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# ***TOWARD HIGHER GROUND***

***A PARENT PRIMER  
FOR BUILDING CHARACTER IN YOUTH***



## **Seminar Booklet**

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## ***BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JIM KESTNER***

Jim Kestner is a nationally recognized character-development specialist, author and editor of books and articles, as well as keynote and seminar speaker. Jim has extensive experience providing a wide array of educational services, including video and audio production, DVD and CD multimedia development, curriculum and program development, teacher training and consultation, research and evaluation, writing and publication consulting, graphic design, and marketing and strategic planning. Jim also coordinates web-based and alternative route to teacher certification programs at Eastern Illinois University (EIU) in Charleston, Illinois. Current and past KES clients include Stedman Graham, Oprah Winfrey, USA Volleyball, US Swimming, YMCA of the USA, the National Education Association, Horace Mann Educators Corporation, the Illinois State Board of Education, the Abraham Lincoln Institute for Literacy in America, and numerous colleges, universities and schools.

Jim is an experienced public speaker and provides seminars that help educators and business people to improve their personal and organizational effectiveness. He has spoken on topics including career development, leadership, student achievement, athlete development, character development, and program evaluation. Jim has also team taught Sports Marketing at the Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University. He is a past member of the Education Advisory Council and Coaching Accreditation Program Curriculum Committee for USA Volleyball. Jim has been married for 14 years to Tami Kestner and has three children. Jim's hobbies include running, basketball, bicycling, fishing, basketball, and writing articles, short stories, and poetry.

After completing his undergraduate education at EIU in Charleston, Jim taught English and speech communication at Woodland High School in Streator, Illinois. Later, he taught English, speech, and reading and coached track and field at Oakland High School in Oakland, Illinois.

Seeking to expand his influence beyond a single classroom, Jim pursued master's and Ph.D. degrees in educational administration from UIUC. As a student, Jim served as a consultant for teacher evaluation instruments, wrote grants, and served as a consultant for the National Center for School Leadership. His accomplishments at UIUC include publishing articles on new teacher induction and school finance, evaluating reading improvement programs and Illinois state school consolidation initiatives, and serving on a number of Illinois School Improvement committees. In addition, he has earned recognition for his outstanding achievement in education through the Linda S. Lotto Scholarship and through the College of Education as a William Chandler Bagley Scholar.

In 1994 Jim accepted the position of Director of Program Development for the American Sport Education Program, where he developed national and international educational programs and books, videos, and software resources for coaches, sport administrators, parents, and officials.

In 1996 Jim published his first book, *Program Evaluation for Sport Directors*. Jim is currently writing manuscripts for a character development book for teachers, as well as a book to help individuals make the transition from other careers into teaching.

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## ***WHY DOES IT HAVE TO BE SO HARD?***

Your daughter sits down in front of the computer. You ask her whether she has finished her homework, and she says yes. The next day you get a call from school. Your daughter's teacher tells you that she has not been keeping up with her homework. Furthermore, the teacher says she is concerned that your daughter was with some other girls who have been making fun of some other girls in class. The teacher says she didn't actually hear your daughter saying anything, but that she did see her laugh with the other girls, causing their classmate to burst into tears. You confront your daughter that afternoon, and she tells you that she just forgot the homework and that she wasn't making fun of anyone. When you press her on the issue, she says, "Why don't you just leave me alone!"

What will do you next?

Why did you choose this course of action?

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***TOWARD HIGHER GROUND  
PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING CHARACTER***



**Discipline can focus on halting negative behaviors  
or can be a tool for building character.**

**It all depends upon your perspective.**

If we look at our efforts at disciplining our sons and daughters as long-term investments in character building, we can prepare them for success in school and in life.

Three key skills for success are

- **Self-respect**—not just feeling good about yourself, but feeling good about what you have accomplished
- **Self-discipline**—forcing yourself to do something you don't want to do because you know the effort will pay off in the end
- **Responsibility**—recognizing the choices you make, accepting the consequences of those choices, and taking it upon yourself to make choices that are best for you

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***PERSONAL REFLECTIONS***

Common behavior challenges for my son or daughter:

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Approaches that develop self-respect:

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Approaches that develop self-discipline:

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Approaches that develop responsibility:

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## ***SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE***

Child psychologists and researchers agree upon a number of suggestions that can make day-to-day approaches to disciplining your sons and daughters effective. Follow these suggestions to discipline with dignity while building a solid foundation for character.

### Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers

- Begin disciplining your child as soon as she becomes mobile. Prepare your child to recognize from the beginning that part of your role is to establish limits.
- Redirect preschoolers first; trying to avoid saying “no” and instead giving your child something to say “yes” to.
- Give children plenty of rest, exercise and variety in activities.

### All Ages

- Be a good role model.
- Select your responses with love and respect. Never humiliate, call names or belittle your son or daughter.
- Never make an empty threat. Threaten only what you are willing to do.
- Be consistent and predictable. Your son or daughter needs to know what to expect.
- Avoid arguing or creating a power struggle. Act like sand, like a part of the environment. Sand doesn’t argue; it just exists, and children learn to deal with it accordingly.
- Establish boundaries, but be flexible when appropriate.
- Focus on the behavior, not the child. Say “You did a great job” instead of “You were good.” Say “You made a bad choice” instead of “You were bad.”
- Pick your battles wisely. Ask yourself whether you are charging into a necessary battle; perhaps the behavior will go away on its own, or maybe you can redirect your daughter or son instead.
- Think about consequences before you begin speaking, and select consequences that are immediate and, when possible, related to the choice of behavior.
- Look at mistakes as a natural part of learning. Expect your son or daughter to make mistakes, and discuss the valuable role that learning from mistakes plays in growing up.

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## ***Developing Self-Respect***

Help your son or daughter develop self-respect by

- Recognizing good things your son or daughter does.

Examples to use with your son or daughter:

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- Talking about what makes your son or daughter feel good inside, what feels right.

Examples to use with your son or daughter:

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- Talking about what self-respect is and why it is important. Pointing out real-life examples to help your son or daughter see evidence of self-respect in people s/he admires.

Examples to use with your son or daughter:

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## ***DEVELOPING SELF-DISCIPLINE***

Help your son or daughter develop self-discipline by

- Talking about why self-discipline is important.

Examples to use with your son or daughter:

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- Modeling self-discipline yourself.

Examples to use with your son or daughter:

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- Helping your son or daughter deal with frustration—talk about what you do when you get frustrated.

Examples to use with your son or daughter:

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## ***DEVELOPING RESPONSIBILITY***

Help your son or daughter develop responsibility by

- Giving your son or daughter responsibilities at home, when traveling, etc.

Examples to use with your son or daughter:

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- Presenting your son or daughter with choices, then holding them to the consequences of those choices.

Examples to use with your son or daughter:

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- Explaining that punishments are a natural result of choices your son or daughter has made.

Examples to use with your son or daughter:

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