

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

for use with
Program 3

The **RESPONSIBILITY** Connection

In the Video Series



Created and Produced by
Elkind+Sweet Communications, Inc.
in association with Character Counts!
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HOW TO USE THIS VIDEO

Use in classrooms, libraries, youth groups, or view it at home.

This video, along with the facilitator's guide and website, is designed to help teachers engage students in classroom discussion and other activities leading to deep, meaningful reflection about the kinds of people they are and want to be.

Have a great discussion!

Thoughtful, reflective discussions are essential to getting the most out of these videos. You will find some very fruitful facilitation techniques, including **Socratic Method**, at our special character education website at <www.goodcharacter.com>. The questions in this discussion guide begin on page 10.

www.goodcharacter.com provides a wealth of helpful material including questions, assignments, and activities for special topics such as **sports**, **workplace readiness**, and others. Please utilize this very valuable resource.

WHAT IS RESPONSIBILITY?



In this program PERSONAL responsibility means:

- 🍏 Doing what needs to be done.
- 🍏 Being reliable and dependable.
- 🍏 Being accountable for your actions.
- 🍏 Not making excuses or blaming others.
- 🍏 Following through on your commitments.



In this program SOCIAL responsibility means:

- 🍏 Doing your part for the common good.
- 🍏 Volunteering in your school or community.
- 🍏 Participating in community service.
- 🍏 Helping to take care of the environment.



PROGRAM CONTENT

Kailani, a fourteen year old girl, is presenting her classroom video blog on the topic of responsibility. Through a combination of skits, group discussions, commentaries, and documentaries, Kailani's blog reveals how young people think and feel about the role that responsibility plays in their lives. The blog includes two documentaries which focus on individual kids who serve as inspiring examples of both personal and social responsibility in action.

Part I – Introduction to Taking Responsibility

Kailani asks, “Do your parents ever fold their arms, look at you and say, “When are you ever going to take responsibility?” Three young teenagers answer her question. A boy says, “yeah, but I don't really understand what they're saying. Sometime I roll it around in my head and stuff, but I really don't get it.” A girl tells us that her mother asks her that question when the young girl asks her mom for money. “She says when am I gonna grow up and get a job and stop bothering her.” Another girl comments that “my mom always says to me that I should take responsibility, that if I want independence, then responsibility comes with it.”

Part II – Skit: A Day in the Life of an Irresponsible Kid

Kailani introduces a humorous vignette by asking, “have you ever had a day where everything you did made you look irresponsible?” The skit focuses on a day in the life of a teenage boy who makes one irresponsible move after another. We see him get up late. He doesn't have time for the breakfast his mother has prepared. He forgets his backpack and calls his mother to deliver it to school. In class he tells his teacher that his dog ate his homework. His teacher rolls his eyes, as if this is a regular occurrence with this student. Then, in the cafeteria the boy

realized that he has forgotten his lunch money. So he tries to borrow some from a kid to whom he already owes money. When he gets home, once again he has forgotten his backpack. His mother has to remind him that he is missing soccer practice. He is frustrated but blames his mother for not reminding him.

Part III – Group Discussion on Personal Responsibility

Kailani comments about the vignette we just saw. “So maybe you’re not that bad. But there are things we do that are irresponsible. And they don’t just affect us. They affect other people, too.” That launches us on a group discussion addressing questions that Kailani poses.

What’s the Most Irresponsible Thing You’ve Ever Done?

A boy confesses that he lets his dirty laundry pile up and doesn’t clean it when his mom asks him to. Another boy tells a story of when he forgot to lock his pets in their cage before his family left on a three-day trip. They returned to find that the pets had virtually destroyed the whole house.

Are You Irresponsible?

One kid explains, “I’m bad at planning things so my friends get mad at me because I’m so unorganized.” A young boy says, “I lost four lunchboxes last year. And my parents are like, ‘why can’t you keep track of your stuff?’”

Another boy says, “I made my mom cry.” He goes on to tell the story: “I didn’t mean to. But I really liked this girl. So I took this ring from my mom and gave it to the girl. I said I was sorry and I would get it back. But the girl lost it, and there was nothing I could do.” The other kids in the group are shocked. Then the boy continues, “I felt guilty. That was really irresponsible. I hurt my mother’s feelings, and she always remembers that day.” He tells the group of his plan for the future: “So someday I’m gonna buy her a ring and tell her that it’s different, but it’s to take the place of the one from elementary school.” The entire group is moved by his story and clearly sympathetic to this boy’s plight.

Do You Have Irresponsible Friends?

A girl answers this question by telling a story: “Once my friend in elementary school borrowed my shoes and my shorts and messed them up. I was really mad. She denied that she did it. That also made me lose respect and trust for her. She messed up my stuff and lied about it.”

Part IV – Documentary – Personal Responsibility: Veronica’s Story

On her blog page Kailani comments, “let’s face it: being irresponsible hurts our relationships. And there’s another thing it does. It takes away our power to control our own lives. Let me show you what I mean . . . “

That leads us into our first documentary.

Veronica is in the 8th grade at a middle school in Northern California. If you looked at Veronica last year, you would have thought she was the poster child for irresponsibility. She always seemed to be in trouble. And she was in danger of either dropping out of school, or being suspended. Imagine, not even passing the 8th grade. And Veronica herself would be the first to admit that she was a bully.

So Veronica came to the realization that her life just was not working. She decided that she needed to reinvent herself. And she did that in the only way possible -- by taking responsibility for all of her actions. Veronica realized that everything she did was a choice, and that she could choose better things for herself.

Veronica came up with a plan that included staying away from the wrong crowd, not missing any classes, reading every day, turning all her homework in on time, and working out at a gym every day. To avoid her old crowd she hid out in the library.

Veronica tells us that she chose a different path, because she saw how she was going to end up. She has learned a lot about herself in a year and tells other kids, “you have to have confidence in yourself and

not be a follower. Be a leader. Don't try to fit in and be something you're not."

We see that she did graduate from the eighth grade. And now she has her sights set on going to college and then to law school.

**Part V – Group Discussion:
The Difficulty of Making a Responsible Choice**

Kailani observes that Veronica succeeded in turning her life around by taking responsibility. Then she tells us, "sometimes doing the responsible thing isn't easy. Especially when we have to choose between what we want to do, and what we know we should do. Imagine that you've made a commitment to spend the weekend working with some friends on a class science project that's due Monday. At the last minute another friend calls and tells you she has an extra ticket to a rock concert by your favorite group. This is a one-time-only event. You'd love to go, but you can't do both. What do you do?"

This hypothetical situation produces a very lively discussion. A number of the students know what the responsible thing to do is, but still say they would choose the concert over working on the project. One girl admits that we need to "live up to commitments. People are depending on you." But then she vacillates and tells us she would have "a hard time with this." The kids come up with a whole range of creative solutions. One boy suggests he would try to have fun with his friends while working on the project. Another kid suggests that he'd stay up late and work on the project after the concert. One girl agonizes, "my mom says make your own decisions. Now I have to do the right thing." Another student points out that sometimes being responsible takes sacrifice. And she concludes, "think about what's important."

One girl tells a heart-wrenching story that emphasizes the lasting effect of irresponsible behavior. It happened several years ago, but the wound is still very raw. A group of girls were preparing for a dance competition they felt they would win. But her close friend and principal in the dance group dropped out at

the last minute without telling anyone. Her irresponsible decision impacted the entire group of girls who ended up not performing in the competition.

Part VI – Documentary – Social Responsibility: Taking Care of E-waste

Kailani introduces the topic of social responsibility and prepares to show us a documentary. She tells us, “so far, we’ve talked about responsibility for ourselves and our own lives. But there is a whole world outside ourselves that needs some attention, too. Suppose you found out about a problem that was harming society, would you leave it someone else to take care of?”

Kailani’s comments introduce Alex Lin and the Win Team.

Alex is 12 years old and is part of a group that address the issue of electronic waste – discarded computers and other electronic devices that contain hazardous materials that hurt the environment and threaten people’s health. When dumped, these things release poisons into the environment like lead, cadmium, and mercury that can get into people’s bloodstream, animals, crops, and soil. So, the team tells us about alternatives to simply throwing away an old computer. Alex’s group gets the word out that the irresponsible dumping of e-waste in landfills is something that has to be stopped. Their social action includes getting the word out by writing letters and appearing on television, doing presentations at elementary schools to raise awareness, and getting lawmakers to pass legislation.

In addition they rebuild many of these computers and donate them to people who might not be able to afford to buy new computers. The Win Team has donated computers to Tsunami victims, to computer classes, and to families in need.

We get to meet a young girl who received a computer thanks to the Win Team. We hear about the impact that had on her and her family. Alex then tells us how good it feels to see the people they have helped.

Alex closes by telling us that through community service there are all kinds of ways we can help out. We simply need to find a cause and do what's right.

Part VII – Blogger's Conclusion

We return to Kailani who summarizes the two aspects of Responsibility we have seen in this program. Kailani tells us, "Veronica and Alex are living proof that when we take responsibility for ourselves and our community, it makes us better people and the world a better place. And the really nice thing is that being responsible is a choice we all have the power to make. We just have to remember that it's all up to us."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions to ask before showing the video:

1. What do parents mean when they say you should “take responsibility?”
2. Do you consider yourself to be a responsible person? In what ways?

Questions to ask after showing the video:

1. What does “taking responsibility” mean?
2. How does behaving responsibly affect our relationships with our friends? How important is that?
3. How does behaving responsibly affect your relationship with your parents? How important is that?
4. Have you ever caused problems for somebody else by being irresponsible? What happened? Would you do things differently if you had another chance?
5. Has anybody ever caused problems for you by being irresponsible? What happened? What do you wish that person understood about what happened?
6. How does it make you feel when somebody lets you down?
7. How does it make you feel when you have let somebody else down?
8. Do you think there is any connection between being responsible and being trusted? Between being responsible and being respected?
9. Are you responsible? In what ways are you, and in what ways are you not?

10. Successful people get that way by being lucky. Agree, or disagree? Explain.
11. If I try hard and don't succeed it's not my fault. Agree, or disagree? Explain.
12. How might taking responsibility give you power over your life?
13. How did taking responsibility help Veronica change the course her life was taking? Do you know anyone who's done something like that?
14. In the Veronica story we are told that Veronica decided to "reinvent herself." What does that mean? How did she do it?
15. How did Alex's story (e-waste) make you feel? What did you learn from it? What motivated Alex and his friends to do what they did? Do you think that most kids could do something like that, or are Alex and his friends just a special case?
16. Alex closes his story about the "Win Team" by suggesting that people find a cause and do what's right. What does this idea have to do with responsibility?
17. What responsibilities do you feel you personally have for: 1) yourself, 2) your family, 3) your community?

*For questions relating to **special topics such as sports, workplace readiness, etc.**, visit www.goodcharacter.com*

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Write about a time you were let down by someone's irresponsible actions. If you could say anything to this person now, what would it be?
2. How responsible are you? For each of the responsible behaviors listed on page 3 of this guide, rate yourself on a scale of one to five (1=awful, and 5=terrific). For each of these behaviors give an example of how you are either responsible or not, and what you could do to improve.
3. Can you think of a time you did something really irresponsible? Describe it in detail. Why did it happen? How did you feel about it at the time? Did it affect anybody else? Did it cause any problems for you? How do you feel about it now? What did you learn from it? Or, perhaps you would prefer to write about something you did that was very responsible.
4. Book Report: Write about how the characters in a book behaved in either a responsible or irresponsible way, and how their behavior affected other characters and the story. Do the same with a movie or television program.
5. Imagine waking up one morning and deciding to "reinvent" yourself. What changes would you make? How would you go about it?

GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. Have students break into groups and share a time when they acted irresponsibly and a time when they took responsibility. In a large group, have them share one of their stories and the impact that person's behavior had on those around them.
2. Have your students visit this website <www.goodcharacter.com> and click on "[Opportunities for Action](#)." There they will find opportunities to become involved in activities and issues relating to personal and social responsibility.
3. On page 3 of this guide are some behavioral guidelines for how to be a responsible person. Write these guidelines on the board. Have your students think of as many examples of each as they can, and write them on the board. Can they think of any other responsible behaviors that should be added to the list? Have a class discussion about these behaviors.
4. Have everybody in the class declare two short term goals that can be accomplished during the semester. Have them present their goals to the class, including their plans, their deadlines, and why these goals are important to them. Then, have them track their progress giving periodic progress reports to the whole class. Set up some kind of a reward for people who achieve their goals.
5. As a group, identify some problems in your school or community. Come up with a plan for attacking one specific problem. Organize a community service project around it.

This content-rich website is loaded with free resources to help you do the job!

Please visit this website to find:

- ❖ **Facilitation techniques** for conducting meaningful, productive classroom discussions, including **Socratic Method**.
- ❖ **Additional discussion questions, writing assignments, and learning activities.”**
- ❖ **Opportunities for your students** to become involved in activities and issues relating to the topics in these videos.
- ❖ **Links** to key character education organizations and resources.
- ❖ **Articles** and other writings on educating for character.
- ❖ Special discussion guide supplements for use with **sports programs, workplace readiness programs,** and other areas of special interest.
- ❖ **The Daily Dilemma** - an ongoing series of moral and ethical discussion starters from the case files of Charis Denison.

This video series was produced in association with
CHARACTER COUNTS!sm

The CHARACTER COUNTS! coalition is a consortium of the nation's largest and most influential educational and youth-serving organizations united in one over-riding mission: strengthening the character of America's youth.



CHARACTER COUNTS!

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