

Character Matters: Responsibility

Knowing and Doing What is Expected of Me



It Matters at Home

Brrriing! Your alarm clock rattles in your ear with increasing insistence. You lift your head heavily from the pillow. A fresh sheet of paper materializes in your limp hands where nothing had been a moment before. “*Get up.*” it reads. “*Shower. Fix bacon and toast for self and kids. Take kids to school.*” You immediately set about to follow the instructions on your list, for you know there are instant, dire consequences for disobedience. Your neighbor calls, worried, because her list says to fix coffee, but she can’t figure out how to turn on the coffee maker.

Responsibility is knowing and doing what is expected of me. That’s why the above paragraph is not an accurate description of your morning routine. Adults are expected to know and do adult things, without detailed demands, nagging reminders, and overhanging consequences. But because of the lack of accountability, we often take our home responsibilities less seriously. We find ourselves doing the bare minimum just because we can. This is evidence that we aren’t truly responsible.

What about you? Do you strive to excel in

- ◆ *Know your duty*
- ◆ *Do your duty*
- ◆ *Keep your word*
- ◆ *Accept the blame*
- ◆ *Make it right*
- ◆ *Do your best*
- ◆ *Better your best*
- ◆ *Refuse to be average*

keeping home a peaceful, happy place for your family? Do you have “great expectations” for yourself in the area of orderly, inviting home surroundings? Do you eagerly seek to provide your family’s needs? Do you do whatever is necessary to resolve conflict so that family relationships are the best they can be? Do you keep your word to your family as faithfully as you would to a business contact? Do you make excuses for avoiding home responsibilities?

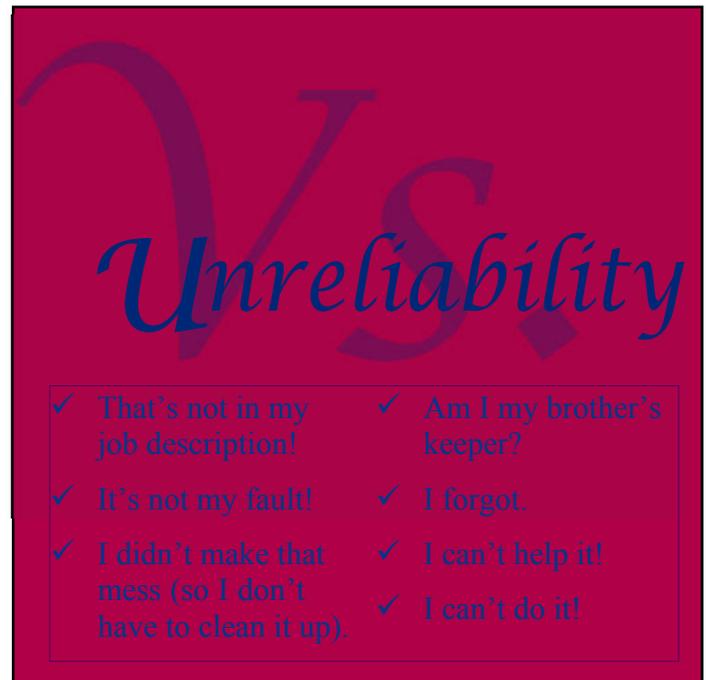
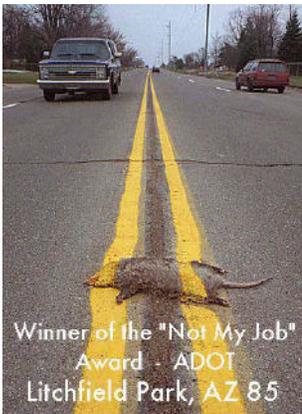
Responsibility matters - because we don’t wake up with a list!

It Matters at Work

"Paint this wall," his boss said. So he did. Green. The most hideous shade of slime-green you have ever seen. He dripped it on the floor. He spattered it on the ceiling. He left half his equipment behind. He forgot to put up a "Wet Paint" sign. He did just as he was told. But was he responsible?

Oftentimes, our responsibilities lie far beyond our job descriptions. The cashiers at the local fast food chain may be required to say, "Have a nice day," but we all know that doesn't always mean they say it "nicely." Responsibility is knowing and doing what is expected of me. That means doing the job well, not just showing up and collecting a paycheck.

Sometimes our responsibility extends to the actions of others. If you are in a position of authority in your company, you are responsible, not just for yourself, but for all those under your supervision. Train, correct, and discipline your subordinates as needed, but be careful not to use them as scapegoats. Instead of shifting blame, follow former President Harry S Truman's motto: The Buck Stops Here!



- ✓ That's not in my job description!
 - ✓ Am I my brother's keeper?
 - ✓ It's not my fault!
 - ✓ I forgot.
 - ✓ I didn't make that mess (so I don't have to clean it up).
 - ✓ I can't help it!
 - ✓ I can't do it!
- ❖ Perform your job not to the minimum but to the maximum!
 - ❖ Don't "pass the buck," even when subordinates are to blame
 - ❖ Develop priorities and a plan to complete all objectives
 - ❖ Complete assigned tasks by or before the deadline
 - ❖ Never stop learning how to do your job better
 - ❖ Hold yourself to a higher standard of excellence than anyone else expects of you

Responsibility matters - because slime-green just doesn't cut it!

Teaching Children Responsibility Matters

Twice a week, I work for a family whose 5 children range from a newborn to a 7-year-old. I can hear you gasping, "How do they do it?" So I'll tell you. It's not easy. But it's getting easier.



It's getting easier because this family is training their children in personal responsibility. The children have ample time to play, and they play hard (trust me, I know!). But before they play, they are each responsible for their

share in the household chores. The 7-year-old does the family laundry while the 5 and 3-year-old take turns scrubbing dishes to put in the dishwasher. Then they all head off to clean their rooms before play. Though the 1-year-old doesn't have many "assigned" jobs, he's anxious to get started helping: he picks up trash off the floor without being asked and is always happy to toddle over to show me where the silverware drawer is.

This family is preparing their children for life by teaching

them responsibility now. They have "great expectations" of excellence for their brood, and the children sense that instinctively and live up to the standard. What a gift to give your children for success in life - a sense of personal responsibility!

- ❖ Don't protect your children from natural consequences
- ❖ Assign tasks from a young age
- ❖ Keep your word to your kids
- ❖ Give and accept no excuses for misbehavior
- ❖ Plan for an above-average family!