

UNDERSTANDING CHARACTER.

“Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right path, the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands.”

Anne Frank.

“Let everyone sweep in front of his or her own door, and the whole world will be clean.”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

In a certain school, one boy was very friendly in class and actually the favourite of the teachers and the administration, His reputation was excellent, no one could question it.

One day, there was a strike in the school, and the school was to be closed indefinitely. When the students were recalled back from home, and were asked to name the real ring leaders of the strike, it was surprisingly that almost all the students mentioned the boy as the mastermind.

It was astounding to all the school community because after interrogation, the boy accepted all the allegations.

Character is not what you try to display to others, it the real you and that is why, Abraham Lincoln said, “Reputation is the shadow. Character is the tree.” Our character is much more than just our reputation, what we try to display for others to see. It is who we are even when no one is watching. Having a Good Character means doing the right thing just because it is right to do what is right, whether you are being seen or not.

Character is what defines an individual, who are you when no one is watching? How do you value discipline, Are you self-disciplined? What defines you?

One dictionary defines character as “the mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual.” Another says it is “the complex of mental and ethical traits marking a person.” In still another dictionary, character is said to be “the stable and distinctive qualities built into an individual's life which determine his or her response regardless of circumstances.”

What you plan when the people you love are not watching you, what you do, do you do things that you never want other people to know about.

A story is told of a boy, who once lived long time ago. He was smart, talented and handsome. However, he was very selfish and his temper was so difficult, that nobody wanted to be friends with him. Often he got angry and said various hurtful things to people around him.

The boy's parents were very concerned about his bad temper. They considered what they could do and one day the father had an idea. He called his son and gave him a hammer and a bag of nails. The father said: „Every time you get angry, take a nail and drive into that old fence as hard as you can.”

The fence was very tough and the hammer was heavy, nevertheless the boy was so furious that during the very first day he had driven 37 nails.

Day after day, week after week, the number of nails was gradually decreasing. After some time, the boy started to understand that holding his temper is easier than driving nails into the fence.

One day the boy didn't need hammer and nails anymore as he learned to hold his temper perfectly. So he came to his father and told him about his achievement. “Now every time, when you hold your temper all day long, pull out one nail.”

Much time has passed. At last the boy could be proud of himself as all the nails were gone. When he came to his father and told him about this, he offered to come and take a careful look at the fence. “You did a good job, my son, but pay your attention to the holes that were left from the nails. The fence will never be the same. The same happens when you say hurtful things to people, as your words leave scars in their hearts like those holes in the fence. Remember, we need to treat everyone with love and respect, because it doesn't matter, that you say you are sorry, the scars will not disappear.

It has been proven that CHARACTER is the foundation for all true successes. A person may have money, position, or power, but unless he has good character he or she is not considered to be truly successful.

On a more immediate and practical level, our character is what really determines our success in any area of life. Our character guides our responses to any situation or circumstance in our life. It is why we do the things we do and it is why we do things the way we do them. Since how we respond to the various things that come up is what will determine the results we get, it follows that the success we have in any endeavor are determined by our character.

Character is like a tree and reputation is like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing. Abraham Lincoln.

GOOD CHARACTER TRAITS ESSENTIAL FOR SUCCESS, PROGRESS AND HAPPINESS.

***“Every life is a march from innocence, through temptation, to virtue or vice.”
Lyman Abbott***

Developing these traits of good character can be difficult to foster and maintain, but they accord so many positive benefits to improve the quality of your life, being vigilant in following them will be very helpful in your day to day endeavors and how you relate with other people.

1. **Integrity**-Integrity is having strong moral principles and core values and then conducting your life with those as your guide. When you have integrity, your main agenda is your adherence to it whether or not other people are watching over you. Deciding to always be steadfast to what is right, irrespective of who is supporting you or who is not supporting you. You always stand with your positive core values, even in the hardest times.
2. **Honesty**-Honesty is more than telling the truth. It's living the truth. It is being straightforward and trustworthy in all of your interactions, relationships and thoughts. Being honest requires self-honesty and authenticity. Truth, Truth, Truth is your language. This trait is very important for the truth never changes and it is universal.
3. **Loyalty**-Loyalty is faithfulness and devotion to the management and administration of your school, teachers, your loved ones, your friends, employers and anyone with whom you have a trusted relationship. Following rules and regulations of the institution you are in, is paramount and absolute loyalty. You always need to be reliable and everyone knows they can count on you.
4. **Respectfulness**-You treat yourself and others with courtesy, kindness, esteem, dignity, and politeness. You offer basic respect as a sign of your value for the worth of all people and your ability to accept the inherent flaws we all possess. Respect, no matter what is important.

5. **Responsibility**-Accepting personal, relational, career, community, and societal obligations even when they are difficult or uncomfortable. You follow through on commitments and proactively create or accept accountability for your behaviour and choices.

I can help you understand, responsibility in another way of being an acronym,

R-Respect: Every person keen of succeeding should learn to respect God, him/herself, and other people.

E-Expectations: Every person should have expectations in their day to day tasks and work towards achievement.

S-Spirituality: It is important for a person keen on progress to check his/her own spirituality and the relationship he or she has with God, this ensures inner drive for discipline and success.

P-Participation: Everyone keen on success should participate in the own personal development and explore on how to improve on weaker areas.

O-Ownership: When a person owns up his life and he is keen on improving, it becomes less difficult in accomplishment of tasks at hand.

N-Nurture: Feeding ones aspirations with positivity is very important, success starts when a person is willing to nurture his ambitions and be ready to explore ways to improve and also deciding to make good choices in life.

S-Seek leadership: A responsible person needs to embrace the need to lead from the front as He seeks to improve his effectiveness in what he does and also setting a favorable future.

I-Initiate: A person keen on success should be ready to come up with ways on how to reach his goals; such a person should be able to initiate discussions with the stakeholders on how He can improve his life. For students, they need to initiate discussions or come up with new ways of improving their performance and issues of career. No one should be a back bencher as far as his or her life is concerned.

B-Be faithful and truthful: Every person keen on success in life should remain truthful and faithful to himself and ensure He is not influenced negatively by peers for he will suffer the consequences alone.

L-Listening: Listening to positive advices and shunning negative ones gives a person ways on how to his chances of success.

E-Expand: There should always be expansion in one's life. Personal development is a continuous process which should be embraced all the time. No one should remain at the same deplorable conditions forever and the motto should always be; Forward ever backward never.

6. **Humility**-This means that you have a confident yet modest opinion of your own self-importance. You don't see yourself as "too good" for other people or situations. You have learning and growth mindset and the desire to express and experience gratitude for what you have, rather than expecting or deserving more. Humility mostly goes with respect for other people, for as you know each and every person is important and has purpose, irrespective of who they are or where they come from.
7. **Compassion**-Feeling deep sympathy and pity for the suffering and misfortune of others, and you have a desire to do something to alleviate their suffering. You do consider the suffering of other people, and also desist from doing harm to other people.
For example, if you are indisciplined, you go on strike in your school and destroy the properties of the school; it shows lack of compassion to the stakeholders in your school who includes yourself and your parents.
8. **Fairness**-Using discernment, compassion and integrity, you strive to make decisions and take actions based on what you consider the ultimate best course or outcome for all involved.
9. **Forgiveness**-You make conscious, intentional decisions to let go of resentment and anger towards someone for an offense, whether or not forgiveness is sought by the offender. Forgiveness may or may not include pardoning, restoration or reconciliation. It extends both to others and to one's self.
10. **Authenticity**-You are able to be your real and true self, without pretense, posturing, or insincerity. You are capable of showing appropriate vulnerability and self-awareness.
11. **Courageousness**-In spite of fear of danger, discomfort or pain, you have the mental fortitude to carry on with a commitment, plan, or decision knowing it is the right or best course of action.
12. **Generosity**-You are willing to offer your time, energy, efforts, emotions, words or assets without the expectation of something in return. You offer these freely and often joyously.

13. **Perseverance**-This is the steadfast persistence and determination to continue on with a course of action, belief, or purpose, even if it's difficult or uncomfortable in order to reach a higher goal or outcome.
14. **Politeness**-You are knowledgeable of basic good manners, common courtesies, and etiquette, and are willing to apply those to all people you encounter. You desire to learn the skills of politeness in order to enhance your relationships and self-esteem.
15. **Kindness**-This is an attitude of being considerate, helpful and benevolent to others. It is motivated by a positive disposition and the desire for warm and pleasant interactions.
16. **Lovingness**-The ability to love towards those you love means showing them through your words, actions and expressions how deeply you care about them. It includes the willingness to be open and willing to offer your help.
17. **Optimism**-This is a sense of hopefulness and confidence about the future. It involves a positive mental attitude in which you interpret life events, people, and situations in a promising light.
18. **Reliability**-You can be consistently depended upon to follow through on your commitments, actions and decisions. You do what you say you will do.
19. **Hardworking**-You have the desire to do things well or to the best of your ability. You are thorough, careful, efficient, organized and vigilant in your efforts, based on your own principles or sense of what is right.
20. **Self-discipline**-You are able, through good habits or willpower, to overcome your desires or feelings in order to follow the best course of action or to rise to your commitments or principles. You have a strong sense of self-control in order to reach a desired goal.
21. **Alertness** – Being aware of what is taking place around you so you can have the right responses.

22. **Attentiveness** – Showing the worth of a person or task by giving your undivided concentration.
23. **Availability** – Making your own schedule and priorities secondary to the wishes of those you serve.
24. **Benevolence** – Giving to others basic needs without expecting personal rewards and carefully managing your resources so you can freely give to those in need.
25. **Boldness** – Confidence that what you have to say or do is true, right and just.
26. **Cautiousness** – Knowing how important right timing is in accomplishing right actions.
27. **Contentment** – Realizing that true happiness does not depend on material conditions.
28. **Creativity** – Approaching a need, a task, or an idea from a new perspective.
29. **Decisiveness** – The ability to recognize key factors and finalize difficult decisions.
30. **Deference** – Limiting your freedom so you do not offend the tastes of those around you.
31. **Dependability** – Fulfilling what you consented to do, even if it means unexpected sacrifice.
32. **Determination** – Purposing to accomplish right goals at the right time, regardless of the opposition.
33. **Diligence** – Investing your time and energy to complete each task assigned to you.
34. **Discernment** – Understanding the deeper reasons why things happen.

35. **Discretion** – Recognizing and avoiding words, actions and attitudes that could bring undesirable consequences.
36. **Endurance** – The inward strength to withstand stress and do the best you can.
37. **Enthusiasm** – Expressing joy in each task as you give it your best effort.
38. **Faith** – Confidence that actions rooted in good character will yield the best outcome, even when you cannot see how.
39. **Flexibility** – Willingness to change plans or ideas according to the direction of your authorities.
40. **Forgiveness** – Clearing the record of those who have wronged you and not holding a grudge.
41. **Gentleness** – Showing consideration and personal concern for others.
42. **Thankfulness** – Letting others know by your words and actions how they have benefitted your life.
43. **Honor** – Respecting those in leadership because of the higher authorities they represent.
44. **Hospitality** – Cheerfully sharing food, shelter or conversation to benefit others.
45. **Humility** – Acknowledging that achievement results from the investment of others in your life.
46. **Initiative** – Recognizing and doing what needs to be done before you are asked to do it.
47. **Joyfulness** – Maintaining a good attitude, even when faced with unpleasant conditions.
48. **Justice** – Taking personal responsibility to uphold what is pure, right and true.

49. **Loyalty** – Using difficult times to demonstrate your commitment to those you serve or follow.
50. **Meekness** – Yielding your personal rights and expectations with a desire to serve.
51. **Obedience** – Quickly and cheerfully carrying out the direction of those who are responsible for you.
52. **Orderliness** – Arranging yourself and your surroundings to achieve greater efficiency.
53. **Patience** – Accepting a difficult situation and working with patience towards achieving a particular goal.
54. **Persuasiveness** – Guiding vital truths around another's mental roadblocks.
55. **Punctuality** – Showing esteem for others by doing the right thing at the right time.
56. **Resourcefulness** – Finding practical uses for that which others would overlook or discard.
57. **Security** – Structuring your life around that which cannot be destroyed or taken away.
58. **Self-Control** – Rejecting wrong desires and doing what is right.
59. **Sensitivity** – Perceiving the true attitudes and emotions of those around you.
60. **Sincerity** – Eagerness to do what is right with transparent motives.
61. **Thoroughness** – Knowing what factors will diminish the effectiveness of my work or words if neglected.
62. **Thriftiness** – Allowing myself and others to spend only what is necessary.

63. **Tolerance** – Realizing that everyone is at varying levels of character development.
64. **Truthfulness** – Earning future trust by accurately reporting past facts.
65. **Virtue** – The moral excellence evident in your life as you consistently do what is right.
66. **Wisdom** – Seeing and responding to life situations from a perspective that transcends your current circumstances.

PILLARS OF CHARACTER.

“Worry about your character and not your reputation, because your character is who you are, and your reputation is only what people think of you.”

ANONYMOUS.

There are six pillars which can be used to shape character and have been sighted by psychologists as the framework to teaching and learning character development.

The six pillars consist of six virtues which everyone can identify with, Trustworthiness; Respect; Responsibility; Fairness; Caring; and Citizenship. They help instill a positive learning environment for students and workers and a culture of kindness making schools and institutions a safe environment for students to learn and workers to work in.

Use the mnemonic acronym of T.R.R.F.C.C. to help remember each pillar.

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.
- Be tolerant and accepting 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.
- Plan ahead.
- Be diligent.
- Persevere.
- Do your best.
- Use self-control.
- Be self-disciplined.
- Think before you act.
- Be accountable for your words, actions, and attitudes.
- Set a good example for others

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.
- Treat all people fairly

CARING.

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

CITIZENSHIP.

- Get involved to make your school and community better.
- Cooperate.
- Get involved in community affairs.
- Stay informed; vote when of age.
- Be a good neighbor.
- Obey laws and rules.
- Respect authority.
- Protect the environment.
- Volunteer.

HOW TO BUILD GOOD CHARACTER TRAITS.

“Character is like a tree and reputation is like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.”

Abraham Lincoln.

***“When I do good, I feel good.
When I do bad, I feel bad. That’s my religion.”***

Abraham Lincoln.

If you believe developing your character is an endeavor you want to pursue, here are some steps to show you how.

Define your core values

Know what is most important to you by determining your values for your professional and personal life. These are the principles that are the foundation for your priorities, choices, actions and behaviours.

Practice the habits.

Pick one or two of the traits of good character to practice for several weeks. Write down the actions you want to take or the behaviours you define that reflect this trait, and implement them in your daily life and interactions. Wear a rubber band on your wrist or create other reminders to help you practice.

Find people with character.

Surround yourself with people who reflect the character traits you want to embrace. They will inspire and motivate you to build these traits in yourself. Try to avoid people who have weak character and make bad decisions.

Take some risks.

Start taking small actions toward a goal or value that involve some level of risk. When you face the possibility of failure and challenge yourself toward success, you become mentally and emotionally stronger and more committed to your principles.

Stretch yourself.

Create high standards and big goals for yourself. Expect the best of yourself and constantly work towards that, even though you will have setbacks and occasional failures. Every stretch builds your confidence and knowledge that your character is getting stronger.

Commit to self-improvement.

Realize that building your character is a life-long endeavor. It is something that is practiced in all defining moments of your life. There will be times you step up to the character traits you embrace and other times you falter. By remaining committed to personal growth and learning about yourself, your character will naturally improve, even though the failures might be experienced.

CONSEQUENCES FOR BAD MORAL CHARACTER.

*"I wonder why, I wonder why.
I wonder why I wonder.
I wonder why I wonder why
I wonder why I wonder!"*
Richard Feynman

1. You Will Be Embarrassed.

I put embarrassment as the first reason to walk your talk because it stings. We can all think of a time when we were embarrassed. Being caught doing the wrong thing feels bad. That feeling sticks with you, especially when you get caught in front of people. Study after study reveals people are terrified of public speaking. In fact, one study showed that 74% of people are scared of public speaking. That is 3 out of 4. Why do you think they are scared?

One reason is fear of embarrassment.

They do not want to say something dumb and embarrass themselves. Embarrassment is a big deterrent. Even if social scorn has few if any real consequences, the threat of being called out is powerful. If you are not intentionally about building your personal character, then there will come a time when you will fall. It is the size and height of your platform that determines how big a splat you make. The bigger the stage. The more reason to better your character.

2. You Lose Trust With Others.

Relationships are built on trust. Whether we are talking about friends, family, coworkers or customers, everyone values trust. People demand it.

Trust is like the air we breathe. When it is present, nobody really notices. But when it is absent, everybody notices. – Warren Buffett

Warren Buffett is right. Everybody notices a lack of trust. Sadly, the first part is also true. Nobody really notices when trust is present. Trust is hard to nail down, and therefore sometimes trust is overlooked or undervalued. Trust is a thread that weaves through all our relationships. If you have poor character, then people do not trust you.

3. You Will Destroy Relationships.

Transparency goes a long way in any relationship. When people trust that you are a person of character, then they trust you and your decisions. The inverse is also true.

Broken trust bleeds into every relationship. We may try to sort our work and personal life, but character shows through in every aspect of your life.

4. Your Reputation Will Be Ruined.

A good name is more desirable than great riches; being held in high esteem is better than silver or gold – Proverbs 22:1.

It is amazing that a solid reputation which takes years even decades to build can be shattered by one decision. A blunder that ruins your reputation is caused by a series of poor choices. These choices accumulated, because integrity was not a consistent or a priority.

We live in a world of communication. It is hard to keep things quiet. This is all the more reason to continually focus on improving your character. One thing to consider is that people do not expect perfection. They expect honesty. No one is perfect and everyone knows that.

A leader who is accountable and honest is respected. A leader with poor integrity will hurt the ones who care the most. It is not about the leader it is about the followers. Poor character can leave lasting scars on people.

5. You Will Never Reach Your Full Potential.

Several people never lived up to their full potential. They did not make it. They lacked a key component in lasting success, personal character.

You may be smart. You may be strong. You may get people to like you, and you may even get people to love you. Still, you will never reach your full potential in this life unless you live the life you were designed to live. Building, improving and striving for top notch moral character is not an option. In order for you to be your best, it is required.

