



Family Focus on Character

***Focus on Character*— What it is, and how it can help your family**

Focus on Character is being offered in your child's group this year to help them become better citizens tomorrow. Politics and religion play no part in the meaning of any of the pillars of character being discussed in your child's group. *Focus on Character* is a way for families and other significant adults in children's lives to start teaching children about good character and ethics, a way to help kids learn to make the right choices, and a way for family members to communicate better with each other.

The Six Pillars of Character

The foundation of *Focus on Character* is the Six Pillars of Character: **Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship**. Teaching the meanings of each word to your family is a good way to begin learning about good character in your home. A definition of each word is attached to this newsletter.

A Little History

Given the growing discipline problems in schools, frightening crime statistics, and other troubling evidence, many people across the country have begun to realize that character education needs to be taught openly and regularly at home, in school, and in the community.

In the summer of 1992, in Aspen, Colorado, Michael Josephson of the Josephson Institute of Ethics held a conference to develop a solution to some of these problems. The result was CHARACTER COUNTS!sm, a concept that gets parents, schools, and communities talking with kids and each other about character. At the national level, more than 450 youth agencies and nonprofit organizations have joined the CHARACTER COUNTS!sm Coalition, to help spread the good news about the importance of character in everybody's life.

How it will work

At each of your child's youth group's meetings, the group will actively participate in some planned activities related to the Six Pillars of Character. Activities will include: a roll call, a lesson, and a recreational game about one of the pillars. At the conclusion of each meeting, your child should also receive a **Family Focus** informational piece with some ideas for activities to reinforce the pillars of character at home.

Youth—Parent Partnership

Teaching youth about the six pillars within their group is a good starting point. Kids really benefit the most from character education when parents get involved at home, too. Below are a few tips you may find helpful.

Talk to Your Family: Good character —what it is and how you develop it—needs to be talked about openly and frequently at home. Place a list of the pillar words and their meanings on your refrigerator as a reminder. Or your family can create your own character words and meanings to use. Just remember to use them often in conversation with your children. Praise them for good deeds and behavior. Hugs can go a long way! Teach your children to understand that being a good person, treating others well, and making the right choices is an important part of growing up.

Role Models: How you behave in front of your children is more important than what you say to them. Strive to provide your children with positive role models so that they see you “walking the talk.”

Get books from the library: You can make learning about character entertaining and interesting for the whole family by borrowing a book or two from the library. Stories and fables can help give meaning and context to words and ideas children may not fully understand.

Talk to your youth group leader(s), school, and community leaders: The best ways for children to learn about good character is to see and know that it is being practiced throughout the community by adults and their peers.

Family Activity

Choose one of the Six Pillars of Character and write that word at the top of a piece of paper. Discuss this pillar as a family and record your strengths in this area. Then identify your family’s weaknesses in this area. Provide examples to demonstrate your family’s strengths and weaknesses. Next, make an “Action Plan.” List three specific things your family will do to improve behavior in the chosen area. Be realistic — don’t make your goals unachievable!

Character Quote:

“Character is how you behave when no one is looking.” — Author Unknown