

Energy and Effort into What Matters



By Jeff Kluever, Director of Programs

We fill our lives by putting energy and effort into what matters. There's a popular demonstration called "Jar of Life" in which a jar is filled with big rocks (important things like family, health, work), little rocks (less important things like sports or hobbies), and sand (unimportant things like watching television or social media). When you fill the jar with the big rocks first, then the little rocks, and finally the sand, everything fits in the jar. If you reverse the process and start with sand, then little rocks, then big rocks, not everything fits in the jar.

The point of the demonstration is that when we fill our time with the most important things first, the little rocks and sand can be worked in, but when our time is consumed by unimportant things, we run out of space for what really

matters.

When I perform the demonstration, however, I exchange the big rocks for balloons and pose the question – instead of trying to cram more unimportant things into our jar, what if we decided to put more air into our balloons? In other words, what if we put more time, energy, and effort into the big things that really matter, instead of jamming more unimportant sand into our life? What will be more fulfilling – putting more into the important aspects of your life or spending more time on social media?

There's nothing wrong with having some little rocks and sand in your jar. We need variety in our lives. We need opportunities to rest and rejuvenate so that when the time comes we can be fully engaged with our balloons. But, when you feel like you're falling short, when there's just not enough time in the day, don't cram in more sand. Put air in your balloons.

60-Second Character Challenge

- What are the critically important “big rocks” or “balloons” in your life?
 - What could you do to invest more time and energy into your “balloons?”
 - What unimportant sand could you remove from your life in order to invest more energy into your “balloons?”
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Leading a significant life

“Life's most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?”

Conflict Resolution for Kids

Although we can't protect our kids from problems, frustrations and heartaches, we can arm them with tools to better handle them. The more we help them learn to resolve conflicts peacefully, the greater the likelihood they'll develop into more self-sufficient, and resourceful individuals able to deal any issue—and do so without our guidance.

The Treasure of Old Friends

Communicating with “old friends” can enrich our lives by bringing our pasts into the present, reminding us of who we were and how we became what we are.

Fun Ways to Help Kids Learn the Power of Kindness

Studies firmly support the theory that by practicing small acts of kindness, people are often guided to perform more widespread acts of compassion even though that may not have been their original intention.

Seven ways to build strong character and integrity in children

Wondering what can you do to help your kids counter negative influences and stand up for what they know is right? The answer is to nurture a solid moral core that will guide them to stand up for their beliefs and act right without us. And the best news is that we can teach kids the core virtues and skills of strong character and moral courage and can begin when they are toddlers.

Recognizing, Addressing, and Preventing Cyberbullying



From guest contributor, Pamela Zuber

COVID-19 has changed so much about our daily lives. If we're lucky, we're able to use technology to continue to work, stay informed, and keep in touch with our family and friends.

But technology can be a double-edged sword for some children and young people. While using computers, phones, and other devices allows them to attend school remotely and spend time online with their friends, it can also expose them to cyberbullying.

What is cyberbullying?

In cyberbullying, people post hurtful things about other people online. They might post these messages through

- Email
- Messaging apps, text messaging, direct messaging, or instant messaging
- Social media apps such as Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, or Facebook
- Online chats, gaming communities, message boards, chat rooms, or forums

Since social media and internet sites are social, others could see these messages, which could magnify the victim's shame, embarrassment, and fear. In addition, it's often difficult to remove some of these posts, so the messages can continue to harass a person long after a bully posted them.

Cyberbullying is particularly insidious because a bully can attack a person from anywhere or anytime. In the past, if a student threatened another student in school, the confrontation may have ended when classes ended. Now, people can use technology to start, continue, or intensify their harassment.

How can we stop cyberbullying?

As horrible as cyberbullying is, there are ways to stop it. There are many online guides that explain what cyberbullying is and how to prevent and address cyberbullying.

In addition, it might be a good idea to remind children and young people that our online lives shouldn't be all that different from our actual lives.

We could remind them that when they post something online, the audience members reading or watching their posts are real people. They have real emotions and can be hurt by hurtful comments.

Ask them, "How would you feel if someone posted something insulting about you?" Your conversation could spur them to consider other people's feelings and help them foster respect for others.

Keeping the lines of communication open can help if you think your children are the targets of cyberbullying. If you talk regularly with your children, they may be more likely to share their problems with you and go to you for help.

Frequent conversations can also help you notice if your

children seem nervous or fearful or don't seem like themselves, which could be clues that they're being cyberbullied or if something else is wrong.

Communication fuels cyberbullying, but it's also a tactic for ending it. Reinforcing kindness and respect and providing safe spaces to share can help prevent and stop cyberbullying and other harmful exchanges.

About the author: Pamela Zuber is a writer and editor at Sunshine Behavioral Health who is interested in mental health, addiction and recovery, human rights, gender issues, and several other topics.

Sources

stopbullying.gov – What Is Cyberbullying

sunshinebehavioralhealth.com – Top Tips for Preventing Cyberbullying

raycenter.wp.drake.edu – Four Ways to Nurture Kindness

Learn more about character education.

When the Six Pillars Conflict



At CHARACTER COUNTS!, we often refer to the Six Pillars of Character as universal values. In other words, they are values that transcend race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and even time. Put another way, nearly everyone can agree that more trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship would be good and even necessary for our individual, community, and societal growth.

Though the Six Pillars are universal, they are not absolutes. Like anything else in society, what the Pillars look like, sound like, and feel like can change due to context or circumstance. What is considered perfectly respectful behavior at a football game would not be considered respectful in a boardroom, for example. How we define what each pillar looks like and sounds like in unique circumstances is particularly important when Pillars appear to be in conflict. One definition of citizenship may include following the rules, respecting the law, and so on. And yet, Rosa Parks is often highlighted as an example of fairness, for her protest on the bus in which she technically broke the law – an unjust, unfair, and racist law, but a law nonetheless. Does that mean she's a bad citizen? Or, a student may argue that she was showing caring by letting her friend copy homework so her friend wouldn't get in trouble, while a teacher might argue that the student was being irresponsible and untrustworthy by

letting her friend cheat.

The tendency in these moments is to ask, “which Pillar is more important?” but that’s the wrong question. The right question is, “in this time, given these circumstances, what does it mean to put the Six Pillars into action?” When one asks this question, Rosa Park’s action is not only a demonstration of fighting for fairness, but citizenship, as she tries to make her community a better place for everyone, regardless of race.

Of course, some may view the constant need to negotiate what the Six Pillars look like in different circumstances as soft or unprincipled, but maybe it’s the opposite. The intentional, deliberate conversation about what the Six Pillars look like for us, in this situation, is exactly the kind of conversation, sometimes hard conversation, we must have if we’re going to work together successfully. Yes, the Pillars are universal, but what we want them to look like for our students, school, community, family, and society is ultimately up to us.

Learn more about character education.

Six Pillar Animal Coloring Pages

Download these PDFs and get started coloring!

Trustworthiness – Camel

Respect – Lion

Responsibility – Elephant

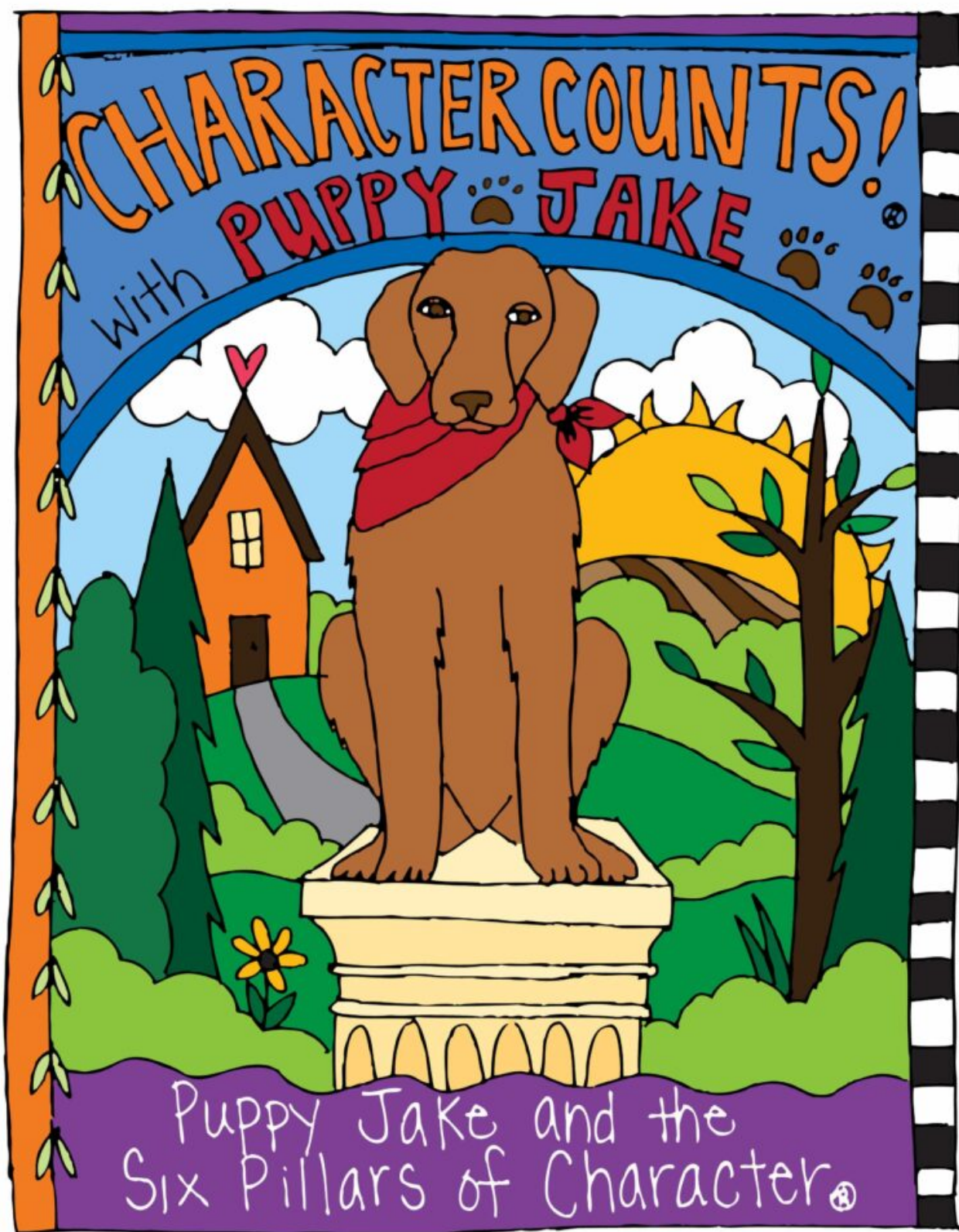
Fairness – Giraffe

Caring – Kangaroo

Citizenship – Bear

CHARACTER COUNTS! Coloring Book

Download our CHARACTER COUNTS! with Puppy Jake coloring book.



Special thanks to our friends at the Puppy Jake Foundation and Sticks.