

CHARACTER COUNTS!SM – *Caring*

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Educational Objectives

1. To increase participants' understanding of caring as it influences choices and decisions in their daily life.
2. To increase participants' awareness of CHARACTER COUNTS! and the Six Pillars of Character.
3. To increase participants' knowledge of the choices they have in making caring decisions.

Caring includes such human virtues as compassion, kindness, benevolence, altruism, charity, generosity, and sharing, all of which are at the heart of ethics.

To be caring is to show love, regard, and/or concern for the well-being of others.

A caring person is:

- Compassionate and empathetic
- Kind, loving, and considerate
- Thankful, expressing gratitude
- Forgiving of others

*“Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
As long as ever you can.”*

– John Wesley

A caring person is not:

- Selfish or self-centered
- Mean, cruel, or insensitive
- Too busy to lend a helping hand

Caring involves concern, empathy, kindness, charity, and love.

1. Concern for others' well-being is the willingness to be there for them. This is shown when we become so involved with the well-being of others, that it seems as if our happiness depends on theirs.

Quote to share or to copy and have read by a participant.

“If you think about what you ought to do for other people, your character will take care of itself.”

– Woodrow Wilson



2. Empathy

Empathy is sharing another person's feelings and emotions. Empathy involves feeling an emotional response to the pain and pleasure of others.

Quote to share or to copy and have read by a participant.

“Sympathy is two hearts tugging at one load.”

– Charles H. Parkhurst

Activity Idea: A Thousand Words

To help participants be more aware that compassion involves a commitment to understanding and to becoming more engaged in another person's life, have them view images of other people and take the time to creatively interpret what they see.

Preparation and Materials

- Photo(s) cut out from various magazines (be sure not to have headlines, captions, or associated articles describing the scene)

Procedure

Choose one or more photos (the amount is up to you) that provoke some sort of emotional response from the viewer. The photo should feature at least one person. Try to choose images in which the emotions of the person in the photo are not displayed overtly (screaming, crying, laughing), but where the person's mood or situation is ambiguous.

To begin, you might say: *“There is an old saying: “A picture is worth a thousand words.” We are going to look at a picture and describe it. But before we perform this task, we need to ask ourselves what a person has to do to feel compassion for another person and why.*

Solicit and list answers. Point out that part of caring involves empathy.

Then say: *Our purpose here is to look at the people in the photo with compassionate eyes. Imagine their lives, their thoughts, their dreams, their fears. Invent a story for them. To do that, you have to care about them.*

Distribute the photo(s) or display them for everyone to see.

Encourage participants to pretend that they are the figure in the photo(s).

– continued –

Invite them to think about:

- What the person sees, hears, tastes, smells, touches, and feels in the captured moment
- Why the figure in the picture is happy, scared, bored, or sad
- Where he or she has come from and where he or she is headed

Last, suggest that taking the time to figure out a person's feelings is the essence of empathy and compassion, the key elements of caring.

Adapted from Good Ideas 2002-2003 – Idea # 233, p. 498
Adapted from "Keeping the American Promise," Vol. 4, Issue 1, p. 2 (Los Angeles, CA: The American Promise, 1999). Also inspired by the "What They Were Thinking" photo feature of The New York Times Magazine.

3. Kindness

A person shows kindness by being sympathetic, generous, or charitable and by generally doing good.

Quotes to share or to copy and have read by a participant.

"It is nice to be important but it is more important to be nice." – Sir John Marks Templeton

"We are made kind by being kind." – Eric Hoffer

"I expect to pass through the world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again." – Attributed to Stephen Grellet

4. Charity

Charity is the voluntary giving of comfort, time, support, money, or other help to people in need. To be truly charitable, a person gives for the sake of making someone else's life better and not for praise or gratitude. The highest form of caring comes from within; it is a true and honest expression of benevolence, also referred to as altruism.



Quotes to share or to copy and have read by a participant.

"When faith and hope fail, as they do sometimes, we must try charity, which is love in action." – Dinah Maria Mulock

"You must give something to your fellow men. Even if it's a little thing, do something for others – something for which you will get no pay but the privilege of doing it." – Albert Schweitzer

5. Love

Love is the tender feelings of attachment or affection we have for other persons.

Quotes to share or to copy and have read by a participant.

"That best portion of a good man's life / His little nameless, unremembered acts / Of kindness and love."
– William Wordsworth ("Tintern Abbey")

"All children need love, especially those who do not deserve it." – Evan Esar

"We can do no great things – only small things with great love." – Mother Teresa

"Service is what life is all about."
– Margaret Anderson



Caring

Do: . . . show compassion and kindness.
. . . show empathy and consideration.
. . . be thankful and express gratitude for what others do for you.
. . . forgive others.

Don't: . . . be mean, cruel, or insensitive.
. . . neglect those who need your help.
. . . think only about yourself.

Activity Idea: Consider the "do's and don'ts" listed and address the following questions with participants.

- Do you know someone (not a family member) who is especially caring? How does he or she show this?
- List ways you can work together as a group to show kindness and compassion to others.

Activity Idea:

Copy the following and pass out to participants. Ask them to share with others by reading aloud. Discuss if time permits.

"The best place to find a helping hand is at the end of your own arm." – Swedish proverb

"You have not lived a perfect day, even though you have earned your money, unless you have done something for someone who cannot repay you." – Ruth Simeltzer

"One must care about a world one will never see."
– Bertrand Russell

"Real generosity is doing something nice for someone who will never find out." – Frank A. Clark

"What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal."
– Albert Pike

"Men are only as great as they are kind." – Elbert Hubbard

CHARACTER COUNTS!

CHARACTER COUNTS! is a national grass-roots initiative based on voluntary citizen action. It has no ideological or political agenda other than strengthening the moral fiber of the next generation by promoting ethical values.

A person of character is fair and just. He or she tries to be impartial and is open to differing viewpoints.

The Six Pillars of Character are:

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

Character education works best when it is pervasive and when ethical values are consistently taught, enforced, advocated, and modeled (T.E.A.M.) throughout the schools and all facets of our communities.

What Can Be Done . . .

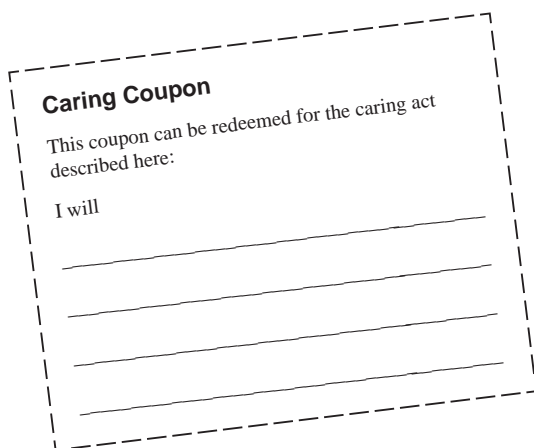
Individuals: Consciously incorporate the teaching and modeling of the Six Pillars of Character into everything you do, especially when children are involved.

Social and Service Organizations: Get all the organizations to which you belong to take an active role in supporting CHARACTER COUNTS! activities.

Schools and Communities: Be a leader in bringing Character Counts! to your community. Support school-based or community training.

Additional Activities:

1. Share the “caring coupon” idea with participants to use personally or to decide on ways to work together to do caring acts in your world.



See next page for your Caring Coupons.

2. Over the next several months, quietly take pictures of participants involved in caring acts. Share the photos at a later meeting.
3. For next year, organize the writing of one or two “*Notes of Kindness*” each month by the group. These could include notes of thanks or appreciation to persons, groups, agencies, businesses, or organizations in your community, city, or county. Take this as an opportunity to tell people that their caring acts are appreciated. Keep track of to whom you send notes and discuss the project. Are there others who would appreciate hearing from you?

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.

CHARACTER COUNTS! for Families, Greve, Vikes, Jha, LaDeane, & Stockall, Sandy, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Cooperative Extension.

CHARACTER COUNTS! for 4-H Clubs, Nebraska 4-H Youth Development, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension. *Good Ideas Books*, 2002-2003 Edition.

Operating Manual for Character Education Programs. Compiled by Nancy Reed, Hamilton County School District, Tennessee, 2001.

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 information may be found on the Web (www.wvu.edu/~exten/infores/pubs/ceospub.htm).

Caring Coupon

This coupon can be redeemed for the caring act described here:

I will

Caring Coupon

This coupon can be redeemed for the caring act described here:

I will

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