

6-12 character education lesson: resilience



Overview:

Students need to embrace resilience as they care for one another during conflict. This lesson focuses on the caring Pillar while supplying a resource to problem-solve and build resilience.

Character education objectives:

- Students will discuss problems and solutions
- Students will brainstorm solutions to a problem
- Students will use the Problem Solving Essentials tool and compose a caring response /solution for a problem

Materials:

- Problem-Solving Essentials tool
- Problem Solving Handout
- Problem Solving Scenarios

Duration: 2 days

Lesson Plan Day 1

Journal: (5 mins)

- What is a problem you have had to solve at home or school?
- What was challenging about solving it?

Whole Group Instruction: (10 mins)

- You are going to compose an advice column to help people solve problems in their lives.
- You will work in groups of 4-5 to problem solve solutions to real-life issues.
- You will compose a caring response to help the sender tackle their problem.
- I want you to utilize the *Problem Solving Essentials* tool.
- For each problem scenario you will...
 - Define the problem and solution goals
 - Brainstorm all possible solutions
 - Write down everyone's suggestions
 - Encourage everyone to participate and give ideas
 - No idea is a bad idea they can all lead to great ideas
 - Adapt, expand, innovate, and eliminate possibilities
 - Determine the best route with the list of ideas you came up with during the brainstorming
 - Test solution and revise as needed
 - Compose a response and edit / wordsmith

- until you feel it is ready to submit
- Share with the classroom

*Whole Group Model with the classroom the following scenario:
(15 mins)*

DEAR ABBY: I'm a freshman in high school, and it's great. I've made a lot of new friends, but most of them are guys. For some reason, they think I'm this girly-girl type who doesn't like to get my hands dirty. When it's time to do something that involves lifting, they think they have to take over. If they ever saw me at home, they'd think I was a whole different person. How can I show them I'm not a girly-girl while still being friends with them? – NO GIRLY-GIRL-14

Small Group Discussion: (10 mins)

- How does our response show we care?
- Review what resilience means
- How do you build resilience?
- Why is it important to seek advice from people who care about you?
- How does seeking advice from someone you care about help build resilience?

Lesson Plan Day 2:

Journal: (5 minutes)

- Write a Dear Abby Response to the problem you listed in your journal (see lesson plan day one)

Small Group Productive Group work: (25 mins)

- Students can use the Problem-Solving Handout to gather their thoughts
- Students will go through the scenarios listed on the Scenario Handout (Allow them to choose one they would like to work on together)
- Students will use the Problem Solving Essentials tool and compose a solution for the problem

Whole Group: (10 mins)

- Share aloud the advice your group offered for the teen

Exit Ticket: (5 mins)

- How does advice from someone who cares about you help build resilience?

References

If students are unfamiliar with advice columns you can send them to the sites below to review and read some of the responses from Abby.

Dear Abby. 2020. *Uexpress*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.uexpress.com/dearabby/2020/2/9/2/teen-resents-being-treated-like-a>> [Accessed 30 March 2020].

Dr. M., 2020. *Ask Dr. M – Advice For Teens Advice Column. Advice For Teens, Advice For Kids, Advice For Children, Advice For Young Adults, Advice For Parents, Advice For Parents Of Kids, Advice For Parents Of Teens, Advice For Parents Of Young Adults.* [online] Askdrm.org. Available at: <http://www.askdrm.org/col_teens.html> [Accessed 30 March 2020].

K-5 character education Lesson: caring



Overview:

Reflecting on your own character is important to grow and stay accountable. This lesson is designed for students to reflect on the character trait of caring and the ways they display it to others. It also allows students time to discuss how they can continue to show care towards others and how they can make changes to become even more caring.

Character Education Objectives:

1. Students will reflect their own character.
2. Students will share their character traits with a partner and discuss similarities.

Materials

- Body outline for each student

Lesson:

Large Group

1. Discuss the character trait of caring with students. Ask them what caring looks like and what caring sounds like. Encourage them to think about people who they know that are caring and what they say and do.
2. You may want to write those traits down on chart paper.

Small Group/Partners

1. Give each student a body outline.
2. Encourage students to think about their own character of caring. Give them a few minutes to brainstorm how they are caring. Remind them with some of the examples they thought of in the large group.
3. Have each student describe the things that make them caring in the body outline by either writing or drawing. Encourage students to fill their entire body because it's important not only to self-reflect, but also to compliment yourself and the work you do.
4. Students will share their character body outline with a partner or small group.

Discussion Questions

- How do you and your partner/group members show caring the same way?
- How do you and your partner/group show caring in different ways?
- When is it hard to be caring?
- What do you do when
- How can you show caring more often or in a better way?

Journal

Encourage students to journal one thing they will commit to in order to become more caring. Have students be specific with their commitment, not something general like “I will be nicer” or “I will care more.”

Learn more about character education.

Tips for educators: an introduction to caring

Teachers care about the relational aspect of teaching. They take time to establish a trusting and caring connection with students, who in turn become more receptive to what’s being taught. Caring is at the heart of our character and will help in creating a positive school climate.

Questions to ask:

- What are your thoughts on teaching caring, kindness and empathy in the classroom?
- In what way are our students already upholding the Pillar of caring?
- Are there examples of where we could improve in words or actions on the part of students toward the Pillar of caring? How about as a staff?
- What can we do to teach students to be more caring and kind to others?

Activities to do:

1. Write 3 classroom key beliefs around the Pillar of caring that you would like to instill in your students.
2. Write 2 key beliefs you would like to instill in students throughout the school, hallways, lunchroom, etc.
3. What instructional strategies or classroom management techniques could you use to be intentional and explicit in instilling these beliefs?
 - Positive Sticky Notes – Leave sticky notes with positive messages
 - Thank You Letter – Write (and send!) an anonymous letter to someone you respect in your school, workplace, or other community space.
 - Caring Bulletin Board – Create a bulletin board in your school and provide plenty of paper in fun shapes or designs where adults and students can write down the acts of kindness they have received or benefitted from.

Project to explore:

One of the effective ways to implement CHARACTER COUNTS! in a school is the creation of a school-wide project. As this lesson is on the Pillar of caring, a school could consider as a project a Campaign of Kindness. As a staff, brainstorm the following:

- Slogan for the campaign
- Agree upon at least four action items that would help to implement the Culture of Kindness campaign
- Assign responsibilities for staff, students and parents
- Establish a timeline with a specific target date for the Kindness project

For additional ideas, a great resource is Random Acts of Kindness – <https://www.randomactsofkindness.org>

Join our CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition to have access to more videos like this!

6-12 lesson: goal setting



Overview:

Setting and reaching goals is an important skill every student needs to develop to become a more productive citizen. However, students do not always understand the difference in goal setting and goal achievement, nor do they grasp the steps it requires to achieve their goals. So, this lesson will walk students through the steps and supports needed to set and attain their goals.

Character Education Objectives:

- Students will discuss the difference in goal setting and goal achievement
- Students will share a desired goal they have to become a more productive member of society
- Students will create a goal map to help them navigate the journey to reach their goal

Duration:

- Creating the goal map may take more than one day depending on students

Materials:

- Goal Achievement Map

Lesson Plan

Journal (5 mins)

- What is a goal you aspire to attain in 5 years?
- What is a goal you have for the remainder of this school year?

Small Group (10 mins)

- What is the difference between goal setting and goal achievement?
- How does a citizen who strives for goal achievement support our society?

Whole Group Discussion (10 mins)

- Why is it important to have goals?
- What is challenging about goal achievement?
- How do citizens who strive for goal achievement support society?
- Today you are going to create a goal map to help you achieve the goal you stated in your journal you have for the remainder of the school year.

Individual (15 mins)

- **Suggestion: go through each step with the students**
 - Start at the goal achievement (Desired Goal)
 - *Example: I want to run a 5K (2.*
 - Then write where you are right now (Starting Point)
 - *Example: I can run a mile without stopping*
 - What are the steps in between the goal achievement (end goal) and the goal setting (baseline)?

- *Example: Increase to 1.5 miles a week (2 weeks)*
- *Example: Increase to 2 miles a week (2 weeks)*
- *Example: Increase to 2.5 miles a week (2 weeks)*
- *Example: Increase to 3 miles a week (2 weeks)*
- *Example: Increase to 3.5 miles a week (1 week)*
- Who will you have to hold you accountable?
 - *Example: My running partners*
- Why is an accountability partner so important?
- What are the measurements or times when you will assess how you are doing?
 - *Example:*
 - *Each day we will graph our time and distance*
 - *Once a week we will test ourselves on how long it takes to run/walk 3.5 miles and chart it*

Exit Ticket: (5 mins)

- Share this goal setting plan with your accountability partner
 - Snap or scan a picture of the completed map and send it via text or email.

Learn more about character education.

K-5 lesson: digital citizenship



Overview:

Our citizenship does not stop at the physical space we occupy. Citizenship has expanded to the communities we have created online. Being a digital citizen is important for students as they complete school work and socialize in the digital space. This lesson is designed to give students tips on being a safe digital citizen.

Character Education Objectives:

- Students will discuss their own digital citizenship.
- Students will brainstorm ways to be a safe digital citizen.

Materials:

- Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9Htg8V3eik>
- Chart paper or space on whiteboard/chalkboard

Lesson:

Discussion Questions

- Where are you a digital citizen? YouTube? SnapChat? TikTok? Google?
- What do you do the most on the internet?
- How do you know it is to talk to someone on the internet?

Large Group

1. Explain to students that just like their neighborhood, school and family, the internet is a community as well. As a community member, they a responsibility to be a safe digital citizen.
2. Watch “5 Internet Safety Tips” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9Htg8V3eik>

Small Group

1. Break the students into five groups. Each group will be assigned a different Internet safety tip. The tips are:
 1. Don't give out personal information.
 2. Never send pictures to strangers.
 3. Keep passwords private.
 4. Don't download anything without permission.
 5. Tell an adult if you receive a mean or strange message.
2. Have the groups develop a slogan, song, rhyme or short skit for their rule. The goal is to find a way to create something catchy so students are able to retain the rules.
3. Have groups present their ideas to the large group.

Journal

Remind students that there are a lot of restrictions put on internet access at school, but in some settings (home, friend's houses) there are few restrictions. What are some other things you can do to make safe internet decisions?

Learn more about character education.

Fun ways to help kids learn the power of kindness



From guest contributor Dr. Michele Borba

When my children were little, we played a game called the Silent Fuzzy Pass. Fuzzy was a bright orange, ragged old stuffed animal that I suppose was a bear though it's debatable. Each night, Fuzzy "mysteriously appeared" on one of my son's pillows because the receiving child had been especially caring that day-and trying to sneak it there was always challenging. I only needed to put Fuzzy out once for the game to be effective.

The very next day-and the next few weeks-the boys were on a "kindness alert," watching for a brother to say or do

something nice so that they could later try to guess who Fuzzy would visit that night. All day long they would run to me with “kindness reports”: “Zach was really nice. He shared his toys with me.” “Jason was kind. He let me choose the game we played.” The only rule was that the boys had to explain why they felt the deed was kind. Later that night they would run to their pillows to see who Fuzzy had visited. The nonrecipients would tell the honored brother why Fuzzy probably chose him by reciting the kind deeds they remembered him doing earlier. Then the discussion would turn to their telling the brother how much they liked receiving his kind gestures, and the smile on the listener’s face was always priceless.

I still don’t remember how our “Fuzzy visits” got started. It probably was one of those spontaneous parenting moments when my kids’ “kindness level” needed readjusting, and the idea just came. But it was amazing how such a simple little strategy could be so effective in boosting the virtue in my family. It sure taught me a few things: I learned that by really targeting kindness for a few weeks at home, my sons focused more on the behavior, and doing so helped them acquire a repertoire of kind deeds. I also learned the importance of letting my children know that their kind deeds positively affected others. Their kind gestures blossomed in our home-and it was so simple!

I’ve used these virtue-building lessons with my kids as well as students ever since. And it also seems that research shows that that easy little “spur of the moment” technique is one of the best ways to boost our children’s kindness muscles.

The Science 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.*

Samuel and Pearl Oliner discovered this phenomenon in their famous landmark study in Europe involving the rescuers of Jews from the Nazi persecution. Their book, *The Altruistic Personality*, is profound. In their interviews with the rescuers, a significant number said they had first planned to give only limited help, but their commitment grew once they became involved. The same phenomenon will take place with children once they recognize that their acts of kindness are appreciated. The more opportunities children have to experience what it feels like to be the giver of kindness, the more likely they will incorporate the virtue as part of their character. *We need to make sure our children have those opportunities to extend kindness.*

3 Ways Kids Can Practice Doing Kind Deeds

What follows are a few ideas parents, teachers, and club leaders have used that encourage kids to practice doing kind deeds.

1. Create a Kindness Center Piece

A family from Toledo shared this heart centerpiece activity with me; it not only makes a charming decoration but also nurtures kindness. Gather your family together and brainstorm a list of kind deeds kids can do for just about anybody. Set one criterion: the deeds must all come “straight from the

heart” and can’t be something you purchase.

Here are a few simple kindness suggestions other kids have come up with: say hello, ask how they are, offer to help, share something (anything!), give a compliment, invite them to play, listen and wait, give a pat on the back, ask someone to have lunch with you, teach a game to a friend, let the other person “go first,” write a thank you note, hug someone you love, open the door, give praise, do an errand for someone, give a high five, recycle, rake the neighbor’s leaves, wave to a stranger, bring a flower to your teacher, let them choose first, smile

Next, help your kids cut out fifteen to twenty-five colored paper heart shapes about three inches wide. On each heart, write a different kind deed. Then have kids decorate the hearts with whatever art supplies you have handy—glitter, stickers, marking pens, doilies, and paper scraps. Tape the back of each heart onto a pipe cleaner. Now place the “heart flowers” into any vase.

Every morning, invite each family member to pull a heart shape from the centerpiece. Encourage him to do the kind deed for people sometime that day. Each night at dinner, have everyone take turns describing his kindness-giving experience. Be sure to point out that people react differently to kindness and that not everyone may seem appreciative, but kind deeds are always the right thing to do.

2. Assign Secret Kindness Pals in Your Class or Home

This idea is a great way to help children learn that giving

can be just as fun as receiving. Start by writing each child's name on a paper slip; put them all in a basket, bag or other container. Each participating child then takes a turn pulling a slip; the pulled name becomes the child's secret kindness pal. Explain that her task for the next week-a few days for younger kids-is to do a *secret* act of kindness toward her pal each day. Emphasize that the pal should not "see" the child performing the deed-that's what makes it secret and what makes the game so intriguing.

Some of the secret deeds kids come up with are just plain wonderful. I've had students draw pictures, write a song, pick a flower bouquet, and string a necklace. My own kids secretly cleaned a brother's room (a true first!), did laundry, and even ironed a shirt (though this was definitely a time when the thought was what really counted, *not* what the shirt looked like later).

My favorite example came from a Girl Scout troop in New York. Each girl's secret buddy was a cancer patient in a pediatric ward. Each day for a month, the girls did secret kindly deeds for the children, such as leaving e-mail messages for them on the hospital computers, bringing toys, making colorful posters to wish them a happy day, baking cookies, and even making tapes of their favorite music to give. The patients adored the gestures, but the girls got even more enjoyment from doing the secret caring deeds.

When I did this activity with students, I always allowed a few minutes before dismissal to ask: "Has anybody done something nice for you? What was it? How did it make you feel? Who do you think your secret pal was today?"

The discussion always generated ideas for more secret kind gestures and also clearly let the senders know that their gestures were appreciated. Warning: the key to the activity's success is keeping the secret pal a secret-which is almost impossible for some kids (like one of my own sons -so try to keep things lighthearted even if the secrecy rule isn't strictly adhered to. Feel free to give younger kids hints for ideas they might try to keep things hush hush.

3. Make a Giving Tree Filled with Kind Deeds

One of the cutest ideas I've seen for helping kids practice kindness was done by a Boys and Girls Club in Atlanta. The leaders first read *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein, a wonderful parable about a tree and a boy who grow old together and finally that recognize the greatest gift is giving of yourself. Next, they stood a large leafless tree branch in a pot and placed it in the middle of the room. The leaders then asked the kids to think of kind gestures they could do for someone when she looked sad or lonely like the tree. Each child's idea was written on a six-inch leaf shape precut from colored paper, then hung to the branch with a paper clip.

In a short time, their Giving Tree was covered with kind ideas, such as give a hug, smile, call her at home, ask her to play, sing a song, say a kind word, share something, ask what you can do, draw a picture. The leaders finally said, "Each day during the week when you come to the club, go to the Giving Tree, find an idea you could do for someone to make his day brighter, and then do it. It will make not only his day better, but also yours."

Parents, scout leaders, and teachers have told me they also

made Giving Trees to help promote kindness with children. All you need is a small branch, plaster of paris, construction paper, scissors, paper clips, and a can. In fact, a fun family outing is taking a walk together just to find “the perfect branch.”

There are dozens of simple kindness rituals you can do with children.

- **A year-round Giving Tree:** My girlfriend Cindy Morse kept her tree for years standing by her kitchen table. Every holiday, her children decorated the tree: paper bunnies for Easter, Kleenex ghosts for Halloween, American flags for the Fourth of July, and hearts with kind deeds for Valentine’s Day. It’s a wonderful family tradition you might want to begin. Cindy now does the same activity with her grandkids.
- **Pull a kind deed every day Giving Tree:** My own family kept a small “Giving Tree” on our kitchen table. We’d periodically add more “kind deeds” written on small paper leaves to the tree. It was the perfect way to start. Each of us could look at one kind deed and then try to remember to do it for someone that day. A highlight of the evening dinner was talking about the kind deed and the impact it had on the individual.
- **A Giving Tree kindness wall at a school:** The Shipley School in Pennsylvania just emailed that they were started a Kindness Wall today. Every student was writing (or drawing) on a Post-it note an act of kindness they had done or seen that day. The wall was wrapping the school! What ideas are you doing with your students or children? Please share! After all, the world needs kindness and it must start with our children. Let’s start kindness traditions and keep them going all year round!

Michele Borba, Ed.D. is an internationally renowned consultant, educational psychologist and recipient of the National Educator Award who has presented workshops to over a million participants worldwide. She is a recognized expert in parenting, bullying, youth violence, and character development and author of 22 books including UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About Me World, The 6Rs of Bullying Prevention: Best Proven Practices to Combat Cruelty and Build Respect, The Big Book of Parenting Solutions, and Building Moral Intelligence. She has appeared over 130 times on the TODAY show and is a frequent expert on national media including Dateline, The View, Dr. Oz, Anderson Cooper, CNN, Dr. Drew, and Dr. Phil. To book her for speaking or media even refer to her website: www.micheleborba.com. Follow her on twitter @MicheleBorba.

Learn more about character education.

K-5 lesson: perspective taking



Overview:

Fairness is hearing all sides to a story, even when it's hard to see there is another side. This lesson is designed for students to stretch their ability to see the view of others in stories that feel like there is a good and a bad side.

Students will be encouraged to think about how a story that they thought they knew looks different when you see the perspective of others.

Character Education Objectives:

Students will:

- identify the perspectives of each character.
- discuss the impact of seeing only one side of a story.
- reflect on their own experiences with fairness.

Materials:

- Choose a classic good vs bad story like *Hansel and Gretel*, *Three Little Pigs and The Big Bad Wolf*, *The Three Billy Goats Bluff*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, etc.

Lesson:

Large Group

1. Read or tell the story you chose. Pick a story where there is a good vs. bad dynamic with the characters.
2. Explain to the students that every story has two sides.

To be fair, you need to hear both sides. Share with students that the story you just read only shares one side of the story. We know this because the story focuses on the one character and we know what that character does before, during and after the main events.

3. The other side of the story is the “bad guy’s” story. For example: In *Hansel and Gretel* there is only the story of the children and the witch’s story goes untold.
4. Explain to the students that they will be creating another story to show the view point of the other character in the story.

Small Group

1. You can also do this in a large group depending on the developmental level of your students.
2. Students will write and/or draw a short story that involves telling the side of the other character in the story. The story will need to include the following:
 - The main plot points of the story.
 - Why do you think the character did what they did?
 - What did this character do before the event?
 - What was the character thinking during the event?
 - How did the character feel after the main events?
 - What did the character do after the main events?
3. Have the groups share their short story out to the large group.

Discussion Questions

- When you first read the story, did you think about the side of the other character? Why or why not?

- Did writing the other character's side of the story change how you felt about the character? If so, how?
- What would happen if you didn't think about the other character's side of the story?

Journal

Think about a time where you were in a disagreement with someone. What was your side of the story? What do you think their side of the story was?

Learn more about character education.

6-12 lesson: embracing diversity



Overview: Learning about other traditions and holidays is important to promote acceptance not just tolerance of other viewpoints, religions, belief systems, and perspectives. This lesson will discuss having integrity with a focus on fairness to promote a classroom that embraces diversity.

Character Education Objectives:

Students will:

- discuss traditions of their culture and family
- share ideas about promoting a fair environment for all learners to be who they are
- depict what it means to embrace culture using a form of artistic expression (Day 2)

Materials:

- Venn Diagram handout
- Integrity and Fairness Cultural Expressions Project Grid
- Art supplies
- Paper
- Pens
- Markers
- Teacher Resource : Bhouraskar, S., 2019. *Finding A Place For Culture In The Classroom*. [online] Teaching Multicultural Students: Creating Inclusive Classrooms.

Lesson Plan Day One

Journal: (5 mins)

- What is one of your family's favorite traditions?

Think-Pair-Share: (10 mins)

- Share a family tradition with a partner

- Use the Venn Diagram to compare and contrast your family cultural tradition with your partner's family cultural tradition

Small Group Discussion: (10 mins)

- What is a definition of culture?
- What makes up culture?

Whole Group Discussion: (15 mins)

- As a class define culture- use the definitions created in small group and wordsmith to create a classroom definition
- Discuss the elements that make up culture
- How do we promote fairness in the diverse culture where we live?
- What does integrity have to do with being fair to other cultures?

Exit Ticket: (5 mins)

- What is something you learned about promoting cultural fairness and awareness today?

Lesson Plan Day Two

Journal: (5 mins)

- What does it look and sound like to allow everyone to be who they are in a classroom?

Think-Pair-Share (5 mins)

- Discuss the following quote with a partner: “Be yourself, everybody else is taken” – Oscar Wilde

Whole Group Discussion (5 mins)

- Make a list with students about what is needed in a classroom of fairness to allow everyone to be who they are?

Individual Work (20 mins)

- Give students the freedom to choose an activity from the Integrity and Fairness Cultural Expressions Project Grid to share about what it means to have the integrity to showing fairness for all cultures in the classroom.
- Play some different cultural music while they work (or take suggestions from students and ensure they are not explicit).

Exit Ticket (5-10 mins)

- Share your work with a partner or record a video of yourself sharing your Integrity and Fairness Cultural Expressions Project and post to your classroom social

media using #CharacterCounts.

References

Teacher- to learn more information on teaching culture and to get some ideas to help with discussion check out this resource:

- Bhouraskar, S., 2019. *Finding A Place For Culture In The Classroom*. [online] Teaching Multicultural Students: Creating Inclusive Classrooms. Available at: <<https://www.accreditedschoolsonline.org/education-teaching-degree/multicultural-students/>> [Accessed 27 March 2020].

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Six Pillar coloring pages

Download these PDFs and get started coloring!

Trustworthiness

Respect

Responsibility

Fairness

Caring

Citizenship

Six Pillar animal coloring pages

Download these PDFs and get started coloring!

Trustworthiness – Camel

Respect – Lion

Responsibility – Elephant

Fairness – Giraffe

Caring – Kangaroo

Citizenship – Bear