

# Small Acts of Kindness and Citizenship (Grades 6-12)

Students can learn how to model good citizenship in the way they care for the members of their school. Students will develop tangible habits that show how to increase awareness of citizenship and good character. This lesson will explore ways to support the citizens and take care of the community of learners within the building.

---

## Volunteering (Grades 6-12)



### Character Education Objective:

- Students will discuss how caring is demonstrated through volunteering.

### Content Objective:

- Students will volunteer for an organization that is

close to their heart to demonstrate care for others.

### **Language Objective:**

- Students will research local organizations where they can volunteer

### **Purpose:**

Students can learn how to care for others by volunteering for organizations and getting more involved. Discussing ways to care for animals, the Earth, or people is a great way to share caring, but serving in those areas is a superior way to make connections to this pillar of character. Therefore, this lesson will push students to think and research organizations where they can volunteer and demonstrate what it means to care in action not just in words.

### **Lesson**

Independent (5 minutes)

- If you could write a blank check to any non-profit or service organization what would it be and why?

Categorize who or what your selected organization cares for in service (2 min)

- Animals
- Individuals with disabilities
- Sick Children
- Etc

Utilizing the areas of interest find a group who is also interested in supporting these types of organizations. (13 min)

- Create a poster as a team of the 5W and H ways to volunteer and demonstrate you care
- What organizations are available in your area?
- Where do you need to go to get signed up to volunteer?

- When do can you volunteer?
- Who do they need or accept to volunteer?
- Why would you choose to volunteer?

Share out your Why (2 min)

- Why should you volunteer at your selected organization?

Learn more about character education.

---

## Defining Fairness (Grades 6-12)



**Character Education Objective:**

- Students will discuss the meaning of fairness.

## **Content Objective:**

- Students will define fairness.

## **Language Objective:**

- Students will share their ideas and definitions of fairness from assorted quotes.

## **Purpose:**

Fairness can vary based on definition and situation. Thus, students need to discuss what it means to be fair, and what should be considered *unfair* in their world. This lesson will give students the opportunity to view fairness from multiple perspectives, so they can create a more expansive picture of what it looks like and sounds like in different settings and situations.

## **Lesson**

Partner discussion (2 min)

- What is something you think is unfair?
- What is the definition of fair?

Productive Group Work (10 min)

- Place quotes around the room (images or list of them)
- Students will meet with a group to discuss each quote
- The students will develop a definition or attributes of fairness based on the meaning they attributed to the quote

Share out your teams definition of fairness (5 min)

Create a class consensus definition of fairness (5 min)

Independent (3 min)

- What was your favorite quote and why?

“Win or Lose, Do It Fairly.” – Knute Rockne

“The Way You See People Is the Way You Treat Them, And the Way You Treat Them Is What They Become.”– Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

“Live So That When Your Children Think of Fairness and Integrity, They Think of You.” – H. Jackson Brown, Jr

“Fairness Is Not an Attitude. It’s A Professional Skill That Must Be Developed and Exercised.” – Brit Hume

“I Think Perfect Objectivity Is an Unrealistic Goal; Fairness, However, Is Not.”– Michael Pollan

“From the Equality Of Rights Springs Identity Of Our Highest Interests; You Cannot Subvert Your Neighbor’s Rights Without Striking A Dangerous Blow At Your Own.”– Carl Shurz

“You Cannot Be Fair to Others Without First Being Fair to Yourself.” – Vera Nazarian

“If You Want to See the True Measure of a Man, Watch How He Treats His Inferiors, Not His Equals.” – J. K. Rowling

“We Hold These Truths to Be Self-Evident: That All Men Are Created Equal.” – Declaration of Independence

Learn more about character education.

---

## **Problem Solving (Grades 6-12)**

**Character Education Objective:**

- Students will discuss the role each individual play in solving his or her own problem.

**Content Objective:**

- Students will take responsibility to solve the problems they face.

**Language Objective:**

- Students will tackle a problem in their own life so they can #GetUnstuck

**Purpose:**

Taking responsibility for our own actions and problems in life is a skill we need to build. There will always be escalators breaking down in our lives, so we must take ownership over what we can control to keep moving up the stairs. This lesson highlights the importance of recognizing the things you can take responsibility for to #GetUnstuck and keep moving

forward.

## **Lesson**

Independent (2 min)

- What is a problem you are facing?

Watch the video as a class Stuck on an Escalator: <https://youtu.be/Kq65aAYCH0w> (3 min)

Small Group Discussion (8 min):

- What is the problem for these people in the video?
- What is the solution?
- Whose responsibility is it to solve their problem?
- What keeps us from taking responsibility and just getting off the escalator when we have a problem?

Whole group share out (4 min):

- When faced with a problem, what are some ways we can take responsibility and get off the escalator?

Reflection Journal (Independent task) (3 min):

- Go back to the problem you listed in your journal and write some responsible solutions or ideas that you can take to #GetUnstuck on the escalator or get it moving again.

## **Family Connection**

- Tech Support
  - Anydo is an app that helps organize and prioritize tasks when you are overwhelmed and stuck with too many things to do
  - Sam App is an app to help you take ownership over your own health and manage the anxiety of dealing with the stress of the day to day.
- Pillar Time

- Play a game of chess to determine strategic ways to stay out of checkmate
- Write a 100-word poem about being thankful for problems
- Use an object from your home and try to come up with as many ways to use it as possible
  - A spoon
    - Dig a hole (slowly)
    - A party trick for your nose
    - To carry an egg
- Watch the video, Stuck on an Escalator as a family
  - <https://youtu.be/Kq65aAYCH0w>
- Read What do you do with A Problem by Kobi Yamad
- Dinner Discussion
  - Describe an experience when you had to solve a problem in your life?
  - Discuss how responsibility plays a role in finding solutions to everyday problems.
  - Share why you feel it is important to take responsibility for your own actions and problems.

## References

Radcliv, Bob. "Stuck On An Escalator – Release Your Trapped Emotions!". *Getanswers.Com*, 2013, <https://youtu.be/Kq65aAYCH0w>.

---

# Interpersonal Skills (Grades 6-12)



**Character Education Objective:**

- Students will discuss how to develop and maintain positive relationships in their lives.

**Content Objective:**

- Students will define, establish, and maintain healthy relationships.

**Language Objective:**

- Students will employ strategies to promote positive relationship building and connections.

**Purpose:**

Human beings need opportunities to build and maintain positive relationships in all stages of life. Providing teens with opportunities to develop a clear definition of what healthy relationships look and sound like is important to help ensure health development, physically, socially, and emotionally. Creating positive models and situations to practice healthy boundaries and communication is important to grow relationships and social connections.

**Lesson**

## Independent

- Who do you have a healthy, positive relationship within your life?
- How does this connection with this individual make you feel?

## Productive Group Work:

- Read this article and/or infographic about connection and the impact on health.
- List the impact of human connections on health

## Whole Group Discussion:

- What did you learn?
- What are some ways to spend more time with friends?

## Reflection Journal (Independent task)

- Compare and Contrast the feelings/benefits of social media time with friends and in-person time with friends
- How will you get out from behind the screen and be seen this week?

#BeSeen

#CharacterCounts

Learn more about character education.

---

# No Gossip (Grades 6-12)



### **Character Education Objective:**

- Students will discuss the impact of gossip on individuals, teams, friend groups, and families.

### **Content Objective:**

- Students will commit to a No Gossip challenge to show respect.

### **Language Objective:**

- Students will share ideas about spreading the #NoGossip

### **Purpose:**

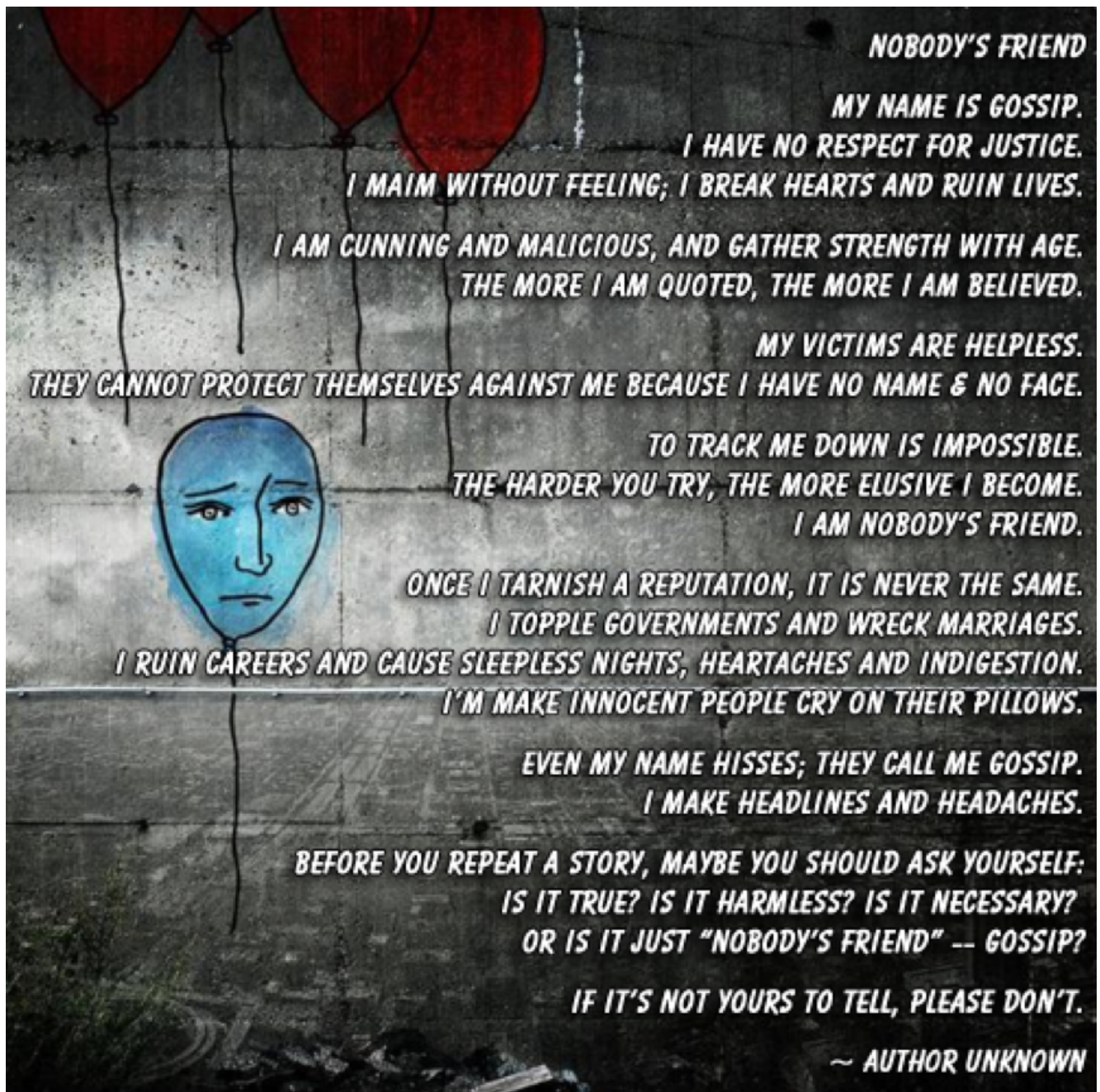
Gossip is a toxic cloud that spreads darkness around the globe and runs rampant in schools and communities. Creating a culture of respect is vital to ensure learners feel safe and like they belong. So, let's build a 40 Day No Gossip Campaign to empower students, teachers, administrators and families to stand for respect.

### **Lesson:**

- Independent (3 mins)

- Write about a time you have heard, been part of, or were gossiped about in school or on social media.
  - How did it make you feel?
- Write one feeling on a sticky note and add it to the whiteboard or post on social media: Instagram/Twitter/Facebook #NoGossip #CHARACTERCOUNTS
- Vocabulary (2mins): What do these words mean? (Optional)
  - Gossip
  - Maim
  - Tarnish
  - Elusive
- Productive Group Work (10mins):
  - Read the poem (or print image of poem below)
  - List the attributes and impact of *gossip* you find?
  - What are some respectful statements you can use to stop gossip you might hear?
  - Make a plan about how your group will spread the #NoGossip





- Whole Group Discussion (3 mins):
  - How can showing respect to others stop gossiping behavior?
  - What will your group do to spread the #NoGossip?
- Reflection Journal (Independent task 2 mins)
  - Post on social media and/or in planner
    - #NoGossip #CHARACTERCOUNTS! #Respect

**Family  
Connection**

- Tech Support
  - Friend  
your child and follow their social media profiles
  - Share  
out a social media post as a family with #NoGossip  
#CHARACTERCOUNTS!
- Pillar Time
  - Share  
ways to stop gossip in your household
  - Practice  
ways to lovingly hold one another accountable to  
no gossip
  - Invite  
extended family to join your family in the  
#NoGossip #CHARACTERCOUNTS!
- Dinner Discussion
  - What  
is harmful about gossip?
  - How  
is gossip disrespectful?
  - What  
feelings do you associate with gossip?

Learn more about character education.

---

## **Trustworthiness Through Organization (Grades 6-12)**

**Character Education Objective:**

- Students will discuss the impact of disorganization in their lives and in the lives of those who count on them

**Content Objective:**

- Students will explore ways to become more organized to help them remain trustworthy and accountable to their commitments

**Language Objective:**

- Students will share ideas about what it looks, and sounds like to be trustworthy and organized

**Purpose:**

School is back in session, and students are lining the halls and classrooms in anticipation of another year of learning. The hallways smell of freshly sharpened pencils and glue, and the agendas are sparkling with white space. Soon, calendars will begin to fill up, to-do lists will start to take up more space, and the students and families will become overwhelmed with commitments. After all, students are busier today than they have ever been and are struggling with balance. Therefore, this lesson will focus on tips for students to

demonstrate trustworthiness through organization. Learning to prioritize and organize are vital to keeping commitments and maintaining a character of trustworthiness.

## Lesson

- Watch video: “Organization for the Chronically Disorganized.”
  - <https://youtu.be/ENF8090oJvM> (5 mins)
- Consider the following quote and discussion questions independently, and then with an elbow partner (5 mins)
  - What does this quote teach about the impact of your habits
  - What does this quote say about being trustworthy in your commitments?
  - How does this quote relate to prioritizing and organizing things in your life?

Watch your thoughts; they become words.

Watch your words; they become actions.

Watch your actions; they become habits.

Watch your habits; they become character.

Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.

- Productive Group Work: Students complete a chart paper with ideas for one of the following questions. (5 mins)
  - What are some ideas you have about getting or staying organized this year?
  - What are some ideas you to focus on being more trustworthy in your commitments through organization?
- Gallery Walk (2 mins)
  - Students will put a colored sticker next to an idea that they think will help them to be more trustworthy and organized.
- Reflection Journal (Independent task) (2 mins)
  - Write in planner cover or text to someone who can



hold you accountable.

- I will be trustworthy because I will (Fill in blank with what you will do to be more organized).

## **Family Connection**

- Tech Support
  - Download the COZI App
  - Share calendars to help organize and determine the level of commitments in the household
- Pillar Time
  - Share ways to stay organized and have a weekly meeting to declutter backpacks, and calendars
  - Declutter/Organize a room together\
  - Create a drop zone for backpacks for the school year
- Dinner Discussion
  - What does it mean to be trustworthy in your family?
  - What is one area of your lives / home do you want/need to organize?
  - How do you feel when you are organized?

Learn more about character education.

---

# **Teaching Respect (Grades K-12)**



## RESPECT

- Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule
- Be tolerant of differences
- Use good manners, not bad language
- Don't threaten, hit or hurt anyone
- Be considerate of the feelings of others
- Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements

You don't have to like everyone and you don't have to agree with their opinions or behavior. Everyone has worth as a human being and deserves our respect. Give respect freely, regardless of the respect that you receive.

Respectful communication can be difficult when we disagree with someone. We must be willing to accept that our opinion is not fact; believing in something strongly doesn't make it more true. Communicating with respect requires us to express ourselves in a thoughtful and purposeful way.

### T.E.A.M.

- **Teach:** Show your child how to use the tool below. Teach your children the Golden Rule: Treat others the way you

want to be treated

- **Enforce:** Embrace diversity and cooperation with individuals who are ethnically and culturally different.
- **Advocate:** Talk to your child about the differences between “treating everyone with respect” and admiring them.
- **Model:** Be a good role model by having respectful discussions.

### Discussion starter

Ask your child what they think: are there things that if everyone did it, would it be a bad thing? What if everyone used bad manners? What if no one treated others with respect?

### Excellence and Ethics Tool: Two Steps to Better Communication

#### Try to Understand

Use active listening by restating, in your own words, what you just heard. This helps to make sure that you understand what you are hearing.

Example:

Person 1: “I’m disappointed that you didn’t come to my birthday party.” Person 2: “I understand that you are upset that I didn’t come to your party.”

#### Try to be Understood

Express your thoughts, feelings and expectations without blame, insult or personal attack.

Example:

“I’m disappointed that you didn’t share your new toy.”

Learn more about character education.

---

# Expectations of Respect (Grades 6-12)

Students and teachers will use a Gallery Walk activity to define what respectful behavior looks like in the classroom, in the hallways, in the cafeteria, and in their athletics and activities.

---

## Integrity (Grades 6-12)



**Character Education Objective:** Provide students with an Integrity in Action Checklist, which serves as a decision-making model. Students have the opportunity to practice utilizing the checklist on relatable, hypothetical scenarios.

### **Core Alignment:**

**HS** – Demonstrate leadership skills, integrity, ethical behavior, and social responsibility while collaborating to achieve common goals.

**MS** – Essential Concept and/or Skill: Demonstrate leadership, integrity, ethical behavior, and social responsibility in all environments.

**Lesson:**

*Optional Activity – Integrity Ball (Need small object that can easily be thrown or caught)*

**Directions**

1. Have students get in groups of 8-15 (10 is ideal) and stand in a circle (about a foot apart)
  1. Space can be a complication in this activity. It is ok if there are desks and tables in the middle of the circle. Also, you can adjust the group size as needed to accommodate for space limitations.
2. Each group gets an object to throw around the group
3. The ball is tossed around the group using the following rules:
  - No one can speak or make a sound of any kind
  - No one is allowed to move except to throw or catch the ball
  - No one may make a bad throw or catch
  - Each individual interprets these rules as they see fit. If you feel you break one of these rules, you must step back from the circle and sit down.
  - No one can decide for anyone else if a rule is broken, even if you think someone should be out.
4. After playing one round (approx. 3 minutes or until only one person is still standing) tell students to think about how their classmates played the game. Did they interpret the rules the same way you interpreted the rules? Are you going to adjust the way you play the game in round two?
5. Play a second round with the same rules.
6. Ask students to raise their hands if they feel like they

followed the rules. Then ask students to raise their hand if they feel like there was someone in their group who did NOT follow the rules. Typically, everyone thinks THEY followed the rules, and everyone thinks that SOMEONE ELSE did not follow the rules. Ask students how that could happen?

7. Ask students if they played the second round differently than the first round. Did anyone think to themselves, “well if I had known I could get away with that...?”

Process the Activity – You can’t have a little bit of integrity; you either have it or you don’t. When you are looking to others to see what you can get away with, that’s a time when you need to ask yourself some questions to make sure you are making the right choice, not just the easy choice.

### *Start Here if Not Using Optional Activity*

We all make hundreds of decisions each day. Sometimes determining the right choice is easy, but on occasion we have to make a decision where the right choice either isn’t as clear, or is otherwise difficult to make. Ask students to share an example of a difficult decision they have made.

In these moments, we sometimes look around to see what others are doing and what we can get away with, like in the Integrity Ball game. A better idea is to have a strategy that helps us make the right decision. The tool we use to help us make hard decisions is call the Character in Action Checklist: Six Pillars.

## CHARACTER-IN-ACTION CHECKLIST: SIX PILLARS



When faced with a choice or dilemma, consider the following:

Would my decisions pass each of these tests?	Yes	No
<b>Trustworthiness Test:</b> Would my words and actions be honest, sincere, and reliable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Respect Test:</b> If the situation was reversed, is this how I would want to be treated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Responsibility Test:</b> What would be the consequences of my words and actions and would I do the right thing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Fairness Test:</b> Would this be fair to everybody involved in and affected by my actions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Caring Test:</b> Would my words and actions express compassion and kindness?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Citizenship Test:</b> Would I want to live in a world where everybody did this?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**What if it's still not clear what to do?**

1. Stop!
2. Think it over some more.
3. Seek additional insight from individuals whose integrity you respect.

Adapted from Lickona & Davidson (2005).

The Character in Action Checklist: Six Pillars consists of nine questions that when applied to a difficult decision can help us determine the right choice to maintain our integrity and trustworthiness. Practice applying the questions to the hypothetical situations below.

*(Facilitator Note: Sometimes you must play Devil's Advocate to help students practice using the checklist. For example, most students know that if someone gives them incorrect change, they should give the change back. Thus, a follow-up question is sometimes in order, "Does anyone know a person who might not give the change back? What would they say to justify their decision? Does that justification pass the checklist questions?)*

Hypothetical

1. Jimmy is at a special matinee movie where the tickets

are \$6.00 each. He gives the box office cashier a ten-dollar bill. The cashier is very busy and gives Jimmy \$14 in change (she thinks Jimmy gave her a twenty-dollar bill). What should Jimmy do?

2. Your best friend Ashley is failing her Language Arts class. If she doesn't do very well on the final test, she may have to go to summer school and miss a vacation trip that you had planned together. A week before the final test, another student, Calvin, offers her a stolen copy of the final test. Ashley isn't sure what to do and asks you. What do you tell her?

- Samantha tells you that she was in a loud argument with Jessica at school on Friday and got a three-day in-school suspension. If Samantha tells her folks about the suspension, she'll be grounded over the weekend and will miss the big school dance. If she doesn't tell her folks, they'll get a letter from school on Monday. Samantha was going to the dance with you and asks what she should do. What do you tell her?
- Your math teacher allows you to grade your own paper. If you give yourself credit for an answer that should be marked wrong, you will get a higher final grade in the class. Would you?

### **Parent Connection:**

Encourage parents to watch this short video with their kids.

After watching the video, parents and students should write three commitment cards to one another. Parents keep the cards of their children, and kids keep the cards of their parents. When the promise is filled, the card is returned. (Note: you can order promise cards from Because I Said Would if desired, but it is not necessary. Any notecard will suffice).

Learn more about character education.