

# 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!

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# 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.

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## 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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# 6-12 lesson: growth mindset



**Overview:** Life can be busy and can create distress in the lives of families and students. Therefore, it is important to highlight the need to have a growth mindset and to manage stress to respect yourself, your health, and your well-being.

**Duration:** 2 days (45 minutes each day)

## **Character Education Objectives:**

Students will:

- share ideas about good stress and distress on the body
- discuss ways to use a growth mindset to navigate stressful situations
- create a Personal Stress Management Plan

## **Materials:**

- 3-2-1 Handout
- Stress Quadrant Handout
- Personal Stress Management Plan

## **Lesson Plan Day 1**

### **Journal: (5 mins)**

- What makes you feel stressed?
- How do you know you are stressed?

### **Whole Group Discussion (10 mins)**

- What are physical signs of stress?
- What are some emotional signs you may be feeling distressed?
- How do we show respect for ourselves by paying attention

to our stress levels?

**Whole Group Video 15 mins:**

- Watch Video : *How To Make Stress Your Friend*
- Record what you learned on the 3-2-1 Handout

**Whole Group Discussion (10 mins)**

- What are the effects of believing stress is bad?
- How does changing the way you think about stress impact your body's response to stress?

**Exit Ticket: (5 mins)**

- What is the number one thing learned about stress today?

**Lesson Plan Day Two**

**Journal: (5 mins)**

- What should you think when you feel stressed?

**Small group Discussion/Productive Group Work (25 mins)**

- Use the 3-2-1 Handouts from previous lesson to help with

responses

- Record the responses to share whole group on Stress Quadrant Handout
  - What:
    - should you think when you feel stressed?
    - are some healthy ways to process stress?
    - are some unhealthy responses to stress?
    - is important to know about stress?

### **Individual (15 mins)**

- Utilize the posters created in small group to give ideas
- Complete your own Stress Management Plan
- This is the exit ticket

### **References**

*Lee Health, 2020. The Good And Bad Stress. [online] YouTube. Available at: <<https://youtu.be/ZN2NarsQZ04>> [Accessed 26 March 2020].*

*McGonigal, K., 2020. How To Make Stress Your Friend. [online] Ted.com. Available at: <[https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly\\_mcgonigal\\_how\\_to\\_make\\_stress\\_your\\_friend?utm\\_campaign=tedspread&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_source=tedcomshare](https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare)> [Accessed 26 March 2020].*

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# 6-12 lesson: emotional toughness



**Overview:** Students today need more opportunities to build their emotional toughness in a world that is as fast paced and ever changing. Thus, creating conditions that allow them to take responsibility for their behavior, emotions, and responses is important in building resilience for learning and development. This lesson will have students focus on their emotional toughness and highlight the need to be responsible for our responses in emotional situations.

## **Character Education Objectives:**

Students will:

- utilize the Scale of Emotion to describe how they feel
- discuss Emotional Toughness Indicators
- reflect on their own emotional resilience and the importance of taking responsibility for their own emotional response.

## **Materials**

- Scale of Emotion
- Emotional Toughness Handout
- Emotional Toughness Indicators
- Exit Ticket

## **Lesson Plan**

### **Journal (5 mins)**

- Using the Scale of Emotion explain where you feel you are today and why.

### **Small Group or Whole Group Discussion (30 mins)**

- Read through the Emotional Toughness Indicators
- As a group discuss/respond to the following:
  - Emotional Flexibility
    - Define productive and unproductive states of emotion
    - What emotions make you unproductive?
    - Why are emotions so important?
    - Who is responsible for your emotions?
  - Emotional Responsiveness
    - What are some positive responses students when you face unpleasant or unproductive emotions?
    - Give an example of a time you took responsibility for creating a positive emotional response

- How did this impact you and those around you?
- Emotional Resiliency
  - Look up the definition of resilience and come up with a working definition with your group
  - What is a situation you have had to show resiliency in your own life?
  - How has this situation made you more responsible and resilient?
- Emotional Strength
  - How do people develop a never-quit attitude?



## References

Hurst, K., 2020. *Learn How To Move UP The (Vibrational) Emotional Scale*. [online] The Law Of Attraction. Available at: <<https://www.thelawofattraction.com/law-attraction-learning-move-emotional-scale/>> [Accessed 24 March 2020].

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# Good stress versus distress

Not all stress is bad. Most, if not all of us recognize this simple fact, and yet when was the last time you heard anyone say, “I’m stressed” with a smile on their face or joy in their heart?



The reality is, stress exists on a continuum, from good stress to distress. Good stress is the stress that challenges you, motivates you, perhaps even helps you focus. Teachers put their students through good stress every day by asking them to take on more challenging math problems, tackle difficult texts, and attempt new skills. Good stress helps us grow and develop as human beings.

However, there comes a point on the continuum when good stress becomes distress, when stress stops being motivating and instead becomes overwhelming. It's important for each of us to be aware of our stress at any given moment so that we know if we are being challenged (good stress) or overcome (distress).

It's also important for us to be aware of stress of others so that we can continue to support and challenge them as needed. But, recognizing if others are in a state of good stress or distress can be challenging. Not everyone wears their stress publicly. To help others think about their stress, and gain an awareness of their stress, draw the Good Stress-Distress continuum (see below) on whiteboard or sheet of paper. Ask your students, athletes, kids, or colleagues to put an X on the curve indicating their current stress level. They don't need to explain why they are feeling that good stress or distress – this activity is simply about awareness. However, as a team leader, educator, coach, or parent, you can use your knowledge of others stress to push them further (good stress) or provide support if they are in distress.



*Download a PDF of the continuum.*

This activity is one of several extension activities in the Growth Mindset module of The ESSENTIALS, a new resource for middle and high school students. The ESSENTIALS modules draw upon nearly 25 years of applied research and development in various K-16 education settings, the workplace, and diverse athletic environments. Each module is a blueprint of research-based best practices for developing an essential character and culture skill needed for success in school, work, and beyond. [Click here](#) to order The ESSENTIALS for your students.

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## **Return to learn: citizenship**

There is, perhaps, no more important time to be a good citizen than during a global pandemic. Each of us plays a critical role in contributing to the health and well-being of others. Whether returning to the classroom or engaging in online learning, educators, administrators, students, and families have an important role to play in maintaining the health and safety of all parties, and contributing to a positive educational environment.

The Leader-to-Detractor tool serves two important purposes. First, it defines what each role – detractor, participant, and leader – looks like in action. Good citizens are able to

change detractor behaviors to participant behaviors, and participant behaviors to leader behaviors. Second, one can use the tool reflectively by asking, “were my actions that of a leader, detractor, or participant, and what do I need to do better or differently tomorrow to be a better citizen?”



**Citizenship for Educators:** Educators can use the Leader-to-Detractor tool to define what each role looks like in their classroom (virtual or in person). You may choose to include leader to detractor behaviors that are specific to following health guidelines as well. Share these definitions with parents so they know what your expectations are as well.

**Citizenship for Students:** Once students have worked with educators or parents on defining what leaders, participants, and detractors look like in action, they can engage in daily self-reflection to gauge their behaviors for the day. Students should note if there are instances in which they are more likely to be a detractor or participant and create and follow a plan to be a leader in every circumstance. Their reflection can be centered on school, home, following health guidelines, or a combination of all three.

**Citizenship for Families:** Families can use the Leader-to-Detractor tool to identify leader, participant, and detractor behaviors they observe each day. These may be behaviors the student exhibits, or observations of others, whether at the grocery store, at work, or in the community. Ask your student what leader to detractor behaviors they notice in others each day, and what could be done better or differently to be a leader in each situation.

Download the Leader-To-Detractor tool.

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## Return to learn: caring

Caring can be demonstrated in numerous ways. We can demonstrate caring by maintaining social connections, supporting friends and family who are struggling, completing random acts of kindness, or simply being available for a friend who needs a safe, compassionate listener.

The attitude and effort we choose to display is another way we show caring. Bringing a positive attitude each day, to every task, is a great way to show that you care. Likewise, the amount of effort we put forth is another indicator of how much we care about someone or something. The Attitude + Effort = Improvement (AEI) tool is a simple way to reflect on whether you brought a positive attitude and effort to a task, and by extension, how much you cared.



**Caring for Educators:** Use the AEI tool to define for your students what great, good, and poor attitude and effort looks like in action. Be sure to help students see the distinction between attitude and effort (you can have a positive attitude and put forth no effort, and vice versa). Ask students what

they can do to demonstrate a great attitude and work ethic each day, whether remote or in-person. Then, have them reflect on their attitude and effort each day.

**Caring for Students:** Students can track their daily attitude and effort on a 1 (poor) through 3 (great) scale and see if they notice any trends. For example, their attitude and effort is great when working on math, but poor when working on Spanish. Students can then create a plan for what to do better or differently to improve their attitude and effort where needed.

**Caring for Families:** The AEI tool provides a simple way to engage your student in self-reflection. Ask your student to rate himself or herself on their attitude and effort each day and ask them what they can do better the next day. The conversation is even more powerful you reflect on their own attitude and effort each day and try to improve with your student.

Download the Attitude + Effort = Improvement tool

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## **Return to learn: fairness**

In a time of uncertainty, it can be difficult to find fair

solutions for diverse groups of stakeholders. Is it fair to prohibit young people from participating in social activities when it appears the effects of COVID-19 aren't as severe for young and healthy people? On the other hand, is it fair to individuals in a demographic with more risk if young people increase their exposure to the virus and then spread it to others?

When clear solutions aren't available, it's up to individuals to negotiate win-win solutions that account for the needs and wants of all parties to reach a fair solution for the greater good. To do this, one must listen to understand what the other party wants by asking questions and restating what the other person says to ensure clarity. You must also clearly describe what it is you desire and why. Only when all parties understand that this is what you want and this is what I want, can you work together to find a "we could" win-win solution.



**Fairness for Educators:** Few things will be normal this school year. Educators will have to negotiate win-win solutions on everything from how students will pass each other in the hallways to how students will eat lunch. In every negotiation, commit to understanding the other person's perspective, clearly state your idea, and stay focused on your common ground – what you both want to achieve.

**Fairness for Students:** Students can use the Win-Win Negotiation tool to help them find compromise with teachers or parents. For example, students using win-win negotiation when asking permission to attend a social event would clearly articulate what they want (to attend event) and why they want

it (to see their friends), and would listen to and understand what their parent wants (child to be safe and healthy). Then, both parties can focus on solutions that can meet this objective (you can attend the event if there are less than 10 people and you wear a mask).

**Fairness for Families:** Families can use the Win-Win Negotiation tool to help find compromise over work time, if students are working from home. Or, the tool could be used to reach agreement on what social activities students can engage in. Families can even use it when finding solutions with schools on everything from behavior issues to virtual versus in-person attendance.

Download the Win-Win Negotiation tool

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## **Return to learn: responsibility**

When under stress, or outside of our comfort zone, it can be tempting to shy away from responsibility. However, it is critical as the school year progresses that each person take responsibility for their role in ensuring a safe and productive learning environment.

When norms and routines are disrupted, it can be easy to lose sight of our goals and the process we need to follow to achieve those goals. The Goal Map tool is an excellent resource to focus attention on the action steps needed to continue progressing towards our objectives, especially when we are outside of our comfort zone.



**Responsibility for Educators:** The unique challenges of this school year likely feel overwhelming. How do you transition your entire curriculum to online delivery? How do you track student progress when you don't see your students each day? How do you create a productive classroom space while still following health guidelines? Use the Goal Map to break down what seem like insurmountable tasks into small, achievable action steps. Devote your time and energy solely to each step until you are ready to move on to the next action step.

**Responsibility for Students:** Students can use the Goal Map to craft a plan for achieving objectives each day, each week, each month, or even over an entire semester. Whether attending school online or in person, the Goal Map can help students identify what tasks need to be completed, in what order, and track their progress towards completion.

**Responsibility for Families:** The Goal Map is a great tool for families to use to help their students create a learning plan, especially for students working online. Create a Goal Map each day, outlining the objective for the day, and the action steps needed to reach those objectives. Then, review the Goal Map at the end of the day to track progress and ensure students are taking the necessary steps to be successful each day.



**Download a Goal Map.**