



An Overview of Moral and Character Development Adult Guide

Helping parents teach children how to make good life decisions

Life's Building Blocks Mission

To develop children's moral reasoning skills (to know what is right) and build character (to do what is right), by providing fun, family interactive tools that require adult/child interaction

What is the goal of moral behavior?

In the world of ethics and morals, the goal is to always do the right thing. We make moral decisions throughout each day, but we rarely think about why we choose the action we did. If we can think about our own moral reasoning and understand what our decisions were based on, we can take a large step towards understanding ourselves and making better decisions.

What are values?

Moral decision-making starts with our values and what is most important to us. This can be determined at a very early age as we observe our parents, siblings, and friends. For example, someone might believe that the most important values are helping others (compassion), winning (competition), helping themselves (egoism), faith (spirituality), and fairness (justice).

What are our morals?

Our morals are the reference points we use to make good decisions. They are the lens we use to evaluate a situation and decide what we ought to do. We may look at situations and make decisions, for example, by examining the consequences, applying our faith, looking at what is best for us—or just doing what we know to be right because our moral conscience (the little voice in our head) tells us so.

What is character?

Classically, our character is the sum of all of our virtues and strengths. There are many virtues such as judgment, honesty, courage, persistence, self-control,

loyalty, compassion, gratitude, humility, justice, and patience. The key to being an excellent person is to not have an excess or deficiency of any one virtue, but to be moderate in all things. The other key to good character is practicing it over and over until it becomes a habit that we don't have to think about.

How do morals and character work together?

To do the right action, it takes two things:

1. We must have the morals to know what is right, and
2. We must have the character to do what is right.

Often, we know what the right thing is, but one of our virtues may not be developed (maybe courage) and we don't do the right thing. To have true "moral courage," we must possess the appropriate morals plus the virtue of "courage."

How do we develop character?

We develop our character by practicing doing the right thing until it becomes a habit.

It can also be very beneficial to put someone in a difficult situation (dilemma) and ask that person to explain what he or she would do. This process of using scenarios can exercise our character so that when we come across a similar situation, we have already thought about it.

By discussing our specific virtues, we can improve our understanding of our own character and actually work on improving those virtues that may cause us to do the wrong thing.

By being held to a higher moral standard, we learn right from wrong and can correct our behavior and our underlying character on a continual basis.

How do we develop the moral reasoning to make the right decision?

There are several ways to develop our moral reasoning: First, we can put ourselves in a difficult moral dilemma (scenario) and determine which of the options we would choose. But more important, we need to think deeply about why we choose that option. At the core of every moral decision lies a basis for that decision. We don't often think that deeply, but many times the basis of our decision can be as simple as the Golden Rule, respect for others, fairness, faith, truth, and so on. Understanding this can significantly help us improve our moral reasoning.

There are higher and lower levels of moral reasoning. At the lowest level (youngest child) is simply finding satisfaction for ourselves. At higher levels, we may base our decisions on obligations to others, individual rights, and the traditions or customs of society. At the highest level may be doing the right thing just because it's right.

The products

The products of Life's Building Blocks have three important aspects:

1. They are fun!
2. They provide a chance for parents and children to interact.
3. They give children a chance to think about issues of character (how my virtues help me make a decision) and morals (what is the right thing to do, and why did I decide that?).

In many of these products, the child is placed in a scenario (a moral dilemma). The child will then reason through it and make a choice between two options. At the point when the child says what he or she would do, a "teachable moment" occurs. It is important that the adult be present for this moment. If the adult asks the child the right question, saying, for example, "Why did you decide to do that?" or "What if everyone did that?" a rare chance exists to help the child understand why he or she made that choice.

Specifically, Life's Building Blocks products develop morals and character by:

1. Helping children understand the consequences of their poor decisions
2. Helping children understand why some actions are wrong, regardless of the consequences
3. Helping child recognize bad behavior when they see it
4. Helping them listen to the little voice in their head: their moral conscience (Hopefully the voice tells them the right thing!)
5. Understanding higher and lower levels of reasoning
6. Challenging their wrong answers
7. Holding them to high standards
8. Showing them a role model of exemplary behavior
9. Understanding the virtues of their character and seeing ways to improve them

