

The Rewards

OF OBEYING GOOD RULES



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“When a dog is about to stray, it no longer hears the hunter’s whistle.”



African Resource Center of West Michigan
Grand Rapids, Michigan



*Our elders say,
“When a dog is about to stray,
it no longer hears the hunter’s whistle.”*

*Dogs are not naturally obedient.
They are not born with the instinct to follow human commands.
However, dogs are generally social creatures
with a strong instinct to follow a leader,
often their human caregiver.*



*They are also highly trainable,
especially when guided by consistency, affection,
and meaningful rewards.*

*Many dogs are also responsive to trust.
They demonstrate loyalty and attentiveness in proportion
to the bond they share with their human companions.*





*Though not born obedient,
dogs are wise enough to recognize
that their well-being depends on the trust
they build with those who care for them.*

Humans are not so different.

*We don't simply act on impulse or personal preference;
we choose obedience as a way of honoring our relationships—
with family, community, and the common good.*



*When everyone acts solely in their own interest,
without regard for the interests of others,
society begins to collapse.*

We risk becoming no better than instinct-driven creatures.



Rules and regulations exist to create a society

where everyone can thrive.

They are not meant to stifle freedom,

but to shape a shared life marked by dignity, safety, and justice.

So, why do some people choose to ignore rules and regulations?



1. *Perceived Injustice or Irrelevance*

People are more likely to disregard rules they see as unfair, outdated, or morally wrong.

When regulations conflict with personal values or lived experiences, especially in marginalized communities, they may be viewed as oppressive rather than protective. Experiences of discrimination, corruption, or exclusion can erode trust in institutions and diminish the will to comply.

2. Moral Disengagement

Some people disregard rules and regulations because they believe societal controls stifle their freedom or limit their pursuit of happiness.

In doing so, they often rationalize their behavior, minimizing the harm, shifting the blame, or convincing themselves that rules don't apply to them.



Individuals with a strong sense of entitlement may believe they are entitled to special treatment or exceptions. They often view rules as threats to their autonomy and may even prefer to suffer consequences rather than “submit” to authority.





3. Social Norms and Peer Influence

When rule-breaking is normalized or rewarded within a group, individuals are more likely to follow suit, especially in environments where noncompliance is seen as bold, clever, or admirable.

This dynamic is particularly evident among young people, who may defy adult supervision or disregard school and community rules to appear cool, confident, or strong in the eyes of their peers. Some individuals go even further, engaging in shocking or even illegal behavior as a means of signaling their uniqueness or nonconformity.





*Obedience to rules and regulations, however,
is essential to creating a safe and orderly society.*

1. Rules Promote Safety and Order

*When created in good faith, rules protect individuals
and communities from harm.*

*Traffic laws, workplace safety protocols,
and public health guidelines exist to prevent accidents and crises.
Without them, chaos and unpredictability would endanger lives.*

2. Rules Foster Fairness and Justice

Regulations ensure that everyone is treated with equity and held to the same standards.

They help prevent exploitation, discrimination, and abuse of power, especially in institutions like schools, workplaces, and courts.





• ***3. Rules Provide Clarity and Trust in Institutions***

*In schools, businesses, and governments,
rules clarify expectations and responsibilities.*

They help institutions function ethically and efficiently.

*For example, workplace policies protect both employees
and employers from misunderstandings and legal risks.*

*Would you want to live in a society where everyone
does only what seems good for themselves?*

*Such a world would be unsafe, chaotic,
and headed toward an uncertain future.*



*Rules and regulations exist not to stifle us,
but to shape a life that is meaningful, just, and livable for all.*

*So why sabotage your own future
by choosing to ignore the very boundaries
that protect and uplift us?*





*Don't be like the stray dog
that no longer hears the hunter's whistle.*

Choose the path of wisdom.

Choose to be law-abiding.

*Choose to help build a society where order, respect,
and responsibility allow everyone to thrive.*

7. Activity-Based Prompts

A. Circle Activity: “Whistles We Need”

- Ask participants to name one “whistle” they rely on — a person, value, rule, or habit that keeps them grounded.

B. Scenario Cards

- Present short scenarios where someone ignores a rule. Ask:
- What is the risk?
- What wisdom is being ignored?
- What would a wise response look like?

C. Role-Play: “Hearing the Whistle”

- In pairs, one person plays the “hunter” (guidance) and the other the “dog” (youth facing temptation).
- Explore how trust, tone, and relationship affect obedience.

D. Journaling Prompt

- “What boundaries in my life protect my future, even when I don’t like them?”

8. Closing Reflection

- What does it mean to “choose the path of wisdom” in your daily life?
- How can we encourage each other to hear the whistle — and not stray?

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Portions of this handbook and its accompanying video—including draft text, images, and narration—were generated with the assistance of AI tools. The final message and all editing decisions reflect the lived experience, values, and creative guidance of the African Resource Center of West Michigan’s media team.

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