

12 Principles for Building Your Character

Take a moment to thoughtfully read the following statements in their entirety. Then, starting with the first principle, try to honestly assess to what extent you are a leading character-builder. Better yet, since self-deception is a powerful enemy of the character-building enterprise, ask several others who know you well to review this “Character-Building Prediction Test” with you. (A suggested measure might be: “I find that I am OFTEN=5, RARELY=3, or NEVER=1 characterized by this principle.”)

1. _____ I possess the Right Motivation: As a leader, I am called to be an example-setter of high character to the people to whom I am responsible – whether they are my peers, children, employees and/or constituents. No matter if it seems inefficient, inconvenient or ineffective, I will build character because it is the right thing to do.

2. _____ I possess an Accurate Mindset: My character flaws undermine my leadership, but are correctable. Character is who I am; competency is what I do. I will no longer confuse the two. Character is not only attractive to me, but is irresistible.

3. _____ I possess the Freedom to Choose: I am 100% in control of my character and my response to others. I choose to be a leader of character. I regret my past character-poor choices. I *will* do all within my power to change. I will become more like the mentors and models I most admire.

4. _____ I possess a Teachable Spirit: I am designed to be a lifelong learner. I am teachable and have a strong bias to apply what I learn, to who I am and what I do.

5. _____ I possess an Optimistic Vision: A few might remember my competence, but virtually all will remember my legacy of character, good or poor. Many will exceed me in various competencies, but I will set my sight on building a reputation of uncommon character.

6. _____ I possess a Clear Target: I know the “bulls-eye” of high character. I know exactly what character-ethics are (such as UncommonSense) and the corresponding behaviors I desire, even though I may struggle to achieve them consistently.



7. _____ **I possess the Right Tools:** I have taken the time to assess and acquire the correct resources to support my character-building journey, including a list of defined character-ethics and a support system of like-minded leaders.

8. _____ **I possess a Sensitive Conscience:** I may not always act on its every conviction, but I have a conscience that consistently generates a sense of great personal peace when I act in high character and appropriate guilt when I do not.

9. _____ **I possess the Ability to Find a Caring Mentor:** My mentor(s) know me personally and we have agreed on a transparent, accountable, encouraging relationship as it relates to building character. My mentor(s) help me to create and maintain the conditions and principles necessary to build my character. Our respective roles and expectations are defined and mutually understood.

10. _____ **I possess an Integrating Perspective:** My goal is to operate out of one, unifying and aligning character identity. I will tirelessly work to reconcile all of my various relationships to conform to this single identity.

11. _____ **I possess a High View of Relationships:** I value relationships, but I'm not perfect. I want to forgive those who make errors and be forgiven as well when I commit them. While this does not eliminate the consequences of committing wrongs (or omitting rights), it assures others that I earnestly value them.

12. _____ **I have Counted the Cost:** If I start, there is no going back. I will be painfully exposed for what I am if I attempt to champion a double standard or refuse to confront chronically poor character of those in my charge and/or completely abandon my own pursuit of character.

My Character-Building Action Plan

Questions to get you started:

1. What did you discover as you thought deeply about these measures?
2. What personal actions can you take immediately to start leading with rare character rather than with manipulation?
3. What character-building tools might best benefit you in the future?
4. What old habits do you need to shed and what new habits do you need to acquire to replace them?
5. Is there anyone with whom you need to be reuniting or reconciling?
6. Who could you ask to help encourage and hold you accountable to achieve these goals month to month?