



TODDLER

Character Education

Character Building

Character-building activities that focus on these traits and others create foundational life skills that will help kids develop a strong sense of character and serve them throughout their entire lives. Character-building activities also serve to strengthen a child's emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is defined as "the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically."

This skill is clearly one that will be more important as kids get older, but consider this: when emotional intelligence is enhanced and strengthened from a young age, kids will be better prepared to tackle the challenges and tough situations they face in adolescence and in their adult years. They will also grow up happier and more well-adjusted because they will be equipped with the right skills and tools they need to deal effectively with life from the start.

With these goals in mind, let's take a look at some character-building activities that help kids learn essential moral values like compassion and understanding.

The 6 Pillars of Character Education

- **TRUSTWORTHINESS:** Blue. Think true blue.
- **RESPECT:** Gold. Think the Golden Rule.
- **RESPONSIBILITY:** Green. Think being responsible.
- **FAIRNESS:** Orange. Think dividing an orange into equal sections and sharing with family and friends.
- **CARING:** Red. Think of a heart.
- **CITIZENSHIP:** Purple. Think of regal purple as representing the state.

Self-Discipline

- Provide your toddler an empty, narrow-mouth bottle and a handful of cereal. Show her how to drop pieces of cereal into the bottle. This activity provides basic problem-solving skills.

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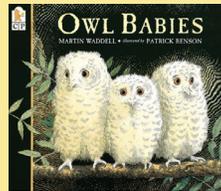


- Give your toddler Hula-Hoops to define a space. Give instructions on how to use his space, such as, “stand inside your circle”, “sit outside your circle”, “put your hand in your circle”, “put your foot under the circle”. Learning through movement is one of the easiest ways to help toddlers develop a sense of body awareness in relation to other people and objects.
- Present a set of objects and invite your toddler to sort them into “bite” and “don’t bite” groups: apple, teething toy, washcloth, photos of friends. Talk about why things in the “bite” group are good to bite. Talk about why we do not bite other people, “it hurts”. Toddlers are just beginning to learn about respectful interactions with others and appropriate management of feelings. Angry and upset feelings can be especially difficult to handle at this age.
- Create a blizzard. Wad up pieces of paper to make snowballs. Have the your toddler wait for a signal to start. Then toss the snowballs at one another. When you are done with the blizzard, recycle the snowballs to use later as a springboard to discuss what kinds of items can be thrown indoors and which cannot. Select several items and display them for your toddler to examine and sort. This activity allows toddlers to unleash pent-up energy and to experience a sense of power, along with developing self-discipline and respect for others and their environment.
- Learning to wait patiently can be difficult for adults and even harder for young children. It takes self-discipline, which toddlers are just beginning to learn. Toddlers learn how to be patient by having opportunities to practice it.

Honesty

- Encourage imaginative play your older toddler. Place several child-size chairs in a line, creating a “bus”. Say, “Let’s pretend this is a bus. Do you want to go with me?” Be sure to add in pretend sounds of the bus and its horn. After the trip say, “We really did not go to the store, but it was fun to pretend”. When older toddlers are able to use their imagination, it is a step toward understanding real and pretend. Honesty is grounded in this understanding.

Recommended Book:



Owl Babies
by Martin Waddell

Respect

- The purpose of this activity is to help your toddler learn appropriate ways of touching others without hurting them. Use an animal puppet to show soft touches. Talk to your child about the best way to touch someone gently. Toddlers can practice soft touches to help learn the distinction between soft and hurting touches. Gentle touches also demonstrate CARING.
- Provide musical instruments. Before handing an instrument to your toddler, let her know she will play that instrument, then swap and play another one. Use recorded music and stop the music when it is time to swap.

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Make a game of sharing the instruments and start the music again. Fair play means everyone has a chance to use each instrument. Preparing your beforehand to expect the instrument swap makes the transition more acceptable. Learning to treat others fairly, to cooperate with them and to respect them, is difficult for toddlers. Toddlers can learn these skills with preparation and practice and knowing what is expected.

- Let loose your inner actor and experiment with using different voices when you are trying to get your child's attention. Before children can be good listeners, you have to get attention. You can use vocal creativity and singing to capture the attention of young children. Listening is a significant avenue for learning and a means to indicate respect for others.

- Put on some soft music and do stretches while taking deep breaths, having your toddler copy you. Explain how calming our minds and bodies is practicing peacefulness.
- Teach courtesy by feeding your toddler a special treat one piece at a time, and requesting he say "please" as he asks for new bites. Add "thank you" and "you're welcome" as he masters each word. Have your child divvy out pieces to you, too, to let him have a chance on the "giving" side!
- Help your toddler show gentleness by giving her several delicate items to look at and hold, such as pictures in frames or precious jewelry. As she holds the items, explain how some objects and people (such as babies) require extra gentleness so they are not hurt.

More Activities to Promote Good Character in Toddlers

- Learn gratitude by playing the "Thank You Game." Simply take turns giving things to each other (such as toys or pieces of food) while saying "thank you" each time.
- Help your toddler understand responsibility by giving her some responsibilities of her own whenever appropriate, such as putting dishes away or transferring laundry from the basket to the machine. She may need help for quite a while, but will eventually be able to do some jobs on her own which increases self-confidence as well.
- Discuss respect by watching insects and showing how you can be careful not to disturb them.
- Role play kindness by taking care of stuffed toys or animal figurines: setting up a home for them, feeding them, bathing them, caring for them if they get hurt.

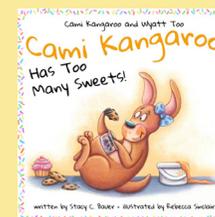
Recommended Books:



The Magic of Sharing
by Ruben Lora and
Ksenia Startseva-Lora
(Author), John Joven
(Illustrator)



Respect - The Best Me That I Can Be
by Rose Angebrandt
(Author), Henrique
Rampazzo (Illustrator)



Cami Kangaroo Has Too Many Sweets!
A children's book about
honesty and self control
by Stacy C. Bauer

