

# Responsibility

This week students will learn about responsibility, how we use self-discipline to fulfill our responsibilities, and make responsible decisions. Students explore the idea of choice and discuss how to avoid blaming when we fall short of our responsibilities.

Begin the unit with the whole class lesson and then aim to complete at least two of the mini lessons with your students throughout the week. Each mini lesson is designed to present elements of the main lesson in new and engaging ways.

## Main Lesson

### Whole Class Lesson

30 minutes



### Taking Responsibility

This lesson introduces the concept of responsibility and self-discipline, and explains how it can be easy to blame others or situations for times when we fall short of our responsibilities. The lesson gives students an opportunity to examine a variety of situations and make decisions about how to respond in a way that reflects blame and in a way that reflects ownership and self-discipline. (See page 3 for lesson details.)

## Mini Lessons

### For Small Groups

15 minutes



### Decisions, Decisions

In small groups, let students work through several short decisions where a choice must be made. After the decision, have groups pause to discuss if that is the choice others would have made and why or why not. Discuss the idea that opinions on the responsible choice will differ from student to student. We need to remember to respect the choices of others.

Situation 1: You have been invited to your cousin's birthday party which will be at an indoor trampoline park and will end with pizza and a movie! Your cousin really wants you to come. But, it is the same day as your friend's piano recital and you already said you would go watch him play. You really want to skip the recital and go to the party. What do you do?

Situation 2: You didn't study for your history test but your friend, who took the test early because she will be gone for a family event, says she can tell you exactly what is on the test. What do you do?

Situation 3: You are supposed to read for 30 minutes before you have any screen time. You struggle with reading, though, and don't want to put in that extra time. Your sister never has to read before she gets on her phone or the Xbox. Your mom doesn't get home until 5 and she wouldn't really know if you read or not. She trusts you to do your reading and most days you do. Today you just don't feel like it but you really want to play Minecraft. What do you do?

**For Partners**  
15 minutes



### **Making Choices**

“Life presents you with so many decisions. A lot of times, they’re right in front of your face and they’re really difficult, but we must make them.”  
—Brittany Murphy

Discuss a time when you had a difficult choice to make. How did you finally arrive at your decision? How did it feel to make a choice? How did self-discipline help you make your decision?

**For Individuals**  
15 minutes



### **What am I Responsible For?**

Write down a list of things you are responsible for each day at home, at school, and outside of school (in the community, on teams, in groups, at a job, etc.). You might be surprised at how many responsibilities you have. When you start getting overwhelmed by everything you have to do, what are some things you can do to help you remain strong and self-disciplined to get everything done?

You could have students brainstorm these lists independently and then talk through [resiliency strategies](#) as a group. [These videos by Dan Siegel](#) might help prepare you to facilitate this discussion, too.

**Technology-Focused**  
15 minutes



### **How Do We Use Tech Responsibly?**

Large group discussion: Considering how much of our daily lives depend on technology (our computers, iPads, phones, music, TVs, game systems), it can be hard to make good choices about how much we use or depend on technology. First, what are some poor choices we can make with regard to technology and how we use it? What are some good choices we can make to ensure we have a healthy relationship with technology where we are in control of it, and not the other way around?

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## Lesson Timeframe

30 minutes

## Required Materials

- ☐ Responsibility Scenario Strips  
(see attached)

## Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, International Society for Technology in Education Standards, when applicable, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.

## Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Explore how to arrive at responsible decisions
- Evaluate how owning up to our responsibilities when we fall short is better than blaming others for our shortcomings

## Teacher Connection/Self-Care

As a teacher, you have many responsibilities throughout a school day. You also are responsible to and for a number of people. It can be challenging keeping everyone and everything organized and on track with what needs to be accomplished bell to bell. One way to help ensure you are meeting all of your responsibilities is to make a list of all you are responsible for and what you need in order to fulfill that responsibility. This helps you make plans, set goals, and have realistic expectations with what you can get done in a day. Have you ever actually thought about each daily responsibility, listed it out, and itemized what you need or prioritized what to do first? Try it, if not. You will be surprised at a) how much you are responsible for, and b) how good it feels to be organized. You might also identify things that you can take off your plate. Are you really responsible for “x,” or is that someone else’s job that you have somehow inherited? Maybe there is an opportunity to alleviate some of your responsibilities and get some of your time back.



## Share

3-5 minutes

In this unit we are going to talk about responsibility and how to use self-discipline and other skills to make responsible choices. When you think of responsibility, what comes to mind? (Invite student responses.)



## Inspire

5-7 minutes

Sometimes responsibility can feel more like a chore or something we have to do, right? And in many ways, that is what it is. RAK defines responsibility as being able to do the things that are expected or required of you. It can sound kind of bossy, right? But, having responsibilities can also be really fun and exciting! As you get older, you will have the opportunity to have all kinds of responsibilities.

What are some responsibilities that you have this year as a 7th grader that you haven't had before (in elementary school)? These could be responsibilities you have here at school or responsibilities you have at home. (Invite student responses.)

Good! These are all really exciting responsibilities. The fact that you are being trusted with more means others view you as capable of doing these very important things.



## Empower

15 minutes

*NOTE: This activity requires some pre-planning. If electing to distribute the scenarios in the manner suggested, you will need to cut out the scenario strips and tape them to the bottom of student chairs in advance of class.*

Now, let's talk a bit about two things: self-discipline and blaming. Self-discipline means that we are able to control what we say and do so that we do not hurt ourselves or others. This applies to responsibility because sometimes we don't want to do what is expected of us (or what we said we would do) and it takes self-discipline to follow through (so we don't hurt others by falling short on our responsibilities). Does anyone have an example of how they have used self-discipline to complete a responsibility? (Invite student responses. If no one volunteers, ask how students got up for school that morning. They probably would have preferred to stay in bed, but they used self-discipline to get out of bed, get ready, and get to school.)

Now, when we fall short on our responsibilities, what is your typical responses? There are a few you might have. 1) You might accept that you fell short and "take responsibility" for it, apologize, and make it right. Or, 2) You might blame someone or something else for why the responsibility was not fulfilled. Has anyone ever done this? Blamed a sibling, a teacher, a parent or guardian, a coach, the other team, or even your busy schedule? (Invite students to raise hands.)

I think we all have both accepted when we have fallen short and blamed someone or something else for when we fall short. We all have responsibilities at home or at school that we probably don't necessarily love having. The key is to remember that we always have a choice. We can choose to accept our responsibilities and to follow through on them (even if we don't love them), or we can choose to blow off our responsibilities and blame others when we do (which often causes more problems for us).

Today we are going to work on using self-discipline to make good, responsible choices.

Everyone, reach under your chair and pull off the strip of paper that is taped there. If your slip says “Blame,” line up on the left side of the room. If it says “Self-Discipline,” line up on the right. Then, silently read the scenario on your paper. If your situation says “Blame,” then think of a way you could blame someone else for the situation. If it says, “Self-discipline,” think of a way you can respond by taking responsibility for the situation. We will start with the Blame side. Whoever has scenario #1, read your scenario and your blame-based response. Then, whoever has #1 on the Self-Discipline side, read your scenario (which is the same as the Blame scenario) and give us your self-disciplined counter response. This will give us a chance to hear two different responses to the same situation.

*Go through each scenario. If you have more kids than scenarios, you could write more scenarios or pair people up (two work together on the Blame side and two work on the Self-Discipline side). Or, just pick a handful of volunteers to go through the scenarios while the rest of the class listens. After each scenario, you could take a poll (using a show of hands or classroom clickers if you use those) to see which response students would be more likely to give.*



## Reflect

5-7 minutes

In your mind, which is easier: blaming or using self-discipline to complete your responsibilities? Sometimes it might feel easier to simply skip out of our responsibility and blame others or situations. What is the trouble with blaming, though? (Invite student responses.)

While it may seem easier to dodge responsibilities, it is actually healthier and more productive to complete our responsibilities and if we fall short, own up and make it right. Use some of the language we discussed today to help you do this!

# Responsibility Scenario Strips

These can be done orally if you do not have time or don't want to cut the scenarios out.

## Scenario 1:

You have a big math test on Friday, but with music lessons, basketball practice, babysitting jobs, and regular homework, you didn't make any time to study. You take the test and nearly fail it. Your teacher pulls you aside the next day and says she's disappointed in your score and asks what happened. What do you say?

## Scenario 2:

You have to do a project for the science fair, but you hate science. It feels like busy work and you don't see the point of doing a project that you'll never use in real life. You put the project off until the last possible moment and then, on the morning of the fair, you forget all your supplies at home. Your teacher releases everyone to the gym to set up their projects before judging starts. What do you do?

## Scenario 3:

Every morning your job is to wash the breakfast dishes before school. Your stepdad works the night shift and your mom has to leave early to get your younger siblings to daycare before she goes to work. So, you are left to clean up and get to school on time. This morning you overslept and barely get out the door on time. You were up pretty late playing video games so you were exhausted. You didn't do the dishes and you actually left a bunch of breakfast stuff out on the counter. This is the third time you've done this week. Now you are at school and won't be home until after dinner because you have practice after school and youth group. You can already hear your mom's disappointment. When she asks why you haven't been doing your job, what do you say?

## Scenario 4:

Your soccer coach has asked everyone to sell coupon books as a team fundraiser but you are really uncomfortable doing that. You don't like asking people for money and your parents don't want you to sell where they work because they feel it puts people in an awkward situation. They also won't let you wander the neighborhood because they don't think it is safe. So, you haven't sold any, but your teammates have sold most of their books. When your coach asks why you didn't sell anything, what do you say?

## Scenario 5:

It's your grandpa's birthday and your mom asks that you call him after school to check in and wish him a happy birthday. You forget. You end up hanging at your friend's house until supper before going home and working on homework and watching TV. When you go to bed that night, your mom asks how grandpa is doing. What do you say?