CONCERN® Services
We're More Than An EAP . . .

Our goal is to Help People Live Better & Help People Work Better. The following information from the
CONCERN WorkLife Services program is intended to help you accomplish that goal and remind you that, as your
Employee Assistance Program, we are here for you and your family. Visit us on-line at
www.ak.concernservices.com or call (513) 891-1627 / (800) 841-5002 for no-charge, confidential assistance.

Building Character

What is right is right even if no one is doing it. What is wrong is wrong even if everyone is doing it.

This article is intended to help families and communities get involved in *character education*: teaching children and youth to show respect, use good manners, and to be responsible. Through character education, it is possible to strengthen the parenting role, improve the quality of life, and develop a civil American society. By building character, you impact an individual's development as well as families, schools, sports, and entire communities.[1] In character education programs there are positive changes in children's behavior, specifically in helping each other, being truthful, and not blaming others. This is an introduction to a character education program based on the nonprofit Josephson Institute's CHARACTER COUNTS! program framework (http://charactercounts.org).[2] This framework is the largest character education program in the nation with almost 500 collaborating agencies.

A 1998 Josephson Institute survey[3] of young people found that nearly half are thieves and 70% cheated on exams. Nearly 92% lied to their parents, and 91% were not satisfied with their own ethics. Teachers and counselors report that children do not know the meaning of terms related to character.

To develop the CHARACTER COUNTS! framework, the Josephson Institute of Ethics brought a diverse group of educators, youth leaders, and ethicists to a conference in Aspen, Colorado.[4] Their discussions produced the *Six Pillars of Character* that form the basis for the Institute's ethical framework.

The Six Pillars of Character

Trustworthiness
- Be honest.
- Don't deceive, cheat, or steal.
- Be reliable—do what you say you'll do.
- Have the courage to do the right thing.
- Build a good reputation.
- Be loyal—stand by your family, friends, and country.

Respect
- Treat others the way you want to be treated.
- Be tolerant of differences.
- Use good manners, not bad language.
- Be considerate of the feelings of others.
- Don't threaten, hit, or hurt anyone.
- Deal peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements.

Responsibility
- Do what you are supposed to do.
- Persevere; keep on trying!
- Always do your best.
- Be self-disciplined.
- Think before you act—consider the consequences.
- Be accountable for your choices.

Fairness

- Play by the rules.
- Take turns and share.
- Be open-minded; listen to others.
- Don't take advantage of others.
- Don't blame others carelessly.

Caring

- Be kind.
- Be compassionate and show you care.
- Express gratitude.
- Forgive others.
- Help people in need.

Citizenship

- Make your school and community better.
- Cooperate.
- Stay informed; vote.
- Be a good neighbor.
- Obey laws and rules and respect authority.
- Protect the environment.

Making Ethical Choices Based on the Six Pillars of Character

1. Have I thought about the way my choices are likely to help or hurt others, the stakeholders?

2. Am I living up to the ethical principles of the Six Pillars of Character by being trustworthy, respectful, responsible, fair, caring, and a good citizen—even if I have to give up things I want?

3. If I cannot find a way to live up to one of the Six Pillar principles without violating another, am I making the choice I think will be best for society in the long run?

Community and Family Involvement

The CHARACTER COUNTS! framework includes the family and community as an integral part of character education. It is important that children and youth see and hear the Six Pillars in action in the family, schools, businesses, government, law enforcement, media, places of worship, sports, and youth programs.

References

1. McDaniel, A.K. (1998, April). Character education: Developing effective programs. *Journal of Extension, 36*(2).

2. Josephson Institute of Ethics. (2007). *What is CHARACTER COUNTS!?* Retrieved February 4, 2008, from http://charactercounts.org

3. Josephson Institute of Ethics. (1996). *A report card on American integrity*. Marina Del Ray, CA: Josephson Institute of Ethics.

4. Hanson, W. (1992). The Aspen Consensus: Youth leaders, educators find core values. In *Ethics* (pp. 19-20). Marina Del Ray, CA: Josephson Institute of Ethics.