



AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION
CENTER FOR EDUCATION

A Workbook for Kids



GOOD WITHOUT A GOD

Introduction

This workbook is designed to help children explore the philosophy of humanism using the American Humanist Association's Ten Commitments.

Each one of us is responsible for the collective welfare of humanity, other beings, and the resources of our shared planet. We value freedom, reason, and tolerance, and it is our responsibility to develop this heritage for ensuing generations. The Ten Commitments represents our shared humanistic values and principles that promote a democratic world in which every individual's worth and dignity is respected, nurtured, and supported, and where human freedom and ethical responsibility are natural aspirations for everyone. The Ten Commitments are further explained later in the workbook and can be found at [HumanistCommitments.org](https://www.americanhumanist.org/ten-commitments).

How to use this workbook:

Using this workbook as a guide, children will understand how they can have a positive impact on society from personal interactions to being an active citizen of the world. Some activities are simple and brief while others are ongoing and may be more challenging. You may need additional paper to record your activities.

We recommend adult counselors work with children on the activities presented in this workbook and support them in expanding on the concepts. A counselor may be a guardian, family member, member of the local humanist group, or another trusted adult who is familiar with humanism.

American Humanist Association's Center for Education publishes this workbook. Additional copies, along with other Ten Commitments materials, can be obtained by contacting:

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Contents

Introduction	1
How to use this workbook:.....	1
What is Humanism?	3
The Ten Commitments of Living Humanist Values	5
Altruism.....	7
Activity 1 – Donate Clothes, Toys, Games, and Books.....	7
Activity 2 – Daily Assistant	7
Critical Thinking	8
Activity 1 – Fact vs. Opinion	8
Activity 2 – Identifying Facts vs. Opinions	10
Empathy	11
Activity 1 – Identifying Emotions.....	11
Activity 2 – Active Listening	11
Environmentalism	13
Activity 1 – Nature Walk Bingo	13
Activity 2 – Supporting Your Environment.....	14
Ethical Development.....	15
Activity 1 – Skateboard Accident	15
Activity 2 – Organs Needed	15
Global Awareness	16
Activity 1 – Language Lesson.....	16
Activity 2 – Global Perspective on an Issue	17
Humility	18
Activity 1 – Spread Appreciation.....	18
Activity 2 – Being a Gracious Loser.....	18
Peace and Social Justice.....	19
Activity 1 – Diversity in Books.....	19
Activity 2 – Learn about an Activist	19
Responsibility.....	20
Activity 1 – My Responsibilities.....	20
Activity 2 – Responsibility goals	20
Service & Participation	21
Activity 1 – Welcome Guide.....	21
Activity 2 – Find a Service Project	21

What is Humanism?

Below is the [Humanist Manifesto III](#) that was adopted by the American Humanist Association in 2003.



Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms the ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.

The lifeway of Humanism—guided by reason, inspired by compassion, and informed by experience—encourages followers to live life well and fully. It evolved through the ages and continues to develop through the efforts of thoughtful people who recognize that values and ideals, however carefully wrought, are subject to change as knowledge and understanding advances.

This document is part of an ongoing effort to manifest in clear and positive terms the conceptual boundaries of Humanism, not what they must believe, but a consensus of what they do believe. It is in this sense that Humanists affirm the following:

Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis. Humanists find that science is the best method for determining this knowledge as well as for solving problems and developing beneficial technologies. They also recognize the value of new departures in thought, the arts, and inner experience—each subject to analysis by critical intelligence.



Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change. Humanists recognize nature as self-existing and accept life as all and enough. Humanists distinguish things as they are from things as they might wish or imagine them. Humanists welcome the challenges of the future, drawn to and undaunted by the yet to be known.



Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience. Humanists ground values in human welfare, shaped by human circumstances, interests, and concerns. These values extend to the global ecosystem and beyond. Humanists are committed to treating each person as having inherent worth and dignity, and to making informed choices in a context of freedom consistent with responsibility.



Life’s fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals. Humanists aim for fullest possible development and animate their lives with a deep sense of purpose. They find wonder and awe in the joys and beauties of human existence, its challenges and tragedies, and even in the inevitability and finality of death. Humanists rely on the rich heritage of human culture and the lifescence of Humanism to provide comfort in times of want and encouragement in times of plenty.



Humans are social by nature and find meaning in relationships. Humanists long for and strive toward a world of mutual care and concern, free of cruelty and its consequences, where differences are resolved cooperatively without resorting to violence. The joining of individuality with interdependence enriches lives, encourages individuals to enrich the lives of others, and inspires the hope of attaining peace, justice, and opportunity for all.



Working to benefit society maximizes individual happiness. Progressive cultures have worked to free humanity from the brutalities of mere survival and to reduce suffering, improve society, and develop global community. Seeking to minimize the inequities of circumstance and ability, Humanists support a just distribution of nature’s resources and the fruits of human effort so that as many as possible can enjoy a good life.



Humanists are concerned for the well-being of all, committed to diversity and respecting those with differing yet humane views. Humanists work to uphold the equal enjoyment of human rights and civil liberties in an open, secular society. They maintain it is a civic duty to participate in the democratic process, and a planetary duty to protect nature’s integrity, diversity, and beauty in a secure, sustainable manner.

Thus, engaged in the flow of life, Humanists aspire to this vision with the informed conviction that humanity has the ability to progress toward its highest ideals. A Humanist believes, “The responsibility for our lives and the kind of world in which we live is ours and ours alone.”

For more on humanism, visit the [American Humanist Association](#) website and the [AHA Center for Education](#) website, where you can access self-guided online courses like the [Introduction to Humanism](#) (registration is required but most courses are free).

The Ten Commitments of Living Humanist Values

The Ten Commitments are defined below and form the basis of the activities in this workbook. More descriptions can be found with the activities and at HumanistCommitments.org. (Note: they are listed in alphabetical order. Each Commitment is equally important.)

Altruism

I will help others in need without hoping for rewards.

Critical Thinking

I will practice good judgment by asking questions and thinking for myself.

Empathy

I will consider other people's thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Environmentalism

I will take care of the Earth and the life on it.

Ethical Development

I will always focus on becoming a better person.

Global Awareness

I will be a good neighbor to the people who share the Earth with me and help make the world a better place for everyone.

Humility

I will be aware of my strengths and weaknesses, and appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of others.

Peace and Social Justice

I will help people solve problems and handle disagreements in ways that are fair for everyone.

Responsibility

I will be a good person—even when no one is looking—and own the consequences of my actions.

Service and Participation

I will help my community in ways that let me get to know the people I'm helping.



THE
TEN
COMMITMENTS
LIVING HUMANIST VALUES
humanistcommitments.org

<p>ALTRUISM I will help others in need without hoping for rewards.</p> 	<p>CRITICAL THINKING I will practice good judgement by asking questions and thinking for myself.</p> 	<p>EMPATHY I will consider other people's thoughts, feelings, and experiences.</p> 	
<p>ENVIRONMENTALISM I will take care of the Earth and the life on it.</p> 	<p>ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT I will always focus on becoming a better person.</p> 	<p>GLOBAL AWARENESS I will be a good neighbor to the people who share the Earth with me and help make the world a better place for everyone.</p> 	<p>HUMILITY I will be aware of my strengths and weaknesses, and appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of others.</p> 
<p>PEACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE I will help people solve problems and handle disagreements in ways that are fair for everyone.</p> 	<p>RESPONSIBILITY I will be a good person—even when no one is looking—and own the consequences of my actions.</p> 	<p>SERVICE & PARTICIPATION I will help my community in ways that let me get to know the people I'm helping.</p> 	 <p>AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION CENTER FOR EDUCATION</p>

Altruism

I will help others without hoping for rewards.

Altruism is the selfless ability and willingness to help others without expecting reward, recognition, or returned support. Humans demonstrate altruistic behavior because we are social beings who depend on each other. Parents take care of babies until they are able to fend for themselves, just as you may care for a sibling or grandparent who needs assistance. When we behave altruistically we increase each other's chances to survive and thrive.

Activity 1 – Donate Clothes, Toys, Games, and Books

Each year we grow physically and intellectually. Have you noticed you no longer fit into some of your clothes anymore? Do you no longer play with some toys or games, or read some books? Take out clothes, toys, games, and books you no longer use (wash as needed), and donate them to a homeless shelter, orphanage, or other organization that supports children in need.

Activity 2 – Daily Assistant

Think about all that you and your family do each day during the week like school, work, play, meals, after-school classes and clubs, caring for pets, gardening, cleaning, visiting family and friends, etc. How could you support your family with these activities each day? Could you set the table, wash the dishes, put away the toys, cheer someone up, vacuum the car, carry groceries, etc.? Write down at least one way you will help the people around you each day of the week.

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

Critical Thinking

I will practice good judgment by asking questions and thinking for myself.

We must observe, report, experiment, and analyze the information around us to understand what is reliable knowledge and what is not. Thinking critically allows us to reason our way to good judgments and effective solutions to the problems we face, instead of making assumptions or misrepresenting opinion as fact. It's important to raise clear questions—like who, what, when, where, why, and how—to gather information and evaluate answers. Critical thinkers learn how to process, share and challenge ideas, and consider the consequences. This process forms the basis of the scientific method.

Activity 1 – Fact vs. Opinion

One of the fundamental skills in critical thinking is the ability to separate facts from opinions. Facts are true and can be proven. Opinions are based on beliefs that are not proven. It's important to differentiate a universally true fact from a person's opinion or preference. Read each statement and circle whether it is a fact or opinion. Explain your answers.

1. Broccoli contains a lot of vitamin C.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

2. The largest fish is the whale shark.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

3. Great Smoky Mountains National Park is the best national park.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

4. Water is two parts hydrogen to one part oxygen.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

5. Fall is the best season because of the spectacular colors.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

6. A telescope is a wise purchase.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

7. Insects and spiders are invertebrates.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

8. Riding in a hot air balloon would be a frightening experience.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

9. An adult human's skeleton has 206 bones.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

10. Ostriches are unable to fly, but they can run very fast.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

11. The blue whale is the largest animal ever to exist.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

12. Staying up late is a lot of fun.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

13. Colds are caused by different kinds of viruses.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

14. Weight training is the best form of exercise.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

15. Most birds have hollow bones.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

16. There are thirty days in April.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

17. It's a bad idea to talk to people about politics and religion.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

18. "I'm happy to see you" is a sentence written in present tense.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

19. Everyone should go to Europe at least once in his or her life.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

20. Rachel Carson wrote the book *Silent Spring*.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

21. Babies should be born in hospitals rather than at home.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

22. The bus leaves at 7:30 a.m.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

23. It's easy to take good pictures if you think carefully about what you're doing.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

24. It's better to ride a bike than to drive a car.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

25. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west.

Fact or Opinion Explain: _____

Activity 2 – Identifying Facts vs. Opinions

Critical thinking is an important part of determining the validity of an argument. Is the argument based on facts or opinions? This can affect how we make decisions on everything from which toothpaste to buy to which political leaders to support. Find three statements or advertisements that are made by a corporation, non-profit, or political leader. Analyze them to determine what is a fact and what is an opinion. List the data that supports the facts. Show the source of the data you determined was factual. Discuss what you found with your counselor.

	Fact	Opinion
Example 1:		
Example 2:		
Example 3:		

Empathy

I will consider other people's thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Empathy requires us to step outside of our own perspective to consider someone else's thoughts, feelings, or circumstance from that person's point of view. In many ways, empathy is the first step to ethical behavior as it allows us to respond compassionately to the suffering of others and exercise good judgment when our actions may affect someone else. Understanding another's perspective is not only critical to building better personal relationships, but also makes us better citizens in our local and global communities. Empathy promotes tolerance, consideration, and compassion amongst us all.

Activity 1 – Identifying Emotions

Use magazines to find images of people expressing any kind of feeling and cut them out with scissors. You can tape or glue the people to a poster board or Popsicle sticks and label each picture with a feeling word. Explain to your counselor what you think the people are feeling. Observe the people's facial expressions, body language, or the context of the image. How easy or hard is it to identify feelings? Write about your observations.

Activity 2 – Active Listening

In order to understand another's perspective you must first learn about them. Active listening is key to this understanding. Active listening is the act of listening to understand rather than to reply or rebut. There are several key parts to active listening which are listed below:

- You must concentrate on not talking while the other person is talking. Be sure to pay attention and to look directly at the speaker.
- Be sure you are listening to the other person talking, instead of preparing your reply.
- Make sure you are paying attention to how the person is behaving.
- Be aware of the body language of the other person.

- Let the other person know that you're listening—for example, by nodding your head or reacting to what they said.
- When the other person stops talking, try to paraphrase or translate what was said. This technique helps to ensure there is a clear understanding.
- Try to recognize the individual's feelings—for example: "You sound angry" or "You seem to be upset," etc.

Practice active listening with another using the guidelines above. The topic is not important but it should not be so trivial as to be unimportant. This can take place between you and another child, you and your counselor, or you and a different adult. Discuss at least three points or aspects of the topic (ex: sharing a story, giving opinions, or discussing facts). Be able to explain to your counselor what you learned about the person's point of view. What was their emotional state (angry, frustrated, bored, or happy)? What did you learn about them that you didn't know before? Do you feel different about the person or subject now than you did before the active listening session? Write about your observations.

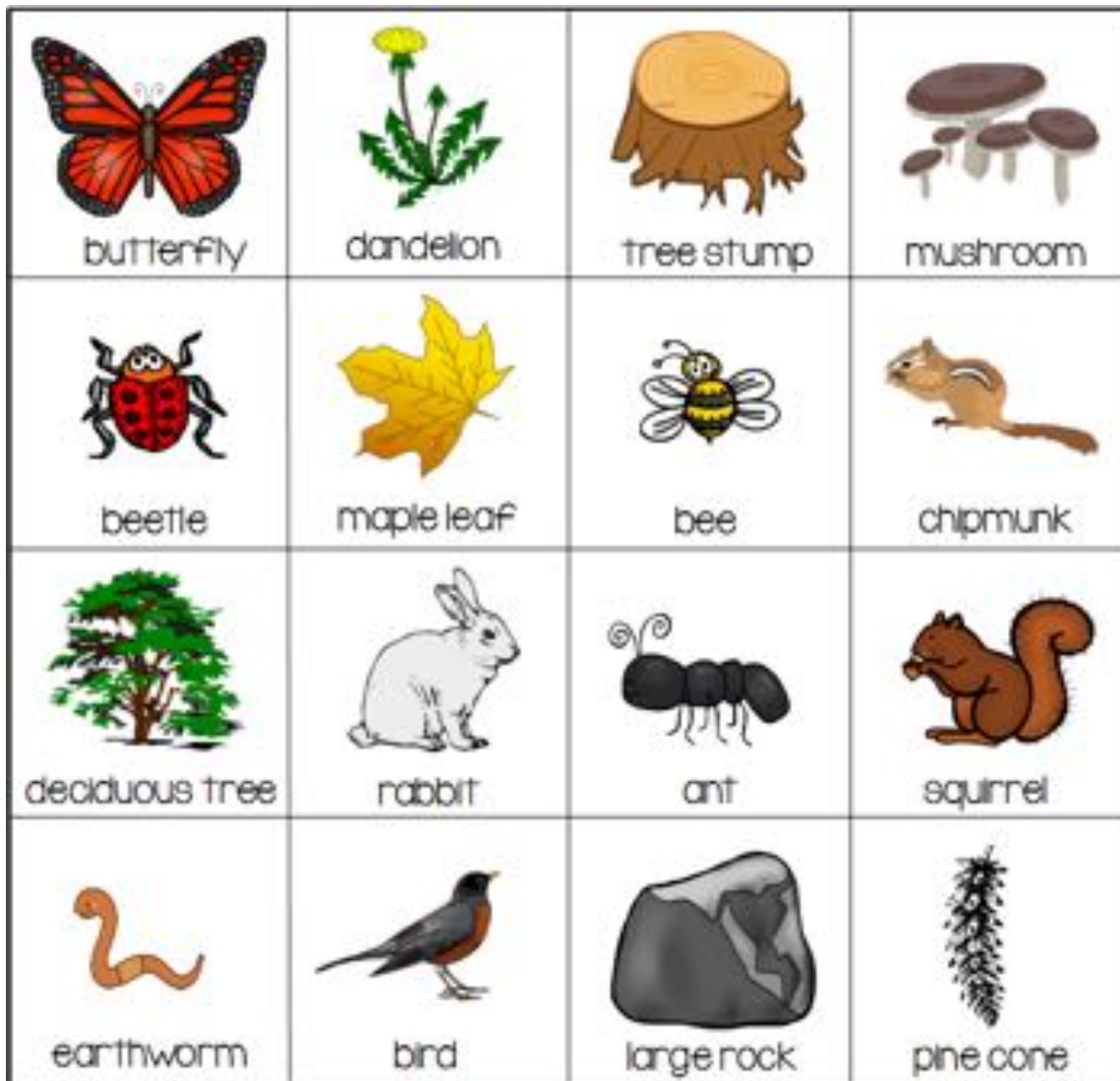
Environmentalism

I will take care of the Earth and the life on it.

Humanists believe everyone can and should play a role in caring for the Earth and its inhabitants. We depend on our planet to sustain us with its precious resources (like air, water, and plants) and our planet's ecosystems depend on us to be good stewards and take responsibility for the impact human activity has. We can directly experience the living things in our homes and neighborhoods, like trees, flowers, birds, insects, and pets. It's also important to learn about deserts and oceans, rivers and forests, and the wildlife around the world.

Activity 1 – Nature Walk Bingo

Take a walk outside and try to find in nature the items below. If walking with your counselor, point them out and discuss. If your counselor isn't with you, take a photo and discuss later. How are animals and plants interacting with each other? What sounds and smells do you experience?



Activity 2 – Supporting Your Environment

While walking around your neighborhood enjoying nature, look for what problems you notice. Is there trash? Are tree branches blocking sidewalks or streets? Are there areas with no plants where flowers or vegetables could grow? Are there weeds sprouting up? Do the birds and bees have places they can land and gather nutrients? Consider how you, alone or with the support of others, could fix these issues. Discuss with your counselor and write down five ways you will support the environment around you.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Ethical Development

I will always focus on becoming a better person.

Ethical development is a never-ending process that requires constant reflection and evaluation of our personal choices and the consequences they have on others. Fairness, cooperation, telling the truth, and sharing are examples of good ethical development. New challenges and concerns arise as times change and different factors need to be recognized. We should continually think and adapt with the goal of becoming better human beings.

Activity 1 – Skateboard Accident

Imagine you and a friend want to play outside with your skateboard but your mother said no because she's worried you'll get hurt. You and your friend go out to play anyway and have a great time until your friend falls and gets seriously hurt. How do you help your friend? Do you tell your mother the truth or lie? Discuss the options with your counselor and make a decision.

Bonus: Have you, or someone you know, experienced a situation where you were unsure where to turn for help or were scared about telling the truth to someone because they may get mad?

Activity 2 – Organs Needed

Imagine you're a skilled doctor with five patients who all need different organ transplants. There are currently no organs available and if they don't get their transplants soon they will all die. You have a sixth patient, who is dying from a disease. At the moment you are giving him medicine to ease his pain and prolong his life. He is a compatible organ donor for your five other patients. If you were to stop giving him medicine he would die before them, in a very painful way, but you would then be able to use his organs to save the other five. What do you do? Discuss the options with your counselor and make a decision.

Bonus: What if the patient's disease is curable? What if the disease is incurable? What if the patient is really famous? What if the patient is a homeless person? What if the patient is someone you knew before they were hospitalized? What if the patient is mean? What if the patient is nice?

Global Awareness

I will be a good neighbor to the people who share the Earth with me and help make the world a better place for everyone.

The world is rich in cultural, social, and individual diversity. In the modern world interdependence is increasing rapidly. Events anywhere can have consequences everywhere. Global awareness broadens our knowledge of cultures and perspectives that are outside of our own experience. We strive to be global citizens who recognize our personal responsibility to foster a healthy and dignified life for everyone in our global community.

Activity 1 – Language Lesson

One of the best ways to connect with people from different cultures is to learn their language. It takes a lot of skill and practice to understand how to read, write, and speak another language. Below are some useful words to know when communicating with people from any culture. Fill in the chart with the correct words and practice saying them out loud.

English	Hello	Please	Thank You	Sorry	Good-bye
French					
Spanish					
Russian					
Mandarin Chinese					
Arabic					
Italian					
Japanese					
[Choose a language]					

Bonus: Learn how to say the above words in American Sign Language.

Activity 2 – Global Perspective on an Issue

Identify an issue that has global implications and study it from the point of view of someone in another country. Examples may be climate change, religious intolerance, racism, income inequality, drug policy, immigration, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, gun rights, etc. Go to your library or the Internet (with parents' permission) and read at least three articles from other countries publications on the issue chosen. These could be magazine articles, newspaper articles, blogs, or other public media. Identify the differences in the views of the different countries. List the differences in perspective and talk about them with your counselor. Write about your observations.

Humility

I will be aware of my strengths and weaknesses, and appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of others.

Humility requires acknowledging that humans have limitations in what we know and can do, which means that each of us must be self-aware of our abilities and struggles and recognize that others may have different abilities and struggles. Humility involves setting aside personal pride and overcoming our egos to embrace gratitude for what we have and appreciate others for who they are. In being humble, we recognize our own value in relation to others; inherently, we are neither better nor worse than anyone else.

Activity 1 – Spread Appreciation

Write and send a Thank You card or letter to five people you appreciate. You could write to a family member who takes care of you, a teacher or tutor who helps you learn, a friend who is kind to you, a person who works in your neighborhood (like a mail person, waiter, garbage collector, etc.), or someone who works hard without enough acknowledgment. What are other ways you could show your appreciation to people? Write some ideas below.

Activity 2 – Being a Gracious Loser

Imagine you worked very hard for months on a science fair project but you lost. What could you say to the winner(s) to congratulate their victory and show that you're not a sore loser?

Peace and Social Justice

I will help people solve problems and handle disagreements in ways that are fair for everyone.

Peace and Social Justice can promote the human rights of all people and understanding among all nations, cultural and religious groups. We attain peace only by consistently responding to injustice through thoughtful conflict resolution that aims to repair harms and ensure a fair and equitable society moving forward. By working with instead of against each other, we can help protect the inherent human rights of everyone both locally and abroad.

Activity 1 – Diversity in Books

Look through your books and make note of the characters they include. Are different genders, races, sexualities, nationalities, abilities, and religions represented by the characters? Are you represented in these books (i.e. are there characters similar to you)? Who is not represented in these books? Repeat this activity at school, the library, and the bookstore. (Or with a parent's permission, explore online libraries and stores.) How do your observations make you feel? How do you think it might make other children feel? Discuss with your counselor.

Activity 2 – Learn about an Activist

An *activist* is a person who campaigns to bring about political or social change. Have you ever heard about an activist? With your counselor, identify an activist (alive or dead) to learn about together. What issues did they address? What actions did they take? What dangers or harms did they face? What differences have they made? What lessons can we learn from them?

Responsibility

I will be a good person—even when no one is looking—and own the consequences of my actions.

Every day, each of us makes choices. These choices, large and small, all have consequences—for ourselves and for the world around us. Moral responsibility involves taking conscious ownership of one’s intentions and actions, and being accountable for the resulting consequences. Although we all live in a society with various cultural values, expectations, codes of conduct, and social rules, we all decide for ourselves what is right and wrong. Being a responsible person involves constant attention to what is right and bearing the blame or praise for our own actions.

Activity 1 – My Responsibilities

Talk to your counselor about the different areas where you may have responsibilities and how you fulfill those responsibilities. These may be in your family, in your community, in your school, or other places where you are involved. Write them down below. Talk about and list below why it is important that those in positions of responsibility do their duty.

Activity 2 – Responsibility goals

With the help of your counselor and your parent set a goal for improving the way you fulfill one of these responsibilities discussed above and track your progress for three months. Talk to your counselor about the experience and record your thoughts below.

Service & Participation

I will help my community in ways that let me get to know the people I'm helping.

Service and participation means putting values into action in ways that positively impact our communities and society as a whole. It fosters helping others, increasing social awareness, enhancing accountability, and many attributes of the other nine commitments. Engaging in service doesn't just make the recipients better off, but those who serve can develop new skills, experiences, and personal satisfaction that all promote personal growth. We must all recognize that we are members of a group, and engaging in service to benefit the group and the other individuals in it makes us all better off.

Activity 1 – Welcome Guide

Think about what advice and recommendations you would give to a person your age, perhaps a new student at your school, who recently moved to your neighborhood. Create a “Welcome Guide” to your neighborhood that includes your favorite parks, good places to eat, and fun things to do. What encouraging messages would you give to help them feel comfortable in their new home? Invite your friends to work with you on the guide so you can include more options.

Activity 2 – Find a Service Project

Think about your interests and talents. For example: Do you like animals? Do you like to play games with people? Do you like to do arts and crafts projects? Do you like to sing and dance? Do you prefer inside or outside? Discuss with your counselor so you can together find one or more service projects to do. Think about the facilities and organizations in your area that you could visit and support. After you do your project(s), write about your experience below. Include stories from the people you helped, how you helped them, and how you felt about the activity.