



July 2007

Character Council Educator Quality of the Month Contentment

Contentment:

**Realizing that true happiness
does not depend on material
conditions.**

I will:

- be thankful for what I do have
- not complain about what I don't have
- not always ask for "one more"
- value people above things
- want less and give more

I believe that Grandma Moses said it best – “Life is what we make it. Always has been, always will be.” Looking for contentment in the wrong places causes us to be dissatisfied with our family, our abilities and possessions. This month, look internally to make your life content and find true happiness.

- ☺ **Bear Necessities:** Disney's movie, *The Jungle Book*, popularized the song “The Bear Necessities”. You can use a recording of that song or that scene from the movie to introduce this lesson or just call the song to mind. Give each student a sheet of paper on which you have photocopied an outline of a bear with writing lines drawn on it. As a class list several items that you can't live without besides the basics of food, water and shelter. Encourage intangibles such as love. You can have them create this list as a class or in small groups. Once the list is made you may also give the students some time to add a few of their own. It is important that each list contain the same number of items. The next part of this exercise can be done in small groups or each student individually. Ask the students to cross off the item they can most live without. Now have them pick another. Continue to do this until you are down to the last 3. These are the “Bare Necessities”. Compare the lists and see what is common.
- ☺ **Life's Sweets:** For this exercise you will need to be a little sneaky. Before you begin the exercise, hand out some sort of long-lasting treat such as a Lollipop, Tootsie pop or Jolly Rancher. (Of course, choose something age appropriate.) Then introduce the lesson as an experiment. You will give them an assignment to do, one from your normal curriculum but during the exercise you will have them do something additional that makes it uncomfortable such as wear a clothespin or paper clip on their finger, sit sideways in the chair, use the less dominant hand, etc. After a few minutes ask for comments about what they are feeling and how different it is. It is likely that their idea of having a treat at the same time will not be noticed since it was included as part of the lesson. Be sure to choose a long lasting treat that will still be present during the assignment. Even if someone brings it up, it will be mentioned far less than the uncomfortable one. Ask them to think about much easier it is to complain than it is to appreciate. Challenge them to be more aware of how many times in next several days they do one or the other.
- ☺ **The Times of Your Life:** (You may recall the title of this exercise as a song used in a Kodak commercial long ago.) If Christmas is more than 6 months ago when you use this exercise, ask the students if they remember everything they got for Christmas. If last Christmas is closer than 6 months start with the previous Christmas. Go back 2 or 3 Christmas depending on the age of the student. For older children you can go back to their 5th birthday. Have them write down their answers so as not to embarrass other children who may not have received as much or to give ideas of a gift that was very popular (Tickle Me, Elmo...). Now ask them to recall gifts they have given that other people enjoyed or an event where they gave time at which to help. Usually, doing acts of kindness, stand out in memory more so than gifts received. Discuss why they think this is so.

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Jill Tomey, Director of Education, jtomey@charactercincinnati.org**

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513.467.0170 mrussell@charactercincinnati.org

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