



## PASSING ON THE TORCH OF CHARACTER TO OUR CHILDREN

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Character is, like any other intelligence, gradually built up and adopted then lived by individuals. People have even said that the greatest adversities create the most powerful character in us. How we attack our everyday challenges and goals in life speak of the character we have. When people say, “He’s quite a character”, it simply means that a certain person has a noteworthy personal trait that makes him different from others. It would be great if the difference is something good, though.

Our character is shaped by the experiences we carry everyday. How we react to environmental stimuli, circumstances, other people and their beliefs, have a lot to do with how we become as individuals. If we grow up in a protected environment where our parents refuse to make us independent individuals with a character that’s apart from what they strictly impose on us, then we often fail to adjust to the many bacteria and viruses that inhabit the real world. By bacteria and viruses here, we mean the outlying dangers, challenges and risks that are inherently outside of our own scope and settings.

For instance, when a mother says, “Ewww! That’s disgusting!” upon seeing an earthworm on the ground, she is signaling to her listening child that the earthworm is to be loathed. But when a mother looks at the earthworm as a source of education for her young child, she becomes a contributor to her child’s attitude toward many things, whether great or small. Using the earthworm to teach her child about cultivation and plant care can signal to the child that there is much to learn and know about other creatures on this planet.

Basically, this is to say that our own parents play a significant role in shaping our personal character. Their ability to face their own challenges in life can become valuable sources of inspiration—and even desperation—for their children. Some might argue that strong parents do not necessarily raise equally strong children. However, showing strength of character at even the most mundane of things like giving back excess change to the cashier, throwing trash everywhere or bickering needlessly with a spouse can be audible signals to children that it’s perfectly acceptable to do things.

Surprising as it may seem, the character we abhor in our own kids are often that which they only derive from us. It’s not easy being a parent, but can we honestly say that it’s easy for our kids to be our children? We may give them the best that money can buy, but how much of our character do we pass on to them? How much of their character has been influenced by our own? That’s for us to find out and for our children to hopefully not suffer through.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Define character. Differentiate it from ATTITUDE.
2. What are the factors that shape a person’s character?
3. What are your character traits that you believe you have gotten from your parents?
4. What character traits do you sometimes wish you didn’t possess?
5. How will you bring up children with exemplary character? Be as specific as necessary.