

CHARACTER COUNTS!SM – *Fairness*

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Open communication is a key to creating fairness in your environment. Talking with others and listening are both imperative to creating an atmosphere of fairness.

The key to teaching others about fairness is to model fair decisions and choices in your daily life.

*“Many things in life are not fair
but all things should be.”*

– Michael Josephson

Each one of us can do our share to make our part of the world a fairer place because of our personal actions, decisions, and choices.

*“Minds are like parachutes;
they work best when open.”*

– Lord Thomas Dewar

To Be Fair:

- Play by the rules
- Listen to others
- Take turns
- Do not take advantage of others
- Share
- Do not blame others carelessly
- Be open-minded

People Who Are Fair . . .

Know and Follow the Rules

If you follow rules consistently, it is more likely you will treat every one in the same manner, thus more fairly. Set a good example and model fair choices, fair decisions, and fair treatment to everyone.

Take Turns

Each of us at various times has certain advantages in certain situations. Do not play unfairly on these advantages. Take your turn in a fair manner.

Share

Share your skills, talents, time, and resources. One key element to a happy life is to give more than you receive. Give your fair share in this adventure called life.

Are Open-minded

Make your decisions carefully, honestly, and objectively. Treat all persons equally and consider each person's merits and abilities without favoritism or prejudice.



Listen to Others

Take time to stop and really listen to what others have to say. Listening conveys that they are important and what they say matters to you. Listening now could save you time in gathering information later. Listening gives you understanding and knowledge for making fair decisions and fair choices.

Do Not Take Advantage of Others

Have reasonable expectations of each person. We all have different skills, talents, and capabilities. Strive to find what is best and fairest for each one of us. Do not take unfair advantage of people's mistakes or ignorance.

Do Not Blame Others Carelessly

Did the person have fair notice that a conduct or action was wrong? If the person was unaware or couldn't have known about the proper standards of conduct, fairness may call for an explanation of acceptable behavior. Gather and verify facts, provide the opportunity for the person or persons to explain or clarify, and then carefully evaluate the information. Open communication clears up much misunderstanding.

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Think about the following. What would you do? What should you do?

Your niece or grandchild would like to transfer to a high school in the area where you live. The school does not take students who live outside their district as established by the County Board of Education. Higher levels of math and science are offered at your local school. You have been asked to allow the student to use your address as a home address. The parents will drive the student to school each day, about a 10-mile trip each way.

What is the right thing to do?

Which of the following pillars are involved in doing the right thing?

- Trustworthiness
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Fairness
- Caring
- Citizenship

Who are the stakeholders in this story?

(everyone involved or affected by what you decide to do)

For Discussion

Would the following facts change your answer?

Fact 1: This child has aspirations to be an engineer and needs the higher math classes.

Fact 2: Your local school's vice principal lives on the next street.

Fact 3: You are good friends with the man who helped to establish the school districts to be fair to all students in the county.

Ideas to Keep in Mind

- Treat everyone fairly and the same.
- Really listen to what other people are saying.
- It is important to try to understand what other people are feeling and saying.
- Think about the fact that your choices are likely to help or hurt other people.
- We are the best teachers for today's young people when we model ethical behavior.
- Be ready and willing to listen to and consider all views, even those that do not agree with your personal opinions.
- Collect and consider all of the facts.
- Use the same rules and standards for everyone. Do not show favoritism.
- If you make mistakes, admit them and correct them.
- Do your fair share.

CHARACTER COUNTS! uses the following six pillars to describe how a person of character thinks and behaves.

- Trustworthiness
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Fairness
- Caring
- Citizenship

Effective character education encourages individuals to do the right thing by incorporating these six core ethical values into their daily lives. Our children will never learn to be persons of character if we as adults do not model good character. Character education works when it is community-wide. It works best when ethical values are consistently taught, enforced, advocated, and modeled (TEAM) throughout all facets of our communities, including schools, organizations, law enforcement agencies, businesses, and other groups.

What Can Be Done

Individuals: Consciously incorporate the teaching and modeling of the Six Pillars of Character into everything you do in all areas of your life.

Social and service organizations: Get all the organizations to which you belong to take an active role in supporting character-building activities and incorporate them into your group's plans and actions.

Communities and schools: Be active in bringing character education to your community and schools. Support community efforts.

Resources

(www.charactercounts.org)

CHARACTER COUNTS! National Office, Josephson Institute of Ethics, 9841 Airport Blvd., Suite 300, Los Angeles, CA 90045, Tel: (310) 846-4800, Fax: (310) 846-4858.

CHARACTER COUNTS! Character Development, Seminars Notebook, On-Site Training Materials. WVU Extension, March 11-13, 2003.

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CHARACTER COUNTS! and the Six Pillars of Character are service marks of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a project of the Josephson Institute of Ethics (www.charactercounts.org).

Copies of this publication may be found on the Web (www.wvu.edu/~exten/infores/pubs/ceospub.htm).

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