

Positive Impact (Grades 6-12)

Overview:

A critical component of citizenship is doing what you can to engage with your community. Everyone has the power to use their interests and passions to make a positive impact on their community, the country, and the world. In this lesson, participants will reflect on how their interests and passions can be used to make their community a better place to live, work, and go to school.

Character education objectives:

- Study how Amanda Gorman's passion for poetry allowed her to positively impact her country.
- Students will explore how their own interests and passions can make a difference in their community.
- Put the citizenship Pillar into action by crafting a plan to use their interests and passions to positively impact their school or community.

Materials:

- Amanda Gorman's 2021 Presidential Inauguration speech
- Written text of Amanda's poem
- Goal Map tool

Lesson Plan:

Discussion Prompt: With a partner, share your interests and passions. Examples could include: music, animals, sports, video games, reading, and so on.

Activity: At the conclusion of the partner discussion, introduce students to Amanda Gorman, the young woman who wrote and delivered the poem "The Hill We Climb" at the 2021 Presidential Inauguration Ceremony.

Watch Amanda Gorman's speech at the 2021 Presidential

Inauguration (5:47)

Optional – have students read the written text of her poem.

At the conclusion of the video, ask students to discuss the following questions in pairs, small groups, or as a full group.

Discussion Questions:

- Which of the Six Pillars of Character does this poem/speech align with? Explain your answer.
- Why do you think Amanda wrote this poem?
- How did Amanda use her passion for poetry to positively impact her community and country?
- How could you use your passions and interests to make a positive difference in your community?

Ask students to write down how they could use one of their passions or interests to make a positive impact in their community. Then, direct them to use the Goal Map tool to create a plan to put their passion to work.

For example, if a student is passionate about caring for animals, they could use that passion to volunteer at the Animal Rescue League. Action steps to put that plan into action could be:

1. Locate an animal shelter in need of volunteers
2. Fulfill any requirements necessary for being a volunteer at their facility
 - Fill out application
 - Ensure my availability and skill set matches their needs
3. Schedule time to volunteer
 - Make sure I have transportation to and from the facility

Follow-Up: Several weeks after the completion of this lesson,

ask students to share whether they have put their plan into action. If so, how much progress have they made on their plan? How are they positively impacting their community? If not, why?

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.

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.

Six Pillar Coloring Pages

Download these PDFs and get started coloring!

Trustworthiness

Respect

Responsibility

Fairness

Caring

Citizenship

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.

Six Pillar Animal Coloring Pages

Download these PDFs and get started coloring!

Trustworthiness – Camel

Respect – Lion

Responsibility – Elephant

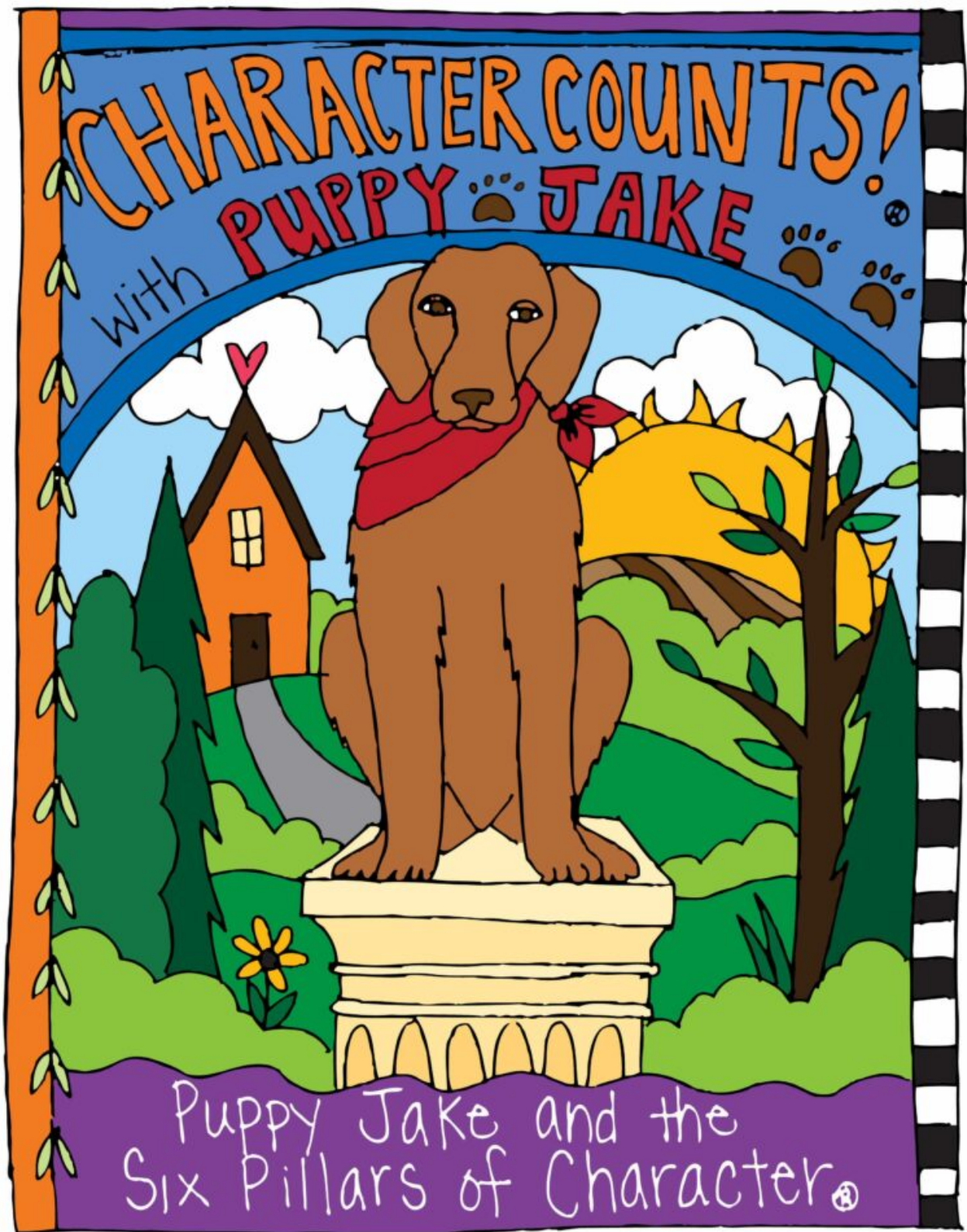
Fairness – Giraffe

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.

Four Ways to Nurture Kindness



From guest contributor Dr. Michele Borba

Kindness is often considered as a soft and fuzzy skill, but science shows surprising benefits to being nice, including boosting health, reducing anxiety, enhancing self-esteem, increasing gratitude, and even elevating happiness.

In fact, study after study shows that a simple act of kindness also activates empathy, and that's why I named it as one of the nine essential empathy habits in my new book, **UnSelfie**. The more kids practice kindness-that is, without expecting gold stars, "Citizen of the Month" awards, trophies or monetary rewards-the likelier they'll develop the skills to succeed in work and in life and acquire what I call, "The Empathy Advantage."

An important point to remember is that while our kids are born with the potential for empathy, kindness, caring, charitableness, courtesy, generosity (and all those other glorious traits of humanity), they aren't guaranteed. Researchers have discovered that a strong commonality of those kids who do acquire them is how they were raised. That means parents can be enormously influential in helping their kids be concerned about others needs by prioritizing caring, kindness and compassion in their homes.

It's a slow, gradual evolution, but if you are consciously boosting those traits as a parent now, chances are much stronger you'll have success and your child will develop those traits. We seem to have a lot of "gimme" kids these days and it's because they've learned that their parents will oblige their every whim. (And materialism and self-centeredness are known reduce empathy and compassion). So don't! Establish guidelines and stick to them. Such as?

Try this:

My girlfriend noticed her mother-in-law was overindulging her kids in material gifts and finally told her that was not the kind of kids she wanted to raise. She asked her to please reduce their number of presents and put the money instead in their college fund. And I can tell you that her children (now grown) are very kind-hearted, loving kids who are concerned about *others* .. not what they own.

The key is that the mom determined how she wanted her kids to turn out, and then consciously begin raising them that way. Instilling character and nurturing compassion involves intentional parenting. So gradually stretch your child to think about other people's concerns and needs.

Here are four ideas that might help you raise a more caring, kind children and help them reap The Empathy Advantage:

1. Switch roles

The next time there's a conflict between your child and a friend (or between you and your child) ask her to stop and think how the other person would feel if the roles were reversed. Then ask her to talk about the problem *as if she were the other person*:

"What would the other person say?"

"How would you feel if you were the other person?"

"What do you think the friend would want to do?"

"If you were in your friend's shoes, what would he/she want to tell you?"

If she is very young, it is helpful to use puppets so that each puppet can represent the person in the conflict. It builds empathy.

2. Call attention to insensitive behavior

Any time your child acts unkindly, use it as an opportunity to help him become more sensitive to the feelings of other people. Just point out the impact of her actions:

"Telling Bert to leave because you wanted to play with Sally was inconsiderate. How would *you* feel?"

"Not asking Daddy if he wanted to watch a TV show was unkind. How would *you* feel?"

3. Be an example of caring, kindness and generosity

Try to find natural ways to help her "give" to others, so she understands the joy giving can bring. Start by doing it yourself and having her watch and do it with you. Here are a couple of ideas:

"The neighbor is sick; let's make an extra bowl of soup and bring it to her."

"Daddy is so tired; let's surprise him and stack the

newspapers so he doesn't have to."

Make "giving" natural and fun but help your children learn to GIVE. And help them learn to do so without expecting anything in return.

4. Expect your child to share and consider others

This is one of the first moral behaviors we need to tune up in our kids starting at around 2 or 3 years of age. When he is two you can structure his sharing: "It's his turn, then your turn, then his turn." Little kids sometimes need an oven timer as a reminder that the other person should still be allowed to play with the toy. Before friends come over, structure "sharing" by asking him:

"What things will you share with your friend?"

"What do you think he would like to play?"

Put away things that are very special that may cause problems. What's important on this one is to help your child learn to think of others' needs and feelings.

The Reality Check here is that while our children are hard-wired to care, that capacity *must* be nurtured for it to develop. So be intentional about raising a caring child! And then keep finding those opportunities for your children to practice kindness until it becomes a part of their mind-set and your kids can describes themselves as "Caring People."

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.

A Family Compact for Excellence

Whether working with professional colleagues on a work project, teammates on an athletic team, or classmates in school it is important to establish expectations for how the group is going to do its best work and what each person will do in order to ensure everyone in the group is treated with respect and care.

The same is true for families. In order to ensure that everyone in your family can do their best work and everyone is treated with respect and care, establish a Compact for Excellence using the directions below. A sample Compact is included to help get you started, but each family should tailor their Compact to the specific needs of their family.

- A. Create a list of agreements for what your family must do in order to do your best work and treat each other well. Ask each family member to contribute to the list.
- B. Once your list of agreements is complete, shape that list into simple, relevant statements.
- C. Ask each family member if 1) they feel like any other agreements need to be added, 2) any agreement needs

clarification, and 3) there is anything on the list they cannot or will not do.

- D. Once all family members have agreed to the Compact, each person should sign the agreement and the Compact should be posted somewhere prominent in the household (like on the refrigerator).
- E. Review the Compact every 1-2 weeks to praise what is going well, polish what could be better, and add or clarify anything as needed.

Excellence with Integrity TOOLS™

COMPACT FOR EXCELLENCE TEMPLATE

In order to do our **best work and treat each other with **respect and care**,
we each agree to/not to:**

- » Treat people how you want to be treated.
- » Choose your attitude.
- » Take care of your belongings.
- » Be kind to everyone.
- » Listen with your ears and your heart.
- » Follow instructions (the first time you are asked).



Adapted from Lickona & Davidson (2005).

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This activity is one of several extension activities in the Growth Mindset module of The ESSENTIALS, a new resource from CHARACTER COUNTS! 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 these new resources for your students.

Learn more about character education.