reply or a reaction.

Stephen Covey, in his book, "7 Habits of Highly Effective People," states that "accountability breeds response-ability." He notes that the difference between a response to a stimulus and a response as a conscious action is that the first is based on instinct, while the latter is based on core values that are part of the human ability to choose what one will or will not do.

The following is an example of two different ways of responding to a craving for ice cream. I respond to the stimulus, ice cream, by turning into the Dairy Queen and ordering my favorite flavor. Rationally, I know that ice cream makes me gain weight. I want to stay healthy, so I make the choice of forgoing the ice cream. Proactive people, according to Covey, make a conscious choice to take responsibility for their actions, and in doing so open the door to another dimension of self.

To be responsible is to be congruent. To paraphrase Viktor Frankl, responsibility grows out of that core of self that constitutes oneness of body, mind and spirit, or a unified whole. It means exercising the same character traits in private that one exhibits in public regardless of who is hearing or watching. It means being as good as your word.

Nowhere is this more important than in the home. Parents are a child's most important role model and a child will notice when what parents do and what parents say do not line up. Responsible children are raised by responsible parents who listen, encourage, discipline, love unconditionally, and are positive role models. Children need to know they are accountable to someone for the choices they make and that they are expected to meet an ethical standard.

I have great concern today that many children have access to most of what they want without having to do anything in return. Parents work hard to provide a plethora of activities and technological equipment to keep their children occupied. Too much, too easily attained breeds irresponsibility, which in turn breeds an attitude of entitlement. As children move through stages of development, they need to participate at an age-appropriate level in the family work. When old enough, adolescents need to work part-time to help pay for such things as gasoline, car insurance, and entertainment expenses. Children become responsible by learning that hard work pays off.

The children aren't the only ones that have too much. We have become a consumer society in which more is better. Rather than exhibiting self-control, we have become consumed with self-gratification. The responsible person thinks not just of himself, but of what he can do for others. Rather than have more, he shares his bounty with the less fortunate. Responsibility is a character trait that emerges from inner strength that provides one with the courage to meet adversity for the sake of what is right and for saying no rather than compromising one's integrity.

It was great to hear that Chick-fil-A has established a "Character and Community Counts" program. Congratulations to award winners" Alabama Pediatric Dentistry, Lighthouse Children's Dentistry, Easter Seals-Achievement Center, Lee County Sheriff's Office reserve deputies, Kathy Powell

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State Farm Agency, Opelika firefighters, and Lee County Youth Development. Thank you for your unselfish service to our community.

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