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How Do I Teach My Child The Importance Of Character?

Becky Mitchell

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A weekly question/answer column

**How Do I Teach My Child The Importance
Of Character?**

Becky Mitchell answers:*

First in a two-part series

In a national survey of high school students, two-thirds admitted to cheating on an exam in the previous year and about half said they had done so more than once. One-third of college students surveyed said they had cheated.

A study aimed at bully-type behavior found that 65 percent of boys identified as bullies in the second grade had felony convictions by the time they were 24.

A 1996 study found that 73 percent of high school respondents and 50 percent of college students said they had lied to a parent more than once in the previous 12 months.

These and other statistics convincingly show the need to instill character in our children and youth. The national 4-H organization is part of a Character Counts Coalition, which is aimed at instilling six points or “pillars” of character in children and youth. The organizations note that a person of character makes the world a better place by living these six core ethical values.

Trustworthiness. Be honest. Don’t deceive, cheat or steal. Be reliable – do what you say you’ll do. Have the courage to do the right thing. Build a good reputation. Be loyal – stand by your family, friends and country.

Respect. Treat others with respect – follow the golden rule. Be tolerant of differences. Use good manners, not bad language. Be considerate of the feelings of others. Don’t threaten, hit or hurt anyone. Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements.

Responsibility. Do what you are supposed to do. Persevere: keep on trying. Always do your best. Use self-control and be self disciplined. Think before you act – consider the consequences. Be accountable for your choices.

Fairness. Play by the rules. Take turns and share. Be open-minded; listen to others. Don’t take advantage of others. Don’t blame others carelessly.

Caring. Be kind. Be compassionate and show you care. Express gratitude. Forgive others. Help people in need.

Citizenship. Do your share to make your school and community better. Cooperate. Stay informed; vote. Be a good neighbor. Obey laws and rules. Respect authority. Protect the environment. Next week: How can I help build character in my child?

* Becky Mitchell is Utah State University Extension 4-H Youth Development Specialist