

Mindsets for Happiness and Success



RESPONSIBILITY

We are responsible for our choices, our behavior, our mistakes and, ultimately, our own happiness.

LET'S TALK about LIFE

The single most important thing we can do for our children is talk to them about life. At dinner, at breakfast, eating burgers in the car, or sipping hot cocoa before bed. Decades of research has shown that children who eat 3 to 4 times a week with their parents are 3 times less likely to get involved with drugs, alcohol, or smoking. They do better in school, have higher self-esteem, and stronger relationships with their parents. With the little time busy parents have, we might as well talk about what's important. All it takes is 10 minutes a day.

LET'S TALK conversation starters have been strategically designed in a specific sequence to help children (and parents) learn the

Happiness and Success

twelve most important mindsets that lead to happiness and success. They are based on decades of research and the literature from hundreds of experts who study happiness and success. In the same way that we learn to walk, play a musical instrument, speak a new language, or dance the salsa, we also build mindsets through repetition. By repeating new, similar thought patterns over and over again during a 30-day period, we actually rewire certain ways of thinking into our brains. Eventually it becomes a habit that we continue without any effort. LET'S TALK is designed for ages five and up. Feel free to adapt the questions to what you know your children are able to understand and can relate to.

RESPONSIBILITY Intro - 1

No one describes responsibility better than Nathaniel Branden, author of *Taking Responsibility*.

"If we wish to achieve happiness, and not merely wait for events or other people to make us happy, we need to grasp how intimately happiness is tied to self-responsibility and specifically ... taking responsibility for our emotions." It "begins with the recognition that I am ultimately responsible for my own existence; that no one else is here on earth to serve me, take care of me, or fill my needs; I am the owner of no one's life but my own.

Introduction for Parents

RESPONSIBILITY Intro - 2

I have the choice to operate mindfully or mindlessly or anywhere between. Self-responsibility entails my willingness to be accountable for my choices, decisions, and behavior ... for thinking about the consequences of my actions... I am responsible for how I deal with other people... If I behave destructively toward them, I can't claim that they or anyone else "made me do it." I do not give away my power or delude myself that others have power over me in ways that they clearly do not ... self-responsibility implies my willingness to be accountable for the ideas and values by which I conduct my life.

Introduction for Parents

RESPONSIBILITY Intro - 3

This entails intellectual independence: the willingness to think for myself and act by the judgment of my own mind... No one owes me happiness." To sum it up, Nathaniel Branden is basically telling us that how much responsibility you take determines your personal power in life.



Introduction for Parents

10 Ways to be RESPONSIBLE:

Learning to be responsible for yourself and understanding how your choices and behavior affect the world around you is probably the most important part of growing up. Most of us learn to take care of our personal needs and our belongings, but many adults never learn that they are responsible for their choices, their mistakes, and their own happiness. Taking responsibility is a critical mindset that helps us learn from our mistakes, develop competence and confidence, build better relationships, create success in many areas of our lives, feel more in control, and ultimately leads to real happiness.

1. Taking care of your personal needs:

Feeding and dressing ourselves, brushing our teeth, doing homework, getting ready for bed, talking to the teacher about a problem, filling out forms for extra-curricular activities, making your school lunches.

2. Taking care of your belongings:

Picking up toys, clothes, shoes, towels, backpacks - and putting them away, finding/cleaning/preparing your uniform and equipment for extra-curricular activities, making your bed, cleaning your room.

3. Being responsible for your part in the family home:

Doing dishes, emptying the trash, doing laundry, feeding, walking, bathing the dog, sweeping, vacuuming, putting away groceries, pulling weeds, mowing the lawn, cleaning the bathrooms.

4. Being responsible for your part in the community:

Picking up your own trash, respecting other people's property, observing laws, waiting patiently in line, being polite and kind to those around you, helping someone in need, adding value to the world.

10 Ways to be RESPONSIBLE: (continued)

5. Being responsible for your part on a team:

Doing your best during practice or games, completing your part in a class project, being cheerful at family events like a sibling's graduation, or a cousin's wedding, making decorations for the school dance.

6. Taking responsibility for your promises:

Doing chores that you promised Mom before going out with friends, showing up to do homework with a friend, helping Dad clean the garage when you said you would, returning the dress you borrowed.

7. Taking responsibility for your behavior:

Showing up on time for school, extra-curricular activities, and family events, getting homework done before friends and fun, thinking for ourselves instead of caving to peer pressure, playing fair.

8. Taking responsibility for your choices:

Recognizing the fact that no one makes you behave badly (except in extreme cases of abuse). You can't change what happens to you but you always have a choice in how you respond in a situation.

9. Taking responsibility for your mistakes:

Wiping up spilled milk, admitting you misjudged someone or was wrong about something that happened, apologizing for hurting a friend - even if it was intentional, or fixing a problem you caused.

10. Taking responsibility for your happiness:

Taking responsibility for your needs, belongings, your part in family, community, or groups, your choices, behavior, and your mistakes, creates control over your life and, ultimately, leads to happiness.

What does RESPONSIBILITY mean?

Talk about what responsibility means to each of you. This will be different for everyone in the family. Take turns and share what it means, as well as what you believe your responsibilities are - at this point in time.



Day 1

What happens when you are IRRESPONSIBLE?

Think of times when you have not been responsible. How did it affect you? How did it affect others? For example, if you didn't do the dishes, a parent might have had to do it for you, instead of relaxing after a hard day at work.



Day 2

Why is it easier to make EXCUSES?

Most everyone is tempted from time to time to make excuses and blame others, or their circumstances, for their lack of responsibility. Why is it difficult to accept blame? Why is it important that we do?



Day 3

Has someone ever been IRRESPONSIBLE to you?

Can you think of a situation where you counted on someone to do something for you, who did not? A friend, a family member, a parent? How does it feel to be on the other end of irresponsibility?



Day 4

Ten Ways to be RESPONSIBLE:

Look at the card titled "Ten Ways to be Responsible." Read through the list together and see if you can think of at least one or two more examples for each of the ten ways. You may even discover another way that is not on that list.



Day 5

Describe an IRRESPONSIBLE world.

What would a world look like if no one was expected to be responsible for anything? If everyone just decided to do whatever they felt like at that moment? Would you want to live in that world?



Day 6

Being RESPONSIBLE for your personal needs:

What does it mean to be responsible for your **personal needs**? Talk about how a child matures into an adult by taking on more responsibility in that way. How does it build confidence, develop competence, create a sense of control over your life?



Day 7

Being RESPONSIBLE for your personal belongings:

What does it mean to be responsible for your **personal belongings**? Talk about how a child matures by taking on more responsibility in that way. How does it build confidence, develop competence, and create a sense of control over your life?



Day 8

Being RESPONSIBLE for your part in the family home:

What does it mean to be responsible for your **part in the family home**? Talk about how a child matures by taking on more responsibility in that way. How does it build confidence, develop competence, and create control over your life?



Day 9

Being RESPONSIBLE for your part in the community:

What does it mean to be responsible for your **part in the community**? Talk about how a child matures by taking on more responsibility in that way. How does it build confidence, develop competence, and create a sense of control over your life?



Day 10

Being RESPONSIBLE for your part on a team or group project:

What does it mean to be responsible for your **part on a team or group project**? Talk about how a child matures by being more responsible in that way. How does it build confidence, develop competence, and create a sense of control in life?



Day 11

Being RESPONSIBLE for your promises:

What does it mean to be responsible for your **promises**? Talk about how a child matures into an adult by being more responsible in that way. How does it build confidence, develop competence, and create a sense of control over your life?



Day 12

Being RESPONSIBLE for your behavior:

What does it mean to be responsible for your **behavior**? Talk about how a child matures into an adult by taking on more responsibility in that way. How does it build confidence, develop competence, and create a sense of control over your life?



Day 13

Being RESPONSIBLE for your choices:

What does it mean to be responsible for your **choices**? Talk about how a child matures into an adult by taking on more responsibility in that way. How does it build confidence, develop competence, and create a sense of control over your life?



Day 14

Being RESPONSIBLE for your mistakes:

What does it mean to be responsible for your **mistakes**? Talk about how a child matures into an adult by taking on more responsibility in that way. How does it build confidence, develop competence, and create a sense of control over your life?



Day 15

Being RESPONSIBLE for your happiness:

What does it mean to be responsible for your **own happiness**? Talk about how a child matures into an adult by taking responsibility in that way. How does it build confidence, develop competence, and create control over your life?



Day 16

You don't feel like feeding the dog.

It's your job to feed and walk the dog every day. But today you don't feel like doing your job. How does your decision affect the dog, or your parents - who now have to feed and walk the dog for you?



Day 17

Mom doesn't feel like feeding you.

You know what it's like when you don't feel like doing a chore you are supposed to do. How would you feel if your parents decided they didn't "feel" like making dinner for you and told you to fix yourself something to eat?



Day 18

You borrowed a friend's new bike.

Your best friend lent you a cool new bike to ride home and you agreed to return it the next day. But you've been busy and have been enjoying riding the bike. A week later your friend is mad. Do you think that is reasonable?



Day 19

Your sister returns a torn jacket.

You lent a favorite jacket to your sister to wear it to a party. You had to ask for the jacket back and it was not only dirty, but also torn on the sleeve. You're upset, but she thinks it's no big deal. How does this affect your relationship?



Day 20

You break your promise to Mrs. Grady.

You promised your elderly neighbor, Mrs. Grady, that you would mow her lawn on Saturday. You decided to spend the day with friends and told her you were sick. She happened see you when your friends picked you up. How did that make you feel?



Day 21

Your Dad breaks his promise to you.

Your Dad promised to practice driving with you and you're excited. When it's time to go he is on the phone with a work colleague and can't take you now. How does it feel to have someone break their promise to you?



Day 22

You blame the teacher for doing poorly on a test.

You have one week to study for a math test. It seems like plenty of time, so you keep putting it off. You do poorly and blame the teacher for not giving you enough time. Why does blaming others make it impossible to do better next time?



Day 23

You get blamed for a friend's mistake.

You stop to pick up your friend on the way to soccer practice and end up waiting 15 minutes while he looks for his shoes. The coach is mad since you're late and your friend blames you. Why will your friend probably do the same thing next time?



Day 24

You made the committee look bad.

Your school dance decor idea was chosen. But, instead of making the decorations you showed them, you spent the day with a boyfriend and set up some ugly store-bought decor. You made the entire dance committee look bad. How would that feel?



Day 25

Everyone got a C+ on the project.

You stayed up late to finish your part in a group project. Everyone chose a topic and a role to play in the presentation. But the person whose job it was to put the boards together did a sloppy job. You all got a C+. How did that make you feel?



Day 26

You're in trouble for doing nothing.

You're with some kids at a birthday party. They start teasing one of the other guests. You feel like it's wrong, but don't want to look uncool, so you say nothing. The entire group gets in trouble. How did your choices get YOU into trouble?



Day 27

"He made me do it!"

Can you remember a situation where you said something like "You make me so mad," or "He made me do it!" You're so angry or hurt that you feel out of control - which you are. But the truth is, no one MAKES us do anything. It's a choice.



Day 28

Your boyfriend made you miserable.

You have a new boyfriend who has a bad reputation for breaking hearts. You're devastated when it happens to you, and you blame him for making you miserable. How can taking responsibility for your choices make you happier in the future.



Day 29

Taking Responsibility = Personal Power

When you blame others for what makes you unhappy, you give away the power to change your life. When you take responsibility, you gain personal power. Describe a situation where you blamed someone else for your choices or mistakes.



Day 30