

Welcome to the Responsibility Workshop! In this workshop, we're going to dive into the magical world of responsibility, especially as it twirls, tumbles, and ties in with our sweet toddlers, playful preschoolers, and keen kindergarteners.

Our mission is to uncover the secret layers of responsibility, find the perfect recipe to teach it, and reveal the superpowers it can grant our little ones when introduced early in life.

We'll be embarking on a meaningful journey, diving deeply into topics ranging from the essence of responsibility to real-world demonstrations of responsibility, and its significant role in shaping our young ones. Prepare yourself, because by the conclusion of this session, you'll emerge as a Responsibility Aficionado, equipped with the knowledge and practical tools to assist your little ones in understanding and embracing responsibility in their daily adventures.

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Allana Robinson, and I'm a Registered Early Childhood Educator and Developmental Specialist turned Parenting Coach. Prior to parent coaching, I had a decade-long career in early intervention, where I was able to work with every stripe of child from completely neurotypical all the way up to one of my clients is one of 3 kids in north America with their specific diagnosis. So I've run the gamut. There is very little about kids that surprises me anymore. And because I've worked with such a wide spectrum of children, I really do believe that all behaviour is communication and we just have to figure out what it is they're trying to tell us. I'm also a Mom of two boys who, at the time of recording this, are 7 and 9, and I'm also a military wife- my husband has served in the Canadian Forces for 17 years now. So chaos is my happy place- whether it's kids or the government, my superpower is taking that chaos and turning it into a safe space.

Alright, enough about me, let's start with the basics. What really is Responsibility? In its simplest costume, responsibility is all about taking care of our own actions and understanding the ripple effects they create in our lives and the lives of others sharing our universe.

Imagine this: A toddler cleaning up their toy land after a grand adventure, realizing they play a part in keeping their world clean. Or a preschooler returning a borrowed storybook to a friend on time, discovering the magic of trust and respect in friendships. For kindergarteners, finishing a simple mission at home or in class can be a lesson in the importance of keeping promises.

Why is this so important? Because responsibility isn't just about doing tasks. It's about crafting characters worthy of superhero stories. It's about nurturing kids who understand their role in our big, wide world, who keep their promises, respect others' rights, and are ready to face the outcomes of their actions. This not only fuels their moral and ethical growth, but also supercharges their self-esteem and self-worth.

So let's dive in and find out how we can teach responsibility to our little superheroes in a way they understand and are excited about.

We're going straight into the deep end of the pool here - because if you're here, chances are you realize responsibility is kind of a big deal. Because responsibility is like the secret ingredient in the recipe of character and integrity.

When our kiddos start taking responsibility for their actions, it's like a light bulb moment for them. They realize they're the ones steering their life boat and their actions ripple out, affecting everyone on board. They start to see that their choices can bring sunshine or rain, depending on the course they set. And that's incredibly empowering! So much of the conversation around teaching kids responsibility is framed as though responsibility is a burden. Something we saddle kids with, which can often lead parents to avoid teaching responsibility in a misguided attempt to preserve a carefree childhood.

But the best part of teaching responsibility? As our kids grow more responsible, their respect for themselves and others grows too. They grasp the idea that they need to respect others' feelings and rights, just like they'd like to be respected. And that, my friends, is the start of trust. When kids show they can be trusted, that's when others trust them – their friends, their family, and most importantly, they start to trust themselves.

And the cherry on top? Responsibility brings so many goodies along with it. For our young ones, it boosts their self-confidence, builds resilience, nurtures patience, and propels them towards independence. It's like a magic potion that instills strong ethical values. And for us families, a responsible child means a home filled with respect, trust, and teamwork.

The first kind of responsibility we're going to cover is the big, bad 'Responsibility and Words.' Now, don't be scared, this isn't just important for us grown-ups, it's super duper important for our little ones too!

Just like we need to own up to our actions, it's mega important to also own up to our words. Especially for our kiddos! They need to know their words are like little superpowers - they can build skyscrapers or crumble them down, they can patch up boo-boos or cause them. So, teaching them about this superpower? Yeah, it's a must for their growth and character journey.

But here's the thing, using words responsibly? It's not something they'll learn while playing with their toy cars or dolls. It's a skill, one they need a little hand-holding with. Where do we start? It all starts with a chit-chat. A chat about what happens when you don't use words responsibly.

Like, y'know, a thoughtless word or two can make someone sad, create a grumpy environment, or even smash friendships. It's super important for kids to get that once they've let the words fly, they can't be unsaid. They leave a little invisible ink, one that sticks around.

Plus, we have to teach them that their words can act like mirrors, reflecting their self-esteem and self-image. Talking down to themselves or harsh self-criticism can chip away at their confidence and self-love. So, using words responsibly also means being their own best friend.

Now, how do we teach our kiddos to use their words wisely? First off, we have to walk the talk, using our words nicely and expressing our feelings without throwing a tantrum. If you're putting yourself down, or gossiping about their friends' parents, or criticizing how others dress or talk or do things- they're going to emulate that. And unfortunately, as adults, we tend to be very good at covering up the consequences of our lack of responsibility with our words. We're skilled enough to spin what we said or did so that it's just seen as a big deal. But little ones aren't able to pick on the nuance of that- they take what we do at face value, and then try to turn around and use it themselves! So we want to be careful of the example we're setting. Now, I know sometimes this can be extremely difficult, especially when we're in private. So we want to teach our kids the concept of "being aware of their audience." Who are you talking to? Can you trust that person to not repeat things you don't want to be repeated? Are you in public? Can the people around you who you aren't interacting with hear or see what you're doing- and are you prepared to be responsible for that? This applies particularly to cuss words. Is cussing to yourself in private acceptable? Sure! Is swearing in at school or to your grandparents something that's going to have consequences you have to take responsibility for? Sure is! So knowing your audience can have a big impact on your responsibilities.

Next up, we can nudge them to think before they blurt. One of the best lessons we can teach our kids is that not every thought you have has to come out of the mouth hole. Think of that viral Tiktok sound: Those are inside thoughts, inside thoughts. We don't want those to slip out. Just having that language: inside thoughts and outside thoughts- can be extremely helpful. I'll often ask kids: "mmm, should that have been an outside thought or an inside thought?" And then give them a way to express their inside thought in an acceptable way- generally with more finessed wording, which is an excellent way to build your child's functional vocabulary. So rather than "Paw Patrol is stupid"...when talking to a kid wearing a Paw Patrol shirt...we might say "I'm not a fan of Paw Patrol, I prefer PJ Masks." OR by giving them a physical way to address that thought. If you think someone smells funny, that's an inside thought. But that inside thought can inform outside actions: we can move away from them. You're a liar is an inside thought, but we can use that inside thought to remind us not to trust someone again. This is responsibility to ourselves.

And lastly, we can put on our empathy cap, showing how words can affect others, and how picking the right words can be a game-changer. Again, re-wording things they say that are inappropriate or hurtful into vocabulary that still gets our point across without being an asshole about it. Using the Paw Patrol example- you may think Paw Patrol is stupid. But if you say that inside thought out loud- how is it going to make the people who like Paw Patrol feel? Brainstorm on that. So if our inside thoughts are going to make someone feel stupid, worthless, embarrassed, belittled, or upset- then it needs to stay inside and we need to use words that still get our point across like "I'm not a fan." And this is extremely easy to do: we need to say it as they would if they could. So when you hear an inside thought come outside, just re-word it as they would if they knew how to say that appropriately, and then wait for them to repeat it. "Paw Patrol is stupid!" "I'm not a fan of Paw Patrol." pause...look at them expectantly, if they don't pick up on the body language, prompt them with "your turn: I'm not a fan of Paw Patrol." When we do this frequently enough, they learn the appropriate way to have their thoughts conveyed to others around them.

Now, heads up, teaching children about the responsibility of words isn't a one-and-done deal. It's all about creating a safe space for them to express themselves while learning about the superpower of words. We need to repeat these processes over and over. In a bit I'll be going through some tools I recommend for further teaching these principles.

Let's have a conversation about how we can nurture the growth of responsibility for actions in our youngsters. This isn't an inherent trait, but rather a cultivated skill, and it's our role as adults to guide them in developing it. Starting this early means setting them up for greater success as they grow.

Responsibility for actions varies a bit by age group, as the amount of responsibility and ownership kids can take for their actions- and HOW they do that, is going to depend on where they are in their cognitive, social, and emotional development. First, let's start with toddlers: introducing them to the concept of responsibility can be as straightforward as encouraging them to tidy up their toys at the end of the day, or assisting in a minor cleanup before mealtime. These may seem like small gestures, but they serve as the initial steps in fostering a sense of responsibility within them. When we're teaching responsibility to toddlers, we're mainly teaching personal responsibility to ourselves. Toddlers are egocentric- they consider themselves the centre of the universe. So the trick here is to instill the concept of following through on your words with actions that match, owning your own self-care and the care of your environment. We can do this through pretty much any daily task like dressing themselves: Encouraging them to start learning how to put on their shoes or jackets. It might be messy at first, but it's a great way to foster independence and responsibility for their own comfort and safety.

Personal Hygiene: Guiding them to wash their hands before meals so they don't get sick, bathing regularly so that our body is clean and we don't smell.

Feeding Pets: If you have a family pet, involving them in the feeding process can be a wonderful and gentle method to begin to instill the concept of responsibility and empathy towards other beings. It's easier for toddlers to empathize with animals.

Watering Plants: Handing them a tiny watering can to help nurture the plants inside or outside your home could be a delightful way to teach them about nurturing and responsibility of others as well.

Helping with Laundry: Even though it might seem complex, letting them assist in small ways like putting clothes in the basket can be a fun and rewarding task that helps introduce responsibility for their belongings and personal appearance. Clothes don't just show up fresh and shiny for me. With a front-load washer most toddlers can even load dirty clothes into the machine and take them out and put them in the dryer. Obviously, you'll be on hand to supervise and support, but giving them a small task like this can start that understanding of taking care of our belongings, which we'll talk about more in a bit.

Setting the Table: With supervision, they can start helping in setting the table, a small step in understanding household responsibilities. You can start this low and slow by just giving one

item that's their responsibility- for my kids it was their cup. It was their responsibility to make sure they had a cup to drink out of. Then we added their utensils. Then we added their placemat. Then we started adding those things for us, the parents. And eventually we worked up to setting the whole table. Working from being responsible for what we need, and gradually expanding it to being responsible for what everyone needs to participate in this group activity of sharing a meal.

Next, we venture into the preschool age bracket! At this stage, things become a bit more nuanced. Here, responsibility may manifest as making sure they have all the things they brought to preschool in their backpack before leaving, or perhaps being entrusted with the care of the class pet. These activities help to broaden their perspective on responsibility, demonstrating the impact of their actions on their surroundings. Some ways to do this include:

Peer Interactions: Encourage them to understand the impact of their words and actions on their peers. Simple lessons in empathy, like asking them how they think their friend might feel if they snatch a toy, role playing that scenario, and reinforcing turn-taking rules can go a long way.

Community Helpers: Introduce them to the concept of community helpers and how each one has a responsibility towards others. This paves the way for role-playing activities where they get to be the responsible community helper of the day. This is also why you'll often find preschools and daycares having a "helper of the day" who has classroom responsibilities beyond the rest of their classmates. Their actions benefit them, but they also benefit their community.

Taking Turns: Teach them the value of taking turns, instilling the understanding that their actions affect others and they have a responsibility to be fair and considerate. If, when you ask for a turn with a toy, your friend says they'll give it to you when they're done- when your friends ask YOU for a toy, you have a responsibility to find them and give them the toy you promised. With this, we're starting to take the personal responsibility and expand it to that community responsibility.

Group Activities: Engage them in group activities where they have a specific role or task. This not only fosters teamwork but helps them understand the repercussions of not fulfilling their duties. An example of this would be a group scavenger hunt where everyone is responsible for finding one item on the list. Or cleaning up is a great opportunity for this- where each child is responsible for one type of toy to be put away so the whole room can get clean.

Caring for Environment: Start with simple conversations about the environment, like not littering, and explain how their small actions can have a larger impact on the community and nature. I've taken kids to landfills so they can see where garbage goes, I've shown them trees that are constricted by plastic can caddies so they have a tangible context for these conversations.

Apologizing and Making Amends: Guide them in acknowledging their mistakes and taking steps to make amends, nurturing a sense of responsibility towards the feelings and well-being of others. It's important here to note that this isn't just about saying sorry- which I think we can all agree is kind of tired and not really impactful. I prefer to teach children how to make amends through actions: so if you hit your friend, you should probably go get their lovey, maybe an ice pack, and promise that next time you get angry you'll hit the couch instead of them. Showing kids that apologizing is about more than a throwaway "I'm sorry!" and it's their responsibility to change their behaviour in order to make amends.

Helping at Home: Again, encouraging them to take up small tasks at home, like helping in sorting laundry or setting the table, gradually moving from personal responsibility to contributing to the family unit. One of my favourites in this category when my own kids were this age was having them be responsible for the couch cushions. So it was their job to make sure whenever they left a room with a couch, to put the cushions back nicely. It was a simple job that they were more than capable of doing independently, and it helped to foster that idea that- this is a shared space, and I can take care of it too. And at 9 and 7 at the time of recording this, they still do it!

Remember, the objective is to craft experiences that not only cultivate a sense of responsibility but also foster empathy and a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of society, even at their tender age. Preschoolers are eager to help, they're eager to take on responsibility, so supporting them in these fairly low-level ways as they begin to become aware of the needs of others can be incredibly impactful. And you'll notice that you can kill two birds with one stone in a lot of these situations. For instance- I recently combined a group activity with an environmental responsibility lesson for a group of preschoolers local to me by organizing a garbage cleanup of the park that their facility backs on to. We talked about why it's important to take care of the environment, how litter can impact the earth and animals around us, and how it's our responsibility to do that care if we want to live in a nice, clean space. And then we put gloves on them and went out and got our little army of helpers to find and bag all the trash that was left in the park over the summer months so they'd have a clean space to play.

As we move on to our delightful kindergarteners, their understanding of life's intricacies starts to deepen. At home, they might have the chance to lend a helping hand with their younger siblings, or they might be given a vital role to play in a classroom project. Such opportunities offer them a taste of what it means to take ownership and feel a sense of achievement. This, in turn, boosts their grasp of what responsibility really entails. We can do this through:

Conflict Resolution: Equip them with the skills to resolve small disputes amicably, encouraging them to think about how their actions affect others and how they can make things right. I really like Heather Shumaker's conflict resolution framework, and I've included a copy of it in the resources for this workshop.

Bigger Tasks at Home: At this age, they can handle slightly more complex tasks at home. They might assist in preparing simple meals or help in organizing a room, instilling a sense

of responsibility and achievement. This is the age I gave my kids each a shared space in our home to be responsible for picking up every night, in addition to their shared bedroom.

Community Engagement: Begin involving them in community activities where they can learn the importance of giving back and understand their role in the larger society. Volunteering can be incredibly beneficial for this goal. Those community activities like trash clean up, or even just tidying the yard at the end of the season and resetting it for the next one.

Classroom Leadership Roles: Assign them leadership roles in the classroom on a rotational basis, fostering a sense of responsibility towards the group and enhancing their understanding of the impacts of their actions on the class dynamics. My youngest was responsible for making sure everyone's boots went on boot trays in his kindergarten class- because we live in Canada, and kids come inside in wet, mucky boots multiple times a day for most of the school year. And his friend had the responsibility of mopping the floor in their coat room- so my son had to do his responsibility in order for his friend to do his...and that experience really drove home the importance of following through on your actions.

Care for the Environment: Introduce more structured activities that emphasize the importance of caring for the environment, like planting trees or recycling. Many locations have quite complex recycling programs with multiple coloured bins and detailed instructions for what goes in each- kindergarten is the perfect age to teach them which symbols mean what, and get them sorting the recycling. Teaching them the broader impact of their actions on the world.

Time Management: Begin to instill basic time management skills, helping them learn to allocate time for their studies, play, and rest, thereby fostering a sense of responsibility towards their own well-being. Using a visual schedule can really help with this, but we'll talk about that a bit more in a moment because it's a tool that works for so many different aspects of responsibility.

Understanding Consequences: Foster deeper discussions about the consequences of actions, encouraging them to think ahead about the potential impacts of their choices, both positive and negative. A lot of parents will fall into a monologue when trying to instil this concept in their kids- but I recommend being more curious and asking questions. What do you think is going to happen if you swing that stick? Is there anyone around you who could get hurt? Yeah- your brother is standing over there, but it's a long stick! Check- is he closer than the stick? He is. So if you swing that stick while he's standing there, are you being responsible with your stick? Nope, what would be the responsible thing to do with your stick? Find a better place to swing where you won't hit anyone, right. It takes like two minutes, and it helps get them into the habit of thinking critically about the impact their actions have in every day scenarios that matter to them.

Peer Mentoring: Introduce peer mentoring where they can help younger kids in certain activities, fostering a sense of responsibility and nurturing their leadership and empathy skills. Big siblings often get this built in- they help bring you diapers and bottles. But it's valuable to note that younger siblings can do this too- teach the youngest a skill or activity, and have them teach it to their older sibling.

Personal Project: Encourage them to undertake a personal project, something they are passionate about. This could help nurture their skills in planning, organizing, and seeing a task to completion, fostering a great sense of accomplishment and responsibility. This can be something as simple as: I want to go to the beach. Cool, well I'm happy to take you, but you need to plan where we're going, when, what we need to bring, collect all those things, and get ready to go. Now- they won't be able to go through all that by themselves- that's a LOT of executive functioning for a kindergartener. But you can prompt them to think of these things and work on it with them.

Remember, the goal here is to gradually expand their horizon of understanding and practicing responsibility, moving from self-centered approaches to those that encompass family, community, and the environment, fostering well-rounded individuals who are ready to be the responsible citizens of tomorrow.

Alright, having delved into the importance of nurturing a sense of responsibility in children through tasks and chores, let's gently steer our discussion towards another key element - the responsibility for personal belongings.

As grown-ups, we inherently understand the significance of caring for our personal items. However, children are still learning this crucial aspect. It's beyond just maintaining their own items - it's also about honouring the belongings of others.

Let's kick off with teaching children about the responsibility for their own belongings. It's crucial to help them grasp that caring for their things is not just about preserving their condition, but also a hallmark of responsibility. This can be taught simply - through routine tasks like packing their school bags, tidying their rooms, and putting away their toys after playtime. One of my favourite ways to do this is to put everything my children need to leave the car on a visual by our front door. Things like hats, their tablet if we're taking a long drive, headphones to go with that tablet, jackets, shoes or boots. And then it's their responsibility to bring those things with us. Now, for toddlers- you'd take on the portion where you remember to check the list and guide them through making sure they have everything. But as they move into preschoolhood and have mastered it with your assistance, you can start backing off and pointing them more generally towards "getting your stuff." And if they forget? Then we get to have a discussion about how it is THEIR responsibility to ensure they have everything on their list, not Mom or Dad's. By experiencing this on a low level when they're young, by time they're school aged and genuinely responsible for making sure they have all their things before going to or coming home from school, this will be old hat.

Next up, let's explore the importance of respect for personal and others' belongings. This is a vital lesson in empathy and respect. It's important for children to understand that just as they would be upset if their belongings were mishandled or lost, the same feelings apply to others. Reinforce this by encouraging them to seek permission before using someone else's items and to handle them with care. Using phrases like "If you're going to play with his truck it's your responsibility to give it back." Can help bring their responsibilities to the top of their mind, AND keep the onus on them. I also like to front-load the consequence if they don't meet their responsibilities so that, again, it's top of mind and very predictable. This might

sound like “If you’re going to play with his truck, it’s your responsibility to put it away when you’re done. It goes here on the shelf. If you don’t put the truck away when you’re done with it, you won’t be able to play with his toys anymore.” This way there are no surprises, and they can easily connect their responsibilities with the fallout if they don’t fulfill them.

Finally, we want to be mindful that consistency and reinforcement are the secret ingredients. Establishing a daily routine that includes tasks relating to their belongings- like “coming home” routine that has them putting away their shoes, jacket, and hat. And remember, it’s perfectly fine if they sometimes forget! These are opportunities for gentle reminders, not criticism.

Remember, it’s not just about the belongings themselves but the values we foster in them - responsibility, respect, and empathy.

Responsibility is a crucial component of character development, forming the bedrock of trust, accountability, and honesty.

We took a three-fold approach to responsibility covering our words, our actions, and our possessions. Acknowledging responsibility for our words indicates that we contemplate before speaking, strive for honesty, and uphold our spoken words. We’ve discovered the immense power our words hold and the importance of using them prudently.

Taking responsibility for our actions means we accept the outcomes of our choices. Actions indeed speak volumes, often revealing our genuine character.

Finally, we learned about taking responsibility for our belongings. This understanding extends beyond physical items like toys, books, or electronics, to intangible aspects like time, effort, and personal respect. By caring for these, we demonstrate our appreciation and respect for them.

So, how do we encourage and nurture this responsible behaviour? It begins with our actions and the environment we create for them. It’s vital to offer praise when they demonstrate responsible behaviour, guide them when they encounter difficulties, and most importantly, embody these virtues ourselves. Our actions are their primary blueprint, making us their most influential role models. So let’s talk about some tools we can use to make this process easier for ourselves.

The first tools in our box are natural and logical consequences.

The concept of natural and logical consequences is all about understanding that our actions, whether positive or negative, have repercussions. This understanding is a vital tool for fostering responsibility.

So, what are natural consequences? These are the inevitable results of our actions that occur naturally. For example, if you decide not to refill your car’s fuel tank, the natural consequence will be that your car will eventually run out of gas. If your kiddo doesn’t put a jacket on, they’re going to be cold. This consequence happens without outside intervention, and it’s directly related to the action taken or not taken.

On the other hand, logical consequences are the outcomes that logically follow from our actions but require some form of intervention. For instance, if a child spills milk on the floor, it's a logical consequence to have them clean it up. This is a consequence that follows logically from the action taken, but it happens because of an intervention. We have to tell our kid to clean it up.

The link between this concept and responsibility is pretty straightforward. When we acknowledge that there are natural and logical consequences to our actions, we recognize that we are in control of what happens to us. This acknowledgment fosters a sense of responsibility for our actions.

It empowers us to make better decisions, knowing that what we decide to do today will directly affect what happens to us tomorrow. And this is a powerful realization that can spur us to act more responsibly in every aspect of our lives.

I'm not going to go too deep into Natural and Logical consequences in the workshop itself because one of your bonuses is my *Time Outs Aren't Working, Now What?* Ebook- which walks you through how to use Natural and Logical Consequences with little kids. But something I really want to highlight for you here is that there is so much power in acknowledging the cause and effect of a situation, and what your child's responsibility is as a result. "Yup, it's cold outside. I told you it's your responsibility to wear a jacket, and you chose not to. If you want to put a jacket on now, you can go get it out of the car and put it on. It's your responsibility to dress appropriately for the weather." ...when repeated over time and in multiple different situations, has a HUGE cumulative impact. No, your 2 year old is not suddenly going to start checking the weather and making appropriate gear choices. But when we repeat this messaging consistently, by time they're 4,5,6- they will be beginning to ask what the weather is outside and making appropriate decisions using that information. They will take on that responsibility. "You're very upset that Caleb doesn't want to play with you anymore. It's your responsibility to use kind words. You said some pretty mean things to Caleb and he doesn't want to play anymore today. Tomorrow you can take responsibility and apologise and maybe he'll want to play again."

Changing how you talk about responsibility and weave it's cues into your day to day life has a MASSIVE impact- whether you're using Natural and Logical consequences or not.

The next tool I have for you are visual schedules.

Imagine you're in a new city, trying to find a specific restaurant without a map or GPS. Someone told you the directions- but you just have to remember them off the top of your head, and before you know it you've taken a wrong turn and you're lost. It would be quite a struggle, wouldn't it? Just like us, kids too can feel lost when they need to accomplish multiple tasks but don't have a guide to follow. This is where visual schedules come into play.

A visual schedule is a tool that helps kids visually see what activities or tasks they need to complete. It's a simple yet highly effective tool that can be customized based on the child's needs and tasks. The schedule uses graphics, illustrations, or even real pictures to represent each task. These visual cues can be particularly helpful for little ones who can't

read yet, however, they still do have text underneath them so they support early literacy as well! Many parents I work with who have kids in the 5+ range tend to put off using visual schedules because they think their child is beyond them- but I guarantee you, there is no age limit for these. My 10 year old still uses his visuals.

Visual schedules are more than just a list of chores or a to-do chart. They can help children grasp the concept of time and sequence, teach them how to transition smoothly between activities and offer them a sense of control and predictability. A visual schedule can provide structure and alleviate anxiety for children who may feel overwhelmed by responsibilities.

By using a visual schedule, kids can learn to manage their responsibilities independently. They get a sense of achievement when they complete a task and cross it off on their visual schedules. This promotes self-confidence and responsibility.

Remember, the aim is not just to keep kids organized but to empower them with the tools they need to become responsible individuals.

As adults, we have visuals too! They just look different. You probably have a calendar- that's a visual. You likely have reminders on your phone- those are visuals. If you're like me you may have post-it notes peppered all over your house to remind you to do things like take out the trash or lock the back door before you leave the house- those are visuals.

So, whether it's putting on a jacket, cleaning their room, or even fun activities, a visual schedule can be a fantastic tool to help children organize their responsibilities, reduce stress, and teach them to manage their time effectively.

I generally recommend parents have a daily schedule where you detail the general blocks of your day. Breakfast, morning activities, lunch, afternoon activities, dinner, bedtime.

However you can also have specific routines for different tasks that occur throughout your day. For instance, I have one at the front door that shows my children all the gear they need to put on their body before they leave the house.

There's one in our dining room with every task they need to complete in order to clear and wipe down the table after a meal.

There's one in our bathroom that details all the steps they need to take to get ready for bed.

In their bedroom, there's one with all the pieces of clothing that need to go on their body for them to be decent.

By having these visual instructions throughout the home, your kids not only learn what's expected of them when, for instance, you tell them to clear the table after a meal. But it helps them to learn over time what it means to be responsible for clearing the table every night- and as they get older, they need the visuals less and less. It becomes habit to the point

where- whether you're at home or not- if you tell your child to clear the table, they can do it from memory.

Same with the visuals detailing what gear they need before they leave the house. Ours has hat, jacket, shoes, tablet, headphones. Now- they obviously don't need their tablet and headphones every time we leave the house, but they're still there, because it prompts them to ask me "Are we taking a long drive, do I need my tablet?" and then take the appropriate action. This means I can now say "get ready to leave" and they know exactly where to look to make sure they have everything that they need, without me having to remember it or have it be forgotten.

At first when you introduce visuals to children, you have to be really consistent with them. If you just put up a visual and don't refer back to it consistently, your children won't use them. So for a 2 or 3 year old, you'd tell them it's time to get ready to leave, and then show them the visual, talk them through each step, and then praise them when they've done every step. "Okay, you need to get ready to leave. Look- do you have your hat? No? Okay, let's find it and put it on your head. Great, Hat on. Shoes, do you have shoes on your feet? No? K, are you going to wear the pink or purple shoes today? Good choice, put them on. Perfect, what's next? Jacket! Look outside, does it look rainy or cold today? No? Okay, I think we can just bring a jacket with us. Next- tablet and headphones. You know what? We're going to the grocery store, it's not a long drive, you don't need your tablet. Alright! You're all ready!" And then as they get older, you can back off more and more until "Go get ready" prompts them to do it themselves.

Remember- we're teaching our kids HOW to think. And by using visuals, we help them begin to develop those thought patterns that allow them to take on more responsibility as they age.

Next we have Timers- which are a KIND of visual, but they have one big difference: they're dynamic.

When it comes to teaching children about responsibility, one of the biggest challenges can be managing tasks and time. This is where timers come into the picture. They are simple, yet powerful tools that can be easily integrated into your child's daily routines.

Timers can be used to structure activities in a measurable way. For example, if you want your child to spend 30 minutes playing by themselves or you want them to turn the TV off in 10 minutes, a timer can provide a clear, visual way for them to understand when they need to start and finish a task.

I generally recommend that we use a VISUAL timer. This differs from your typical oven timer or phone timer because it allows your child to SEE how much time they have. My favourite brand is Time Timer Plus- specifically because it's more durable and the timing mechanism is more robust, but there's lots of options on Amazon as well. I'll make sure to link the Time Timer in the resources section. Another visual timer option I've found helpful is the Echo Clock- if you already have an Alexa system in your home, this clock connects to it via Bluetooth and it will visually show how long the timer is right on the clock face. I originally

purchased this for myself for cooking- but my kids now use it too, especially for longer timers.

Timers bring predictability and consistency into a child's routine. Just knowing that there's a specific amount of time allocated for a certain task can make it feel more manageable and less overwhelming. When paired with a visual schedule, a timer can really help teach a child how to manage their time. If they know that they have 30 minutes to clean their room, and a visual showing them every task that needs to be completed to clean their room- it feels a lot more doable, and again- over time they rely on those tools less as they become more proficient at it. Again, with really young ones we need to initially manage this and draw their attention to it- but the act of calling their attention to the timer helps develop the habit of checking the timer periodically, and adjusting their actions accordingly. If you've fuffed around for 20 minutes and Mom says "Look, how much time do you have left to clean your room if you want to have time to go to the park?" and you can SEE that you have less time than when you started, you're going to be able to speed up or prioritize tasks based on that information.

Lastly, timers can be used to gradually increase the duration of tasks over time. If your child struggles to sit still and concentrate on a task, start with setting a timer for a short duration, say five minutes. Once they are comfortable with this, gradually increase the time. This will help them improve their focus and concentration, while patiently working towards their goals. This works well for long solo play- if you've taken my Independent Play workshop you know we talk about this in more detail there. It can be helpful for dinner times. It can be helpful for waiting for guests or an activity. It's a very powerful tool.

So, as we can see, a simple tool like a timer can go a long way in instilling key life skills in children. It creates a structure, provides motivation, brings consistency, and helps build concentration over time.

Remember, teaching responsibility is not only about the end result, but also about the process. And timers are an excellent tool to guide children through this process.

Next, let's will delve into the pivotal role of clear expectations in developing responsibility, especially in children from 2-6 years old. As educators, parents, or caregivers, we're in a unique position to shape a child's future and setting clear expectations is one way to do it.

Imagine you're taking your child to the park, and you tell them that they have to play nicely or else you're going to take them home. Is that expectation clear to a 3 or 4 year old?

Probably not! Without explaining exactly what you mean by "play nicely"- your child may not understand what you're expecting of them.

So, what do we do? We make expectations clear, specific, and age-appropriate. Tell them: we go up the stairs, down the slide. Take turns with the other kids. We keep our hands to ourselves- before you touch someone, you have to ask. Wait your turn for the swing. Sand stays on the ground. Ask before you use another kids' shovel or bucket. Ask before you

chase someone. Break down the expectations into manageable chunks. Use simple language. And remember, patience is key!

Achieving a clear understanding of expectations requires repetition and reinforcement, but it's definitely worthwhile. It empowers children, makes them feel successful, and most importantly, teaches them responsibility.

One of my favourite tools for this is called a Social Story. Social stories are like little instruction manuals for kids, that lay out all the expectations of a given scenario. This helps in two ways: first, for you- they only have to be written once. So if the thought of having to remember all the expectations at the park and listing them off every time you want to go is exhausting to you- a social story can help! Write the social story of what we do at the park. And then you can read it every time you go to the park, and that way you don't have to remember off the top of your head, and you're giving your child a consistent message.

Second- for our kids- that consistent message is also very key, but social stories also generally have pictures. And children as a group are generally visual learners: they process images much faster than they do words. So by attaching a picture or photo to each instruction you give them, it helps them to remember those expectations much easier.

Finally, it gives you something to refer back to. If you read a social story about playing nicely at the park every time you leave for the park, and then an incident happens, you can refer back to the book and be like "Remember, we keep sand on the ground. You threw sand at that little girl. So it's time to go home." This helps reinforce that accountability piece for their actions.

Role playing is another great tool for teaching kids how to be responsible. When you think about it- most of the scenarios your child encounters that require responsibility are their first time every being in that situation. Maybe their second! So it's no wonder that they often mess it up.

First, let's understand why Role-Playing is an effective teaching tool. Role-playing allows children to step into the shoes of a character, providing them with an opportunity to experience situations from different perspectives. This educational strategy not only engages their imagination but also encourages empathy and understanding.

When it comes to teaching responsibility, role-playing becomes an even more powerful tool. By acting out various scenarios where they have to take responsibility for their actions, children can learn and understand the concept of cause and effect. They can witness first-hand how their words and actions have consequences, and how they must own up to them.

So for instance, if your child is having difficulty being responsible for their lunch kit at kindergarten- every day they come home missing a container or their water bottle. Role play it! Give them pretend money, have them go "buy" a new water bottle, and then leave it "at school." Ask them how they're going to drink the next day. They don't have any more money for a new water bottle!

If they're having difficulty getting along with a peer at school- role play it. Have them act as the other child to build empathy and understanding. Practice what to do and say when common contentions crop up.

But remember, it's not about making them feel guilty or scared about losing or damaging something or how they react in any given situation. The aim here is to help them develop a sense of ownership and understanding of the effort and resources that go into obtaining these things, into empathizing with others, making them more appreciative and responsible.

Alright, we've reached the end of our workshop! We've taken a deep dive into the world of responsibility and uncovered its many layers. We've discovered that responsibility is not just about doing tasks, but about crafting characters worthy of superhero stories. It's about nurturing kids who understand their role in our big, wide world and are ready to face the outcomes of their actions.

Throughout this workshop, we've explored responsibility in words, actions, and possessions. We've learned the importance of teaching kids to use their words wisely, to think before they blurt, and to understand the impact their words can have on others. We've seen how responsibility for actions empowers our little ones and helps them build self-confidence, resilience, and independence. And we've delved into the significance of caring for our own belongings and respecting the belongings of others.

But remember, teaching responsibility is not a one-and-done deal. It's a journey that requires repetition, reinforcement, and patience. We've discussed some powerful tools that can support this journey, such as natural and logical consequences, visual schedules, timers, clear expectations, and role-playing.

So go forth and embrace the mission of nurturing responsibility in your little ones. Be their role models, guide them with love and understanding, and create an environment that fosters responsibility. Remember, it's not about perfection, but about progress. Celebrate their small victories, learn from their mistakes, and keep the spirit of responsibility alive in their daily adventures.

Thank you for joining me in this workshop. You've emerged as true superheroes of responsibility, equipped with knowledge and practical tools to support your little ones on their journey toward becoming responsible, empathetic, and accountable individuals. Keep spreading the superpowers of responsibility and watch as your children soar to new heights.

And as you begin to implement, take note of any struggles or questions that crop up, and make sure to bring them to your Q&A! I want to make sure that you're able to apply it to your family, and we're all different. So having a Q&A allows me to help you customize these strategies for your situation.

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Until next time, stay playful, stay responsible, and keep twirling, tumbling, and tying responsibility into the lives of your sweet toddlers, playful preschoolers, and keen kindergarteners. You've got this!