

# Simple Ways to Boost Character and Make a Difference for Our Students

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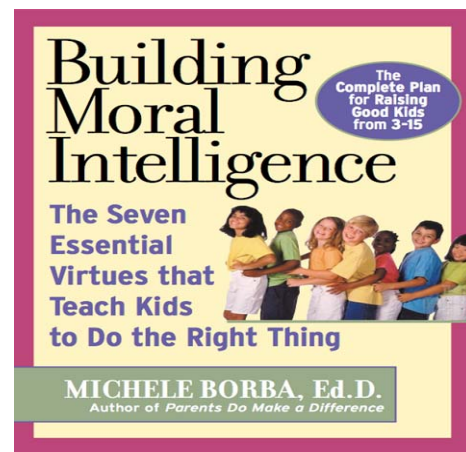
Moral intelligence is the capacity to understand right from wrong. It means to have strong ethical convictions and to act on them so that one behaves in the right and honorable way. Moral IQ is made up of seven virtues of humanity which adults can model, reinforce and nurture. The result: a child with stronger character, humanity, and more likely to do the right thing.

## Empathy: *Identifying with and feeling other people's concerns*

- Be the moral model you want your child to copy
- Create “Cheers” atmosphere: Warm & respectful, clear & less permissive rules, listening opportunities
- Reinforce: “Look at the color of the talker’s eyes”
- Ask: “How would you feel if that happened to you?”
- Teach I Messages: “I feel ---when you...and I want”
- Expand emotional intelligence by asking often, “How do you feel?”
- Help child identify different emotional states (vocabulary and facial expressions).
- Point out positive impact caring and empathy can have on others.
- Expect and demand that your child feel from others.
- Tune up your empathic behaviors so our child regularly sees you show concern for other people’s “hurts and needs.”
- Use statements to affirm “I’m listening”: “Really?” “Then what happened?” “Why?” “Tell me more...” “That’s interesting.” “I see...” “Is that so?” “Thanks!” “Tell me again.” “Let me sum up what you’ve been saying...”
- Provide opportunities for your child to experience different perspectives in your community—visiting nursing homes, homeless shelters, hospitals.
- Use empathic/reflective listening: “You feel...” “I hear...” “So you think...”
- Teach SOLER to help kids know how listening looks and sound: S-O-L-E-R: Sit square, Be Open, Lean in; Look Eye to eye; Remain respectful.
- Role play the situation to build perspective taking
- Read heart-stretching literature: *Stone Fox*, *Charlotte’s Web*, *The Wednesday Surprise*
- Use CARE Building discipline
  - C – Call attention to uncaring acts
  - A – Ask, “Helpful or hurtful?”
  - R – Reflect feelings
  - E – Express/explain disapproval

## Conscience: *Knowing the right and decent way to act and acting that way*

- Identify your “Touchstones”: core virtues you want most your children; use TEACH to gel



T – Target

E – Be virtuous example

A – Accentuate in daily opportunities

C – Catch your child using & reinforce

H – Highlight the benefit & reason

- Use daily quotes that emulate virtue
- Do a book club about moral development
- Utilize Socratic teaching questions.
- Ask: “Is that helpful or hurtful?”
- Focus on a virtue each month
- Choose literature/show films with rich moral dilemmas and discuss
- Clip news of people emulating ethical virtues
- Use virtuous vocabulary in everyday discussions
- Identify virtuous behaviors in virtuous role models/characters
- Present a challenging ethical question to students: “What if ....”
- Make rules match virtue: Use self-control- “Keep your objects, hands, feet to self.”

## Self-Control: *Regulating thoughts & actions so that you stop any pressures from within or without & act how know and feel is right*

- Rule of 21: Reinforce 1 behavior a minute day
- Model calmness; lower your voice
- Teach healthy ways to express anger
- Teach stress reducers: yoga, deep breathing, bubble blowing, soothing music, sand & water
- Stress Box: koosh ball, ipod, pens/paper
- Turn your rules into virtues: *Use self-control by keeping objects, hands, and feet to yourself.*
- Teach feeling sign language
- Talk back to the worry: “I’m ok” “Go away worry,” “You can’t get me!” “I can do it!”
- 1 + 3 + 10 = Calm
  - 1 Tell yourself: “Be calm!”
  - 3 Slowly take 3 deep breaths
  - 10 Count slowly to 10
- Learn stress/anger Physical signs: *Headache, colds; sleep or eating change, rapid breathing, clenched hands, jaw* Emotional signs: *Irritability, acting out, moodiness, clingy*

- ❑ Teach new habits by Showing the child the behavior not telling (or explaining)

**Respect: Showing you value others by treating them in a considerate way**

- ❑ Treat children respectfully so they feel respected and more likely to treat others respectfully
- ❑ Tune up social graces; make courtesy a priority
- ❑ Tell and show kids how to be respectful: never assume they have that knowledge
- ❑ Don't tolerate back talk or rudeness. Stop it before it spreads.
- ❑ Switch your pronouns from "I" to "you." It takes the emphasis off of your approval and puts more on the child's acknowledging self.
- ❑ Teach: 1 put down = 1 put up.
- ❑ Encourage internal praise. Point out what deserved merit encourage self-acknowledgment
- ❑ 21 Day Self-Respect Image Reframe  
Target 1-2 earned/deserved traits  
Praise when earned (use "because"  
Provide opportunities to demonstrate  
Continue until internalized (repeats back) Challenge your children to *Pay It Forward*
- ❑ Use "please" "& "thank you"; expect their use
- ❑ Highlight the value of using a specific virtue
- ❑ Wean off rewards; switch pronouns from I to you: "You should be proud of." Instead of I'm proud..."
- ❑ Teach & discuss a Virtue Quote of the Day
- ❑ Clip news of people emulating ethical virtues
- ❑ Find ways for child to experience kindness: cross-age tutoring; service learning
- ❑ Teach bystander skills – how to step in peacefully
- ❑ Take an active stand against cruelty – don't allow it
- ❑ Kids don't learn how to be kind from reading about it in a textbook but from doing kind deeds.
- ❑ Use the 2 Praise Rule: Say or do two kind daily deeds
- ❑ Teach social skills so your child can experience positive peer interaction. Teach one skill at a time then: Coach, Role Play, Real Life Experiences, Over-learning in Context, Cross-Age Tutoring, Self-Management

**Tolerance: Respecting the dignity and rights of all persons, even those whose beliefs and behaviors we disagree**

- ❑ Expose child to diversity: books, children, cultures, food, songs, language...and do so early
- ❑ Encourage participation in social and community activities that promote cross-cultural programs, diversity, resistance to hate, groups and tolerance
- ❑ Live your life as an example of tolerance
- ❑ Catch a prejudice: "Check that!"
- ❑ Teach STAND for Conflict Resolution  
Stop, calm down;  
Tell problem;  
Alternatives;  
Narrow choices;  
Decide on best option and DO IT!

- ❑ Use Family Meetings or Class Discussion

**Fairness: Choosing to be open-minded & to act in the act in a just & fair way**

- ❑ FAIR Fight: Focus on fact; Assess other view; I Use I Message; Negotiate until Respect
- ❑ Track *your* student interactions for a week: who do you call on and connect with; who is missing
- ❑ Teach Goal Setting: "I will *what + when + how*"
- ❑ Do not tolerate any form of peer unfairness: taunting, name-calling, put-downs, harassment, or plain meanness.
- ❑ Help child learn to bounce back from a mistake or unfair venture: Fortunately by Remy Charlip Adopt a class/family mantra: "We finish what we start." "We do our best."
- ❑ Teach 4-Step Apology: 1. What did you do wrong? 2. Why are you sorry? 3. How will you make amends? 4. When will you apologize?

**Michele Borba, Ed.D.** is an internationally renowned educator, award-winning author, and parenting and child/teen expert recognized for her practical, solution-based strategies to strengthen children's behavior and character. She is an NBC contributor who has appeared 95 times on the Today show as well talk shows including: Dr. Phil, The View, Dateline, The Doctors, Countown, and The Early Show and appears regularly on Fox and CNN to discuss late-breaking news. Her proposal: "Ending School Violence and Student Bullying" (SB1667) was signed into California law in 2002.

**Dr. Borba's book titles include: The Big Book of Parenting Solutions. Building Moral Intelligence. Nobody Likes Me, Everybody Hates Me. 12 Simple Secrets Real Moms Know. Don't Give Me That Attitude! No More Misbehavin'** [Jossey-Bass Publisher & available on Amazon.



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