

# A Quick GUIDE TO HELP BUILD CHARACTER

**W**e all want kids to have good values — and strong character. But good character doesn't just happen. It's up to each of us to lay a solid foundation for character development by teaching children right from wrong and by acting as positive role models. O.K., so it may not always be easy to teach "character." But the task is not impossible.

With programs and materials, the CHARACTER COUNTS<sup>SM</sup> Coalition tries to help. The Coalition, a project of the nonprofit Josephson Institute of Ethics, is a nonpartisan partnership of some 200 leading educational and youth-serving organizations — including the YMCA, 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Little League and La Raza — dedicated to strengthening the character of young people through promotion of the Six Pillars of Character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

## TEACH!

Teach children that their character counts — that their success and happiness will depend on who they are inside, not what they have or how they look. Tell them that people of character know the difference between right and wrong because they guide their thoughts and actions by six basic rules of living (the "Six Pillars of Character"): trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and good citizenship. Explain these words (see definitions on the reverse side). Use examples from your own life, history and the news.

## ENFORCE!

Instill the "Six Pillars of Character" by rewarding good behavior (usually, praise is enough) and by discouraging all instances of bad behavior by imposing (or, in some cases, allowing others to impose) fair, consistent consequences that prove you are serious about character. Demonstrate courage and firmness of will by enforcing the core values when it is difficult to do so.

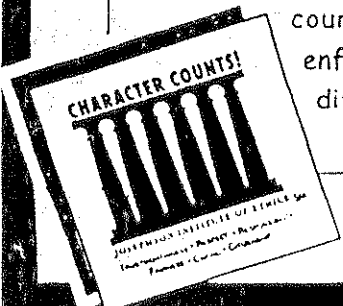
## ADVOCATE!

Continuously encourage children to live up to the "Six Pillars of Character." Be an advocate for character. Don't be neutral about the importance of character or casual about improper conduct. Be clear and uncompromising that you want and expect your children to be trustworthy, respectful, responsible, fair, caring and good citizens.

## MODEL!

Be careful and self-conscious about setting a good example in everything you say and do. Hold yourself to the highest standards by honoring the "Six Pillars of Character" at all times. You may be a good model now, but remember, you don't have to be sick to get better. Everything you do, and don't do, sends a message about your values. Be sure your messages reinforce your lessons about doing the right thing even when it is hard to do so. When you slip (and most of us do), act the way you want your children to behave when they act improperly. Be accountable, apologize sincerely — and do better!

GO!  
T.E.A.M.



CHARACTER COUNTS<sup>SM</sup> is a service mark of the CHARACTER COUNTS<sup>SM</sup> Coalition, a project of the Josephson Institute of Ethics

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