

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

When the Six Pillars Conflict



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

Though the Six Pillars are universal, they are not absolutes. Like anything else in society, what the Pillars look like,

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

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

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

Learn more about character education.

Six Pillar Animal Coloring Pages

Download these PDFs and get started coloring!

Trustworthiness – Camel

Respect – Lion

Responsibility – Elephant

Fairness – Giraffe

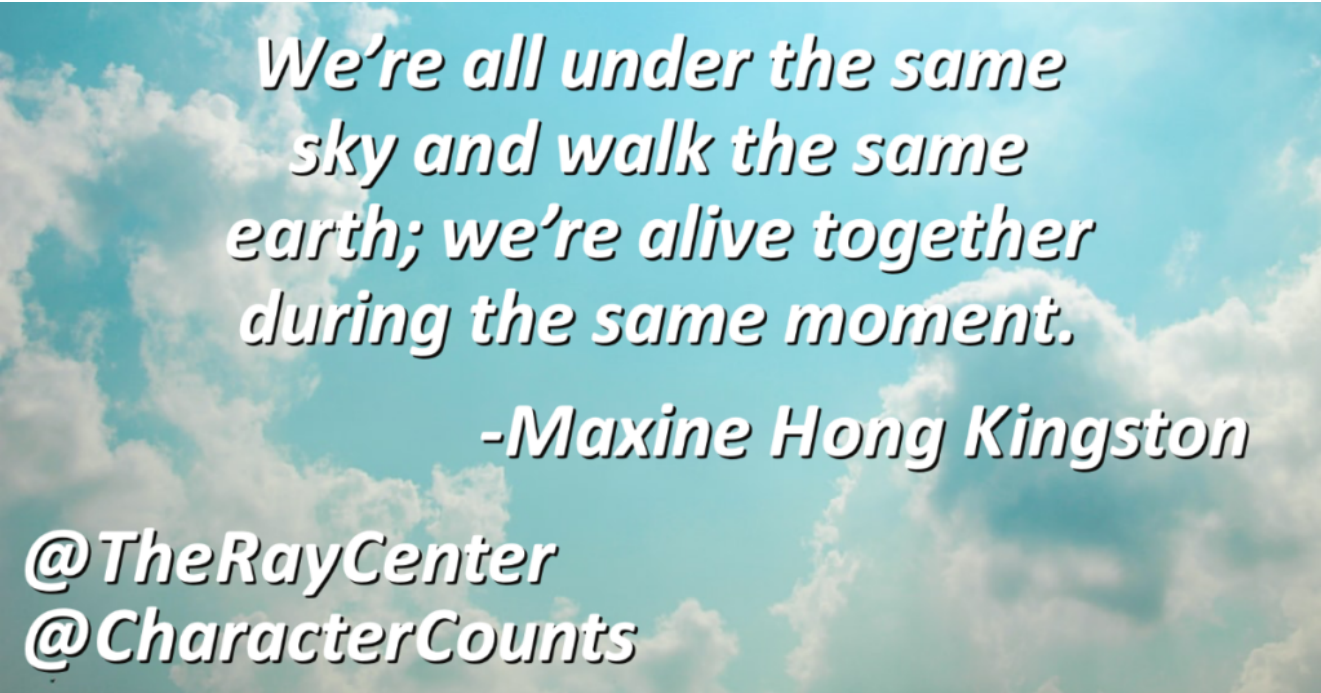
Caring – Kangaroo

Citizenship – Bear

Quotation database

Database of character education quotations.

Together



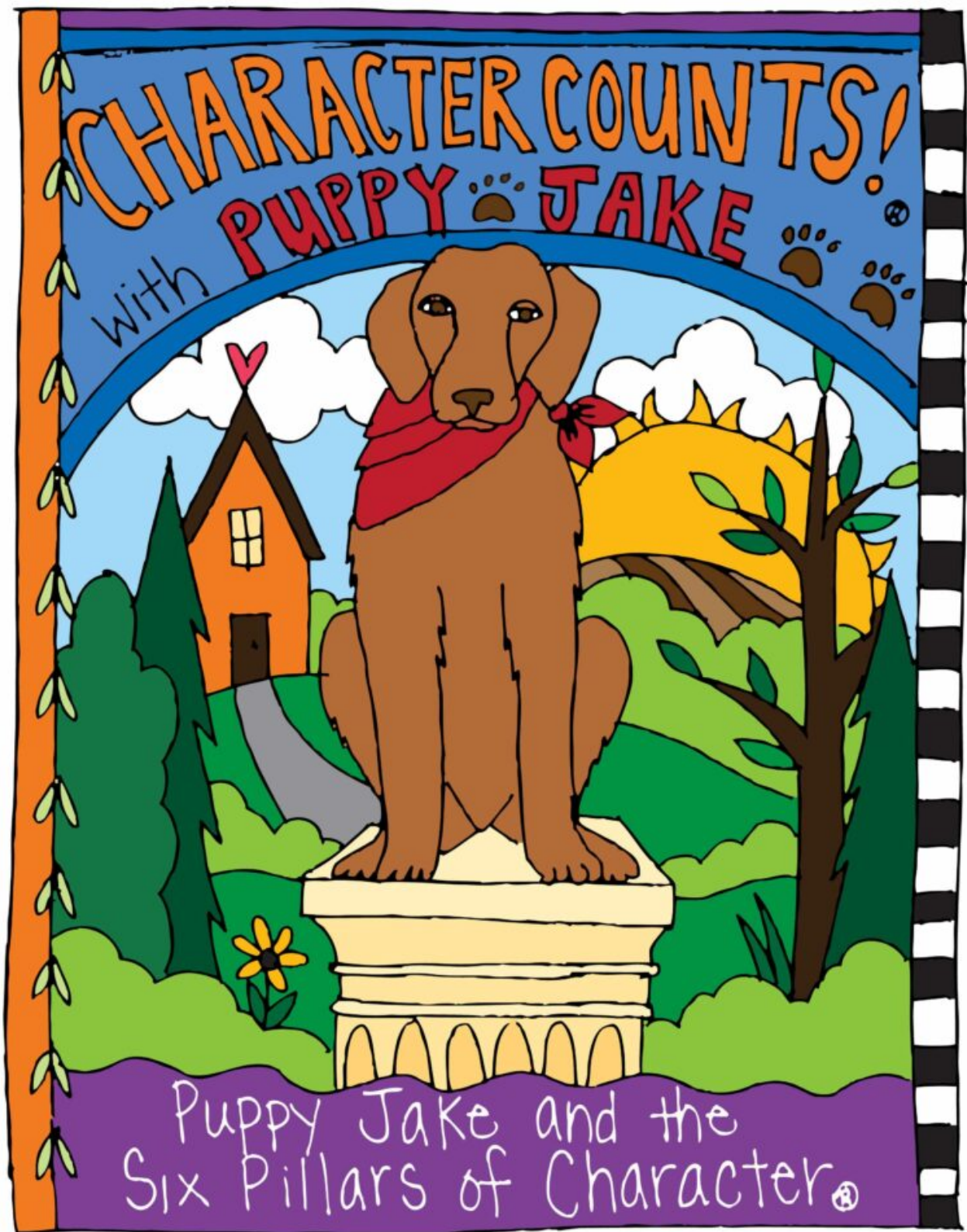
*We're all under the same
sky and walk the same
earth; we're alive together
during the same moment.*

-Maxine Hong Kingston

*@TheRayCenter
@CharacterCounts*

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.

I Am Responsible for My Emotions (Grades K-5)

You may often hear students place blame on others for their own emotions. It is difficult for students to understand that not only do they control their own emotions, but they are responsible for their emotions. One of the best ways to be responsible for your emotions is to be aware of how you are feeling and take preventative measures. This lesson is designed for students to think about how they are feeling and how they move towards more regulated emotions.

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.