

Exploring Leadership

PERSONAL LEADERSHIP: CHARACTER

Character is difficult to measure and teach because it all comes down to a person's core values and motivations, which aren't observable. People of good Character take the right action because it is important to them to live life according to their personal values, not because there is reward or recognition for doing so. These are tough lessons for adolescents to understand, so it's often helpful to break character down into some smaller component parts.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- When someone asks you to donate to a good cause, do you?
- Will you do it even if no one asks you? If so, you are a person of good Character.

Character is who you are at your very core. Those who are considered to be people of good Character often have traits like integrity, honesty, courage, loyalty, fortitude, and other important virtues that promote good behavior.

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

Cartoon "Character" Instructions. With a partner or two, create a cartoon character with good Character. Your poster should include the following:

FACILITATION TIPS:

- *Highlights Magazine* used to run a comic strip called *Goofus and Gallant*. Goofus was not a person of good Character. Gallant, on the other hand, usually did the right thing for the right reasons. Designed for children, this comic tended to pound its point home with a sledgehammer. The posters the teenagers create in this lesson can be a bit more subtle. If you can find a few examples of these as models, it might help spark good ideas for the participants in this lesson. (There are hundreds available online.)

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Identify and discuss common elements of good Character.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Flip chart or poster paper
- Markers/Art Supplies

- A picture of the character doing something that a person of good Character would do. The possibilities for right action are limitless.
- A "thought balloon" that contains a statement about the core value behind the action. Remember: those of good Character do not do things for recognition or reward. They do them simply because they believe they are right. In cartoons, thought balloon shows the value that drives the character's actions, and it is only by knowing this inner value that we can determine whether or not a person has good Character.)
- Cartoon characters do not need to be people, so if no one in your group is an artist, you can convey the idea with basic shapes, animals, or other ways. Be creative, but go quickly!
- When the posters are complete, share with the entire group and point out the traits of good Character.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Why can we never really know if someone is a person of good Character? On what do we then base our judgment?
- Does it matter if a person has good Character as long as they are doing good, moral, helpful, or virtuous things? Why or why not?
- Who are some people you believe have good Character? Why?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- Why would Character be one of the qualities companies want their workers to possess even though it can't be measured?
- Have you ever done something good but for the wrong reason? Did it matter?
- Is it important for you to be a person of good Character? Why or why not?



CONCLUSION:

Donating to charity is objectively good, and it is the sign of a “good person,” but a person of Character does not donate because they want to be seen as “good.” They engage in right action because they believe it is the right thing to do, and they don’t care if anyone knows. A person with good Character does the right thing because they believe it is the right thing, not because someone else is influencing them to do so. In the end, it’s important to realize that people’s actions are not always a reflection of their true character—but that people may improve their character by striving to build positive traits in themselves.

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REFERENCES

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