





You can help your children make better decisions; treat others well, live by good principles and become wise adults when you...

# Find your way to Character Heights

Your experiences at Character Heights can turn your responses to children's misbehavior from actions that make things worse to actions that make things better. You can learn how to teach your children to become capable and sensible rather than resentful and rebellious. Spending time in Character Heights will teach you how to help your children become adults you will be proud of!

In the boxes below, you can use stickers or create your own mark to celebrate those things you are already doing well. You might also mark those things that you hope to improve in your relationships with your children. Use these marks to help remind you to celebrate what you're doing well and to add more good things to your parenting journey.

It can take a long time and a lot of work to get to Character Heights. Good character doesn't happen in a moment or by accident. It is more likely to happen when we love our children, teach them good ways to act and help them to be good people.

## Points of Interest

### 1. Teach good ways to act.

Many children do things we don't like simply because they don't know any better. They spill the milk because they are not skilled. They hurt others because they have not learned to be aware of the needs of others. We can patiently teach them. It takes a long time to learn to be a good human! We help them wipe up their spills and we help them understand other people, their needs and feelings.



 **Checkpoint**  
I make allowances for my children to learn. I allow them to be children.

Children also do things we don't like because we have set them up for failure—we have put them in a situation that is very difficult for them. For example, we may expect children to sit and be quiet in a long meeting. That is almost impossible. Children are wired to be active and explore. They don't do very well at sitting quietly. Maybe we can provide quiet activities for them to enjoy rather than expecting them to sit with nothing to do. We can set them up for success by working with their maturity level and personality.

 **Checkpoint**  
I plan ahead so my children won't misbehave due to boredom.

### 2. Make sensible rules.

Most of us make some rules carelessly. We just start telling children to not touch this or never do that. Children do not know if we are serious about the rules until they see how we act. If we enforce rules sometimes and not others, children become confused. They may not think we're serious about any rules. We shouldn't make a rule unless it is important enough to enforce it.

 **Checkpoint**  
I am careful about the rules I make. I don't make them unless they are important.

Sometimes using distraction is better than making a rule. Imagine a small child banging on pans. At some point, we get tired of the noise. We can make a rule about banging on pans—or we can distract the child with another activity. For example, we might get out some clay and invite the child to the new activity.

### 3. Establish Consequences.

When children do things that bother us, we often want to punish them. Punishment focuses on making children suffer for their mistakes. But suffering often does not lead to better behavior. Teaching is better than punishing.

For example, if our child grabs a toy from another child, we can spank our child. But that will probably make our child angry and resentful. Instead we might say, "Katy is very sad because she doesn't have a toy to play with. How can we help her?" It is good for children to learn how their actions affect other people.



 **Checkpoint**  
I focus on patiently teaching rather than punishing my children.

A child may have certain chores such as washing the dishes. If the child fails to wash the dishes, a reasonable consequence might be that the child can't watch TV or play until the dishes are washed. The purpose of consequences is not to make children suffer but to help them learn that it is good to do what we are assigned to do.

 **Checkpoint**  
I make sure that my child completes his or her assignments.

Some people like to use time-out with children. But making a child sit in a chair doesn't necessarily help the child learn. Sometimes it is more helpful to sit with children and help them think about their decisions. Time-out should be used mainly to help children and adults get peaceful so they can talk with each other calmly.

As children get older, we allow them to make more decisions. While we work with young children to help them clean their rooms, we might decide to give teenagers more freedom about the décor and tidiness of their rooms. We allow children to make choices that are safe and appropriate for their maturity.

 **Checkpoint**  
I allow my children to make lots of decisions.

We let children make decisions that are safe even if they are different from what we would do. We let children wear colors or patterns we don't prefer, but we don't let children wear unsafe or suggestive clothing.

### 4. Establish routines.

Strong families have many different kinds of routines. One important kind of routine is doing chores. As soon as they are able, all family members have ways they help the family. One

child may set the table. Another may feed the dog. We all make a contribution to help our little society we call a family.

 **Checkpoint**  
I provide my children chores that are appropriate for their maturity.

There are also routines for gathering people. Some families gather every day at dinner time. They talk about their day and share their feelings. This can be a good time to reconnect. Some families gather before breakfast or bedtime. Some families gather weekly to share their highs and lows from the week. Some families have a weekly activity together. Having enjoyable time together is a vital part of strong families.

 **Checkpoint**  
We have routines for gathering that help us feel close.

A very important kind of routine is one-on-one time. When parents take time to do things with children individually, it can make a big difference. The key to a successful one-on-one is that parent and child do something together that the child enjoys (and the parent doesn't hate). One child may like crafts, another may like biking. Each child is different. Taking time with children in enjoyable activities builds memories and strengthens relationships.

 **Checkpoint**  
I make time for one-on-one time with each child.

There are also routines that deliberately develop and promote values. Children do not develop values where none are taught. Values must be carefully cultivated. Some families have traditions of talking about their best experiences together. Some families have routines of worshiping or praying together. Others share stories of heroes. Some families have service projects together. Some families visit relatives and study their family history.

 **Checkpoint**  
We have routines that cultivate values in our family.

Each family can carefully choose or create those routines and traditions that will help family members stay connected, cultivate character and serve their communities. This doesn't happen by accident. It takes thoughtful, consistent effort.

## Things to do in Character Heights

Notice the stresses, disappointments and challenges each child faces. **Show compassion** for children's challenges. Give children lots of opportunities to make **choices**. Give children lots of opportunities to find **solutions** for their problems. **Help** children learn to be responsible for their actions. **Give** positive energy toward better choices.