

Teacher Activity

Personal Responsibility

Learning Objectives

Students will

- define “responsibility”
- analyze the scope of the responsibilities they have in their everyday lives
- role-play situations in which they demonstrate how to take responsibility for a range of actions

Overview

This activity will focus on the concept of personal responsibility through the lens of responsible decision-making. The session will kick off as students brainstorm their personal responsibilities, which they will analyze through the creation of a pie graph that demonstrates the weight of each one. Students will then discuss the idea of taking ownership for their actions. They will work in groups to act out several scenarios in which they practice owning up to their behavior, and they will consider why it is easy to take responsibility when things go well but harder to take responsibility when things don't go well. The session will conclude with students selecting a personal responsibility mantra to motivate them to make responsible decisions moving forward.

Grade Range

5–8

Timing

60 minutes

Materials Needed

- My Responsibilities handout, one per student
- Responsibility Scenarios (cut out in advance), one set for one-third of the class
- My Personal Responsibility Mantra handout, one per student
- Devices with internet access, for students to share
- Scissors, for students to share

Procedure

1. **Warm-Up Activity**
 - Distribute one My Responsibilities handout to each student. Challenge students to list as many of their own personal responsibilities as they can within three minutes.

- Before beginning the timer, explain that “personal responsibilities” are the actions they take or the things they do in order to be the best people they can be.
Tip: It may be helpful to give some examples that are relevant to your students. For instance, a personal responsibility could be as minor as setting the table every night *or* it could be as big as being a positive influence on a young sibling.
 - Set the timer for three minutes and allow students time to brainstorm.
2. When three minutes are up, ask students to share a personal responsibility that they recorded as the rest of the class listens. Encourage students to continue adding to their own list if they connect with responsibilities that their peers share.
 3. Once each student has a list of personal responsibilities, acknowledge that everyone is unique and approaches his or her responsibilities in different ways. While there may be some personal responsibilities that everyone agrees are important, there may be other responsibilities that are extremely important to one person but not as important to someone else.
 4. Direct students’ attention to Steps 2 and 3 on the My Responsibilities handout, read them aloud, and give students a few minutes to demonstrate the “weight,” or importance, of their top responsibilities.
 5. Bring the students back together as a class. Reiterate that everyone has different personal responsibilities because everyone comes from different families and different backgrounds. However, there are also some responsibilities that connect us as humans and citizens of the world.
 6. Lead the class in a discussion around a personal responsibility that everyone shares: taking ownership of our actions. Guide the discussion with the following questions:
 - What does it mean to take ownership of our actions?
Guide students in understanding that when we take ownership of our actions, we take responsibility for what we do and have done. We are accountable for our decisions, and we understand that it is up to us to make good choices.
 - By a show of hands, who included this as one of their main responsibilities?
 - Why is taking ownership of our actions a responsibility that applies to everyone?
 7. Divide the students into groups of three and explain that the groups will now act out several scenarios. Each scenario will involve a situation in which someone has the opportunity to make the responsible decision and practice owning up to his or her behavior.
 8. Distribute one set of responsibility scenarios to each group and prepare students for the activity by explaining the following:
 - Groups should select one scenario at a time.
 - Each scenario will state how many actors are needed. Students should take turns and decide who will play each role.
 - After the scenario is read aloud, the actors should improvise what it would look like to take ownership of their actions and make the responsible choice in each situation.
 - Once students in the group are happy with their scene, they can move on to the next scenario.
 - If groups finish all of the scenarios, they may go back to scenarios of their choice and act out additional ways to act responsibly in each situation.

9. After about 15 minutes have passed, bring the students back together and discuss the following questions:
 - What are some of the hardest parts of taking ownership of your actions?
 - Why is it easy to take responsibility when things go well but harder to take responsibility when things don't go well?
 - Why is it important to always take ownership of our actions, even when it is difficult?
10. Finally, pass out one My Personal Responsibility Mantra handout to each student. Acknowledge again that it can be hard to take ownership of our actions. Explain that the students will therefore conclude the class session by finding or creating a quote about responsibility that they can use as inspiration as they strive to take ownership of their actions in the future.

Review the directions provided on the handout and then give students a little time to create their own quote or use the internet to research a famous quotation.
11. **Wrap-Up:** Conclude by bringing the students back together so they can share the quotes they selected. Encourage students to cut out their mantras and place them somewhere useful as they work toward making responsible decisions.

National School Standards

[CASEL SEL Framework](#)

- Responsible decision-making: The ability to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.
- Self-management: The ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.

[National Health Education Standards](#)

- Standard 5: Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health.

[Common Core ELA Standards](#)

- SL.1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing one's own clearly and persuasively.

[Common Core Mathematics Standards](#)

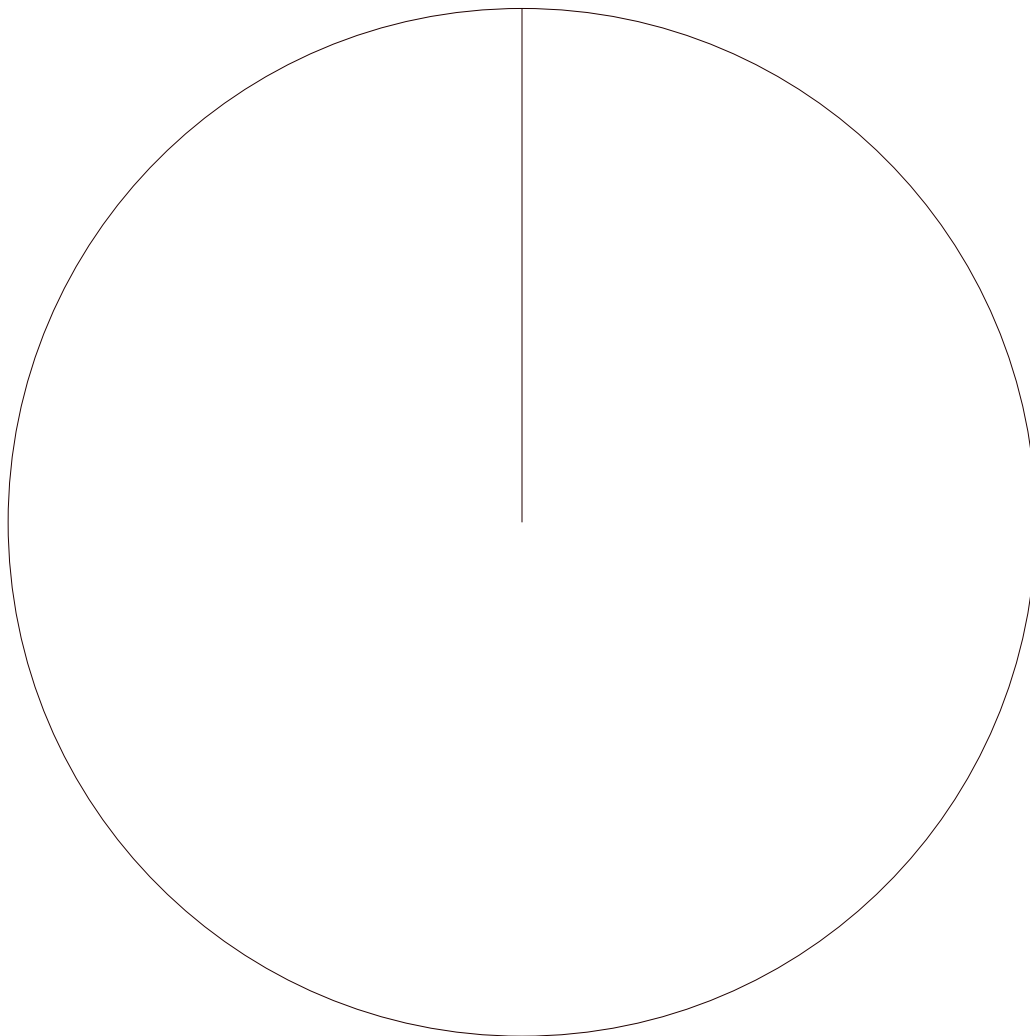
- MP4 Model with mathematics.

Directions:

Step 1: In the space below, brainstorm your personal responsibilities.

Step 2: Place a star next to the 5–10 personal responsibilities above that you think are most important.

Step 3: Use the circle below to create a pie chart that shows the importance of each one. In other words: How much of an effect does each one have on your own life? Divide the circle below and label each section with a different personal responsibility!



Actors Needed:

- Two siblings

Scenario: One sibling borrowed another sibling's favorite book and accidentally lost it.

How should this situation be handled? Act it out!

Actors Needed:

- One student
- One teacher

Scenario: The teacher has been teaching a new math concept all week long, but the student is having trouble and is only pretending to understand. Unfortunately, the teacher just announced that there will be a test in two days!

How should this situation be handled? Act it out!

Actors Needed:

- Three friends

Scenario: Three friends are at a party where there are no adults. Now it seems like someone is serving alcohol.

How should this situation be handled? Act it out!

Actors Needed:

- One teen
- One parent

Scenario: The teen promised the parent that he or she would help with a chore by the end of the day. However, it's now nighttime and the chore hasn't been done. The parent isn't happy.

How should this situation be handled? Act it out!

My Personal Responsibility Mantra

Directions: In the space below, record a quote about personal responsibility that will motivate you to take ownership of your actions. You may use the internet to find a quote or you may create your own. Once you have recorded it in the frame below, cut it out and place it in a location where you will see it often.

