

PARENTING TIPS

A Practical Way to Teach Responsibility

Some children can't seem to do anything without getting distracted. One mom, Heather, said, "When I tell my five-year-old son, James, to go get his shoes on because we've got to leave, he doesn't come back. When I go look, I find him sitting on the floor playing with his cars. And it's not just his shoes. Whenever I tell him to do something he gets sidetracked. I have to yell at him continually to get anything done."

Heather needs to use her frustration to identify the cause of the problem. James is easily distracted, but the deeper issue has to do with irresponsibility. Yes, he is only five years old, but James needs to learn to follow through with a job his mom gives him. This is the beginning of responsibility training.

Most children don't naturally feel an internal weight of responsibility. You can help develop it by watching your kids accomplish assignments and waiting for them to report back. Heather may say, "James, we've got to go so please get your shoes and bring them back to me. I'm going to wait right here in the doorway for you to report back."

As you wait, watch for distraction. At first James may need very close monitoring but as he realizes that he needs to report back and that Mom hasn't forgotten about the job, he will feel the pressure to accomplish the task. Children who need constant reminders lack the character quality of responsibility. They need closer supervision, smaller tasks, and more frequent times of checking in.

Even older children sometimes have a problem with irresponsibility. Yelling isn't necessary – more accountability is. It takes more work to wait or watch, but your investment now will give your children a valuable gift. Responsibility is the ability to complete a task even when no one is watching.

Responsibility training happens in a good instruction process. In Matthew 25, Jesus told a parable about three stewards who were given talents and the responsibility to invest them. Two of the stewards were faithful; one was not. God wants us to be faithful stewards and the roots of faithfulness are taught to children as you teach them to follow directions and report back.

For more on how to build a good instruction Routine with your children, read the book, [Good and Angry, Exchanging Frustration for Character in You and Your Kids](#), by Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN,

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