

# Energy and Effort into What Matters



*By Jeff Kluever, Director of Programs*

We fill our lives by putting energy and effort into what matters. There's a popular demonstration called "Jar of Life" in which a jar is filled with big rocks (important things like family, health, work), little rocks (less important things like sports or hobbies), and sand (unimportant things like watching television or social media). When you fill the jar with the big rocks first, then the little rocks, and finally the sand, everything fits in the jar. If you reverse the process and start with sand, then little rocks, then big rocks, not everything fits in the jar.

The point of the demonstration is that when we fill our time with the most important things first, the little rocks and sand can be worked in, but when our time is consumed by unimportant things, we run out of space for what really

matters.

When I perform the demonstration, however, I exchange the big rocks for balloons and pose the question – instead of trying to cram more unimportant things into our jar, what if we decided to put more air into our balloons? In other words, what if we put more time, energy, and effort into the big things that really matter, instead of jamming more unimportant sand into our life? What will be more fulfilling – putting more into the important aspects of your life or spending more time on social media?

There's nothing wrong with having some little rocks and sand in your jar. We need variety in our lives. We need opportunities to rest and rejuvenate so that when the time comes we can be fully engaged with our balloons. But, when you feel like you're falling short, when there's just not enough time in the day, don't cram in more sand. Put air in your balloons.

### **60-Second Character Challenge**

- What are the critically important “big rocks” or “balloons” in your life?
  - What could you do to invest more time and energy into your “balloons?”
  - What unimportant sand could you remove from your life in order to invest more energy into your “balloons?”
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## **Emotions (Grades K-5)**



**Overview:** Students will practice caring by recognizing and showing compassion for the emotions of others.

### **Character Education Objectives:**

Students will:

- sort and label the different emotions on the Faces of Emotion Handouts.
- discuss how having compassion for another person's emotions shows you care.
- illustrate emotion and share it with a friend.

### **Materials:**

- Faces of Emotion Handout (1-4)
  1. Students will write in the emotion
  2. Students will trace the emotion
  3. Students will cut and paste an emotion
  4. Students will draw the emotion
- I Feel Handout
  - The teacher can also take pictures of familiar faces around the school posing with different faces of emotion to make the lesson more personal to the students in the building
- Discussion prompts (below)
- Family Connection Handout

### **Lesson Plan:**

- Students work in a group or individually to sort and label the *Faces of Emotion Handouts* (5 min)
  - Depending on skill levels students can write, trace, or use a drawing or emoticon to label.
- Discussion Prompts (5-7 mins)
  - What emotion do you feel today?
    - Teacher: I feel happy because I get to teach you today.
  - What is hard about knowing how other people feel?
  - Why do some people cry, and some people yell when they are angry?
  - How can you show you care for someone when they are feeling (insert emotion)?
- Complete the I Feel Handout (5-7 mins)
  - Choose an emotion you feel.
  - Draw a picture of yourself when you feel that emotion.
  - Write (depending on skill level) what emotion you are feeling and why.
- Share your picture with a friend (1-2 mins)

### **References**

*Images are from: <https://www.pexels.com/> are free and attribution is not required.*

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## **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?

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# **T.E.A.M.**

CHARACTER COUNTS! is designed to work in partnership with students, parents and faculty to make your school a great place to learn. The acronym T.E.A.M (T-Teach, E-Enforce, A-Advocate, M- Model) is a process for you to use in the implementation of CHARACTER COUNTS!

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## **The Impact of Lies (Grades K-5)**

This lesson allows students to explore how telling a lie impacts both their relationships and themselves and the decision to be honest, even when it's the hard path, is the best long-term decision.

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## **Resilience(Grades 6-12)**

Students need opportunities to see success and triumph in the midst of struggle. This lesson provides a video that discusses resilience from a young man who faced a lot of trials in his life. The discussion will provide an opportunity for the classroom to share ideas about trust, growth, and overcoming obstacles while building resilience for all the changes that

life throws at you.

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## **Leading a significant life**

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?”

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## **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.

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## **The Treasure of Old Friends**

Communicating with “old friends” can enrich our lives by bringing our pasts into the present, reminding us of who we were and how we became what we are.

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# **Resilience and Overcoming Obstacles (Grades 6-12)**

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.