

# Responsibility

Students have been exposed to the idea of responsibility for many years, so this week's focus is on self-discipline. Students will talk about what self-discipline is and how they can cultivate greater self-discipline in their daily lives. Through large group discussion and journaling, students will evaluate which self-discipline strategies will help them improve their responsibility through self-discipline the most.

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



### Building Self-Discipline

This first lesson introduces students to responsibility and how self-discipline plays a big part in being responsible and dependable. Students will learn about five things that impact our ability to develop self-discipline and journal about one of those things they want to work on throughout the Responsibility unit. (See page 3 for lesson details.)

## Mini Lessons

**For Small Groups**  
15 minutes



### Building Self-Discipline - Scenarios

In groups, read through scenarios that involve someone about to abandon a task or responsibility. Discuss the best self-discipline strategy they could use to help them finish the task or be more successful next time. Scenarios:

Mario has a science project due on Friday. It is Monday and he has everything he needs but doesn't feel motivated to get started. He isn't doing well in science and really needs a good grade on this project. What can Mario do to increase his self-discipline to not only do the project, but do well on it?

Samara has weekly chores at home; she is required to dust, vacuum or sweep, and clean the bathroom. She hates chores. All her friends get an allowance for doing work around the house, but her dad says it's just part of being in the family. She always waits until Friday to do her jobs and then has to do everything at once and usually misses out on going out with friends on Friday after school because of it. How can Samara be more self-disciplined to do her weekly chores throughout the week instead of saving them all until Friday when she wants to go out with her friends?

Adyson struggles with reading. She is supposed to read for 20 minutes at home but her mom works double shifts and isn't home until Adyson is in bed. Her nana stays with Adyson most evenings and is usually watching TV or napping. Adyson doesn't like to read by herself. She just doesn't care about doing it. What can Adyson do to be more self-disciplined to read 20 minutes every day, even if she doesn't have anyone to read with her?

**For Partners**  
15 minutes



### **Why Do We Give Up?**

In partners, discuss why we sometimes don't finish what we start, or give up. What makes us abandon our responsibilities and what do we need to do to stick with something? What strategies do you use to overcome frustration and despair that lead to your not fulfilling a responsibility?

**For Individuals**  
15 minutes



### **My Self-Discipline Strategy**

What is a self-discipline strategy that you already use that works well and what is a new strategy that you would like to try? Journal about this and about a regular responsibility you have that you don't like much and need more self-discipline to complete. How will you use your new strategy the next time this responsibility comes up?

**Technology-Focused**  
15 minutes



### **Technology and Self-Discipline**

In what ways does technology help us be more self-disciplined? Are there apps we use to stay disciplined? Are we motivated by not losing our tech so we always do what we're supposed to? In what ways does technology distract us and prevent us from being self-disciplined?

# Building Self-Discipline

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## Lesson Timeframe

30 minutes

## Required Materials

- ☐ Journal/note-taking materials

## 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:

- Understand the role self-discipline plays in being responsible.
- Practice strategies to improve their self-discipline.

## 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

5-7 minutes

Welcome to the Responsibility unit! This is going to be a great unit because we get to learn about different elements of responsibility. I know you all know what responsibility is, right? Who can define responsibility for us? (Invite student responses.)



## Inspire

3-5 minutes

The definition we are going to use from RAK is, “being reliable to do the things that are expected or required of you.” I think a key word here is “reliable”. When you think about the word reliable, what comes to mind? (Invite student responses.)

As you get older, you will be expected to be more reliable. As you have more opportunities, more freedom, more life experience, and more age, people will expect more from you. They will depend on you more. Think about who you depend on now. Who are some people you depend on (even beyond parents or guardians)? Who, in your life, if they did not show up for you on a regular basis, would make a big impact? (Invite student responses. Encourage them to think outside the box. Think about if teachers didn’t show up, bus drivers, doctors, sanitation workers, grocery store managers, etc.)

Being responsible is everyone’s job.



## Empower

15 minutes

Another part of being reliable and being responsible is being self-disciplined. President Theodore Roosevelt once said, “With self-discipline, anything is possible.” To be self-disciplined means you can motivate yourself to do what is expected or required of you. You don’t need someone or something else to motivate you; you can motivate yourself.

[For a teaser, you could show students Angela Duckworth’s TED Talk: [Grit: The power of passion and perseverance](#) and ask students what they think about the ideas presented.]

How many of you think you are already pretty self-disciplined? For example, who would get up, get ready for school, get here on time, and do all your homework without someone else telling you to do these things? (Invite students to raise their hands.)

How many of you would like to work on being a little more self-disciplined? (Invite students to raise their hands.)

Good! You are in luck! That is what we are going to work on this week!

For our first activity, we are going to talk through some pretty common situations that require self-discipline and we are going to talk about some specific strategies we can use to be more self-disciplined. We all have the power to be self-disciplined, but we may not have the strategies to actually do it. We will work on that today!

So, according to research, the following things can help us build our brain’s ability to be more self-disciplined. It turns out that self-discipline is something our brain can help us do automatically if we train it. So, here is what researchers say will help us train our brain to be more self-disciplined: [The following strategies were taken from the [Wanderlust Worker blog](#) and tailored for 8th grade students.]

- **Gratitude:** This may not seem logical but, when our brains are constantly wanting more or wanting what someone else has, we can't actually appreciate what we already have. And when we can't appreciate what we have, our brains and bodies go into a state of stress and it makes it very hard to have the self-discipline we need to work toward our goals. We are too sad or too envious or too angry that we don't have what someone else has. If we practice being grateful, though, we can allow our brains the opportunity to be more self-disciplined by reaching for a new goal rather than being mad about what we don't have.
- **Forgiveness:** Similar to gratitude, if we spend our time angry at or resenting someone for something, we can never move forward. We will stay stuck in the past and won't realize that we have bigger and better things to achieve. It takes no self-disciplined to stay mad, but it takes a lot to forgive and move on. This, in turn, helps the brain carve out new neural pathways, much like with gratitude, for self-discipline.
- **Goal-Setting:** We may not realize what we want to achieve until we actually set goals and work toward them. We also may not realize that we have to work toward what we want. Things will not magically fall out of the sky and into our laps. If we want good things to happen in our lives, we need to actively work to make them happen. Setting SMART goals can help and using self-discipline to go after those goals will really help!
- **Eat Healthy, Get Plenty of Sleep, and Exercise!:** This is so basic we may not think about these things as helpful for self-discipline, but they are! If our bodies aren't healthy, we won't want to do other things that are good for us. In order for our brains to be motivated, we need to keep our bodies motivated, too.
- **Stay Organized and Be Persistent:** If you want to increase your self-discipline, you need to be organized about what you want to do and be persistent when things don't go well or right. Just because something doesn't work the first time does not mean it won't work the second time. Giving up is a BIG killer of self-discipline. So is chaos. If you can't find anything in your locker, or if you never know what day it is or what you are doing, you will feel frazzled. You will lose things, forget things, and be stressed. All of these restrict your ability to stay focused and self-disciplined.

So, let's review - to GROW our self-discipline skills, we need to:

- 1) Be grateful
- 2) Forgive
- 3) Set Goals
- 4) Have Healthy Bodies
- 5) Be Organized and Persistent; try, try again!

I want you each to pick ONE of these things and practice them right now. In your journals [or on a piece of paper], write about the area you picked and how you want to work on that throughout this Responsibility unit. Try to frame your idea as a SMART goal (one that is specific, doable in the next four weeks, and realistic). We will all need to build our self-discipline skills and this is the time to start! You may not change overnight, but knowing what area you want to work on will help you begin building your self-discipline muscles. Have students complete a 5-7 minute journal/writing session about the one area they want to work on and then collect their ideas. Use the information you collect to do periodic check-ins with them throughout the next month. Encourage them when you see them making good choices toward their self-discipline goal.



## Reflect

5-7 minutes

Have students share their reflections if they want to and if there is time. Collect the reflections and use them later in the unit to encourage students in their self-discipline development.