

Joyfulness

Character... It starts with me!

MONTHLY EDUCATOR BULLETIN

JULY 2011

Vs. Self-Pity

I WILL:

- Look for good in all things
- Smile at adversity
- Not give in to discouragement
- Not allow my emotions to rule my mind
- Take time out of every day to laugh and to sing

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Maintaining a good attitude, even when faced with unpleasant conditions.

Being happy is not the same as being joyful. Happiness is a natural response to a pleasant situation. Joyfulness is maintaining that good attitude even when the situation

becomes difficult. Joyfulness does not depend on the conditions we face but on the decisions we make.

This month, decide to develop a positive, joyful attitude.

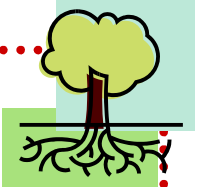


Regocijo

vs. Auto lástima
Conservar una buena actitud, aun cuando enfrente



Go to the Root



From the Latin word gaudium which means joy. Some other words that also come from that root are jest, joke, juggle and yodel.

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“ People will accept your idea much more readily if you tell them Benjamin Franklin said it first.” -David H. Comins

A positive person looks at their obstacles as stepping stones to their success.

~Benjamin Franklin

A bit of fragrance always clings to the hand that gives roses.

~ Chinese Proverb

We are all disappointed when we fail, but we are doomed if we don't keep trying. It's the trying that creates a positive attitude.

~Beverly Sills

Our happiness or misery depends on our attitudes and not on our circumstances.

~Martha Washington

Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.

~Helen Keller

A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.

~Winston Churchill

Most of the shadows of this life are caused by standing in one's own sunshine.

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Character Quotables

Between the optimist and the pessimist, the difference is droll, the optimist sees the doughnut and the pessimist sees the hole.

~Oscar Wilde

In the long run, the pessimist may be proved right, but the optimist has a better time on the trip.

~Daniel L. Reardon

The average pencil is 7 inches long with just a ½ inch eraser – in case you thought optimism was dead.

~Robert Brault

Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand.

~Mark Twain

If you want others to be happy, practice compassion; if you want to be happy, practice compassion!

~Mary Stewbeck

Did you ever see an unhappy horse? Did you ever see bird that had the blues? One reason why birds and horses are not unhappy is because they are not trying to impress other birds and horses.

~ Dale Carnegie

Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.

~Abraham Lincoln

Be happy while you're living, for you're a long time dead. -

~Scottish Proverb

Curriculum Connection



Biology

Laughter is the Best Medicine: What if someone told you that there was a remedy that when shared, it binds people together and increases happiness and intimacy. In addition, it also triggers healthy physical changes in the body, strengthens your immune system, boosts your energy, diminishes pain, protects you from the damaging effects of stress AND is fun, free, and easy to use? Would you jump at the chance to try it or would you think it is a joke? Either way - you're right!!!

http://www.helpguide.org/life/humor_laughter_health.htm

Victor Borge, Hero of Joyfulness

Victor Borge, affectionately known as "The Great Dane," was a musician, humorist, and humanitarian. In the nearly 60 years that he lived in the United States, Borge performed on the radio, in films, on television, in opera houses, in sports arenas, and at the White House.

Distinctively Danish, his comedy encouraged audience interaction and found humor in the mundane. He was the daffy pianist whose whimsical approach to the classics earned him the moniker the "clown prince" of Denmark.

For decades, Borge delighted audiences by deflating the pomposity of classical music.

He fell off his bench, played music upside down. He would comically mangle classic tunes, make faces, or simply stop at the keyboard to tell jokes

He repeatedly milked laughs from such classic routines as "phonetic punctuation" in which he used goofy sounds to indicate commas, periods and question marks in his monologue.

Borge became a U.S. citizen in 1948... He was knighted by Denmark and each of the other four Scandinavian countries. He quipped, "After I was knighted five times, I became a weekend."

When Joel Goodman's Humor Project instituted their very prestigious International Humor Treasure award in 1991, the first person honored was Victor Borge.

Victor Borge is quoted as saying, "Humor is something that thrives between man's aspirations and his limitations. There is more logic in humor than in anything else. Because, you see, humor is truth."

Undoubtedly, Borge brought Joy to those around him.



Team~Building Activity

Building a culture of good character requires building the class into a community. Here is this month's teambuilding activity:



Human Shuffle Have the class stand in a single file line, facing you. Now instruct them to line themselves up in order of their birthdays so that the youngest is at the left and the oldest is at the right. When they are finished, have them rearrange in the order in which their birthdays fall in the calendar year so that all of the January birthdays in order are on the left and the December birthdays are on the right. Next have them each declare their favorite sport and line up alphabetically by sport name. Next, do the same with their favorite color. For students, too young to spell or sort large numbers, have them stand in groups of similar interests. Ask the students for ideas on how to group or line up. When they have finished, ask them to think about how many connections they have to each other.



The “Oh, No” Game

Arrange the students in groups of 5 - 7 sitting in a circle. Pick a place in the circle to start. The first person makes up a bad luck scenario and shares it with the group. The scenario starts with “Oh, no!” For example: “Oh, No! The car won’t start”. Everyone in the group tries to make up a good that could come out of that. This could also be explained as the silver lining. Their responses start with “Oh, well.” for example: “Oh, well, I’ll save money not going to the mall”. The group should try to come up with as many “Oh well”s for each “Oh no” as they can. When the groups are finished, ask them to share some of the more humorous answers with the class. When finished, ask the students how easy was it to look for the silver lining. Try to use the Oh no/Oh well language in the classroom when bad luck occurs and try to turn around the situation.



LOL!

Ha Ha

LOL!

This activity is usually good for some belly laughs but it can only be done with a group that is comfortable with appropriate body contact and those who can count has high as the number of students in the classroom. For this activity, the students will be laying on the floor. Each student has their head on the stomach of a classmate so that their body is perpendicular to the classmate. All of the students should be connected this way so a large space is needed for all of the students to be connected into a single puzzle. Set the stage for a serious activity, having the students close their eyes and maintain silence to start. Now instruct the students that the first person in the line says “Ha” one time. The next person says “Ha” two times with each person down the line saying one more “Ha” than the last person. As the number of “Ha”s increase it generally dissolves into the entire group laughing together. Please make sure to excuse any student who doesn’t wish to play.



The Joy of Music (and YouTube)

Victor Borge

You Tube contains many of Victor Borge's routines. Pick one or two to share with the class. Discuss how important a sense of humor is.

Whistle While You Work: Find one of the following on You Tube: "Whistle While You Work", "Hi-Ho, Hi Ho, It's Off to Work We Go" or "Yakety Yak, Housework Blues". These demonstrate that singing while you work can make the task seem easier or at least go faster. You may wish to make a historical reference to the working songs sung by the slaves working in the cotton fields. Once they have seen some examples of these songs, help them to write a rap about a household chore they don't like to do. They could also write a parody by finding a song they know and changing the words to fit the chore. They can also choose to use a well-known simple tune, such as Mary Had a Little Lamb or Frere Jacques, and put different words to it. Once they have written their song, be sure to make a poster of the song. You can type it up or have them type it. They can use computer graphics, upload digital photos of them doing the chore, or hand drawn illustrations of the chore to decorate it. Instruct the students to post it at home near where they perform the chore.

"The Greatest" by Kenny Rogers

The song, "The Greatest" by Kenny Rogers, tells the story of a boy throwing a baseball in the air and swinging his bat and missing the ball three times in a row. After three strikes, one would think the boy would be sad but his view is from that of the pitcher. You Tube has several versions of the song you can play for the class.



"If You're Happy and You Know It"

This repetitive children's song has many variations. Chose one that includes the 4th line of "Then your face will surely show it." Discuss how your face can reflect your mood and how it is often part of the first impression you make on a stranger.



'Don't Worry, Be Happy by Bobby McFerrin.

This song is just a happy tune. Play a version from You Tube. Discuss the importance of optimism and how your attitude can determine your reactions to setbacks. Challenge the class with this question: Can you have too much optimism? Discuss how excessively optimistic people may not have realistic expectations about the possibility of bad things occurring to them, and so do not prepare such as not studying enough for a test. Include in the discussion when too much Joyfulness is not appropriate such as at a solemn event like a funeral or if is a distraction and disrespectful such as excessive clowning in the classroom.

How To Maintain a Good Attitude, Even When Faced with Unpleasant Conditions (or How to Think Like an Optimist)

- Optimists believe that when bad things happen they will not be long-lasting and that when good things happen it is a result of a more permanent cause.
- Optimists believe that a bad experience in one area of their life has no affect on other areas of life but good experiences can be universal to their lives.
- Optimists believe that bad luck is due to circumstances rather than their own fault but that good luck can be influenced by their own thoughts and actions.

Explain these thoughts about attitude. Have the class picture someone who believes like the optimist does. Ask them what it is like to be around a person like that. Now have them picture someone who believes just the opposite (pessimist). Ask them what it is like to be around a person like that. Now ask them which one they want to be like. Let them practice these beliefs by remembering a time in their recent past where they thought like the pessimist. Teach them how to use self-talk to think like the optimist in that case.

You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar!

The glass is half full!

When life gives you lemons make lemonade!

I think I can! I think I can! I think I Can!



All About Smiling



- ☺ *For all of the important how-to's on smiling visit www.wikihow.com/Smile*
- ☺ *Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing. ~Mother Teresa*
- ☺ *The 13th World Smile Day will be celebrated on October 7, 2011. Visit www.worldsmileday.com for more information.*
- ☺ *Smiling is good for you! For more reasons to smile visit longevity.about.com/od/lifelongbeauty/tp/smiling.htm*
- ☺ *A person who studies humor and laughter is a gelotologist*
- ☺ *Smile at those you meet during the day and see how many smile back at you.*
- ☺ *Play this smiling game. Pair up with a classmate. Take turns trying to make the other person laugh or smile while they are trying NOT to.*



Visit this site on Sign Language and look at the sign for joy. Notice that it comes from the heart.
www.aslpro.com/cgi-bin/aslpro/aslpro.cgi

Robin's Reading List

Grades Pre – 3:

The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant

When the relatives came, they came in mass, and for a long time!!! It's a family reunion!! Their drive was long, and their anticipation at seeing kin, finally getting to hug them "against their wrinkled Virginia clothes" sets the tone. The relatives are a support system to help a fatherless family with the things that need to be done, in and around their home. There was joyous celebration during the relatives' stay and great sadness when they left.

The Tangerine Tree by Regina Hanson

Ida's father is working in New York providing for the family, but she really misses him. She's been given a job, just like her older brothers. Her job is to care for the tangerine tree. "I must ask Mistress Sun to sprinkle down little pieces of her

fire. De tree will catch de tiny bits of sun and put dem inside de tangerines..." Some of this sun Ida squeezes into a bottle to help keep her father warm until he returns to Jamaica. The characters' concern for one another, sadness, joy, and acceptance are brought to life!



All the World by Liz Scanlon

The joy of life and family is beautifully celebrated in this picture book about a family's enjoyment of a day at the beach. The multicultural family is large, loving, and they enjoy many activities. The mood is definitely one of joy and promise after experiencing a farmer's market, a lakeside pavilion, a soaking rain, a warm meal in a cozy café, and a quiet night at home.



Grades 3 – 6:

Finding Joy by Marion Costi

This story tells the adoption story of a little girl, Shu-Li, born in China. The government says that a family can have only one child, so Shu-Li's parents leave her under a bridge where she is discovered and taken to an orphanage. A white American couple decides that their family is still incomplete and decides to adopt Shu-Li and rename her...JOY!!!

An Angel for Solomon Singer by Cynthia Rylant

Solomon is a middle-aged man who lives in a hotel for men in New York City. One night he visits a restaurant, and on the menu he reads "The Westway Café... where all your dreams come true." Angel welcomes him, and invites him back. Each night he returns,

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Robin's Reading List

ordering his food and, silently, ordering his wishes for the things he remembers from an Indiana boyhood. The illustrations capture Solomon's feeling of hopelessness, as well as the murkiness of urban streets. There is an uplifting ending with a reminder that in the face of staggering social problems, a smile in chance encounter has power...and joy!!!



Great

Joy by Kate DiCarmillio
The setting is just before Christmas and an organ grinder and monkey appear on the street corner outside Frances's apartment. She hears their music and can't stop thinking about them. Frances sees them sleeping outside on the cold street at midnight. The day of the Christmas pageant arrives, and it's Frances's turn to speak, everyone waits silently. But Frances can only

think about the organ grinder's sad eyes, and then, just in time, she finds the perfect words to share. This is truly a story of compassion and joy!!!

Grades 5 – 8:

Ghost Girl: A Blue Ridge Mountain Story

by Delia Ray

When President Hoover sets up a one-room schoolhouse in the mountains of rural Virginia during the Depression, 12-year-old April Sloane is thrilled at the chance to learn to read. But her bitter mother blames her for the accidental death of April's little brother in their cabin and refuses to allow the girl to attend school. With the help of her grandmother and an inspiring, supportive teacher, Miss Vest, April does get to go to school--and she finally learns to read by making a wish list from the Sears, Roebuck catalog. To do that, she must first overcome her guilt and wrench herself from home and from her angry mother, who is

locked in grief.

High School:

Tisha: The Story of a Young Teacher in the Alaska Wilderness

by Robert Specht

Anne Hobbs is a proper 19-year-old schoolteacher who yearns for adventure. She finds this and much more in a wild mining town named Chicken, located deep in the Alaskan interior. It's 1927, and this town is flaming with gold fever. Anne quickly makes friends with many of the townspeople, but is ostracized when she befriends the local Indians, and falls in love with one.



Croskey's Corner

Are you familiar with *The Little Prince*, by Antoine de Saint-Exupery? It is a children's picture book written for adults, the story of a pilot who who crash lands his plane. He meets a little prince, who describes to the pilot the many places and planets he has visited. On the Little Prince's home planet, there is a beautiful flower who is very proud, and is only willing to appear publicly in the full radiance of her beauty. She torments the Little Prince with her vanity. When she makes a mistake, she finds a way to put her Prince in the wrong. He explains to the pilot that he finds her very difficult to deal with, and, though he feels good will and great love for her, he comes to doubt her. He later realizes that he took her words literally when she did not mean them. He discovers that he should have taken pleasure in the grace of the gift her beauty was to him. He comes to believe that he should have judged her (or made peace with her) on the basis of her deeds, not her words, which were sometimes selfish or even cruel. "I ought to have guessed all the affection which lay behind her stratagems...But I was too young to know how to love her..." Due to his difficult dealings with her, the Little Prince decides to leave the planet. He tells her goodbye and she responds that she has been silly, and that, "Of course I have loved you... Is it my fault that you have not known it all the while?" She sends him on his way, urging him to try to be happy.

In his travels, the Little Prince meets a fox. The fox allows the Little Prince to "tame" him. In this book, "tame" does not mean to domesticate or train. Rather, it means to build a friendship and sense of belonging where each friend learns to trust the other. The fox, who can talk (it IS a children's book, you know!) shares with the Little Prince a number of wise truths. When the fox and the Prince finally part, the fox tells the Little Prince a secret: "It is only with the heart that you can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." It is a lovely, heart-rending story. I cry every time I read it.

The July Character Quality of the Month is Joyfulness, defined as "maintaining a good attitude, even when faced with unpleasant conditions." One of the "I will..." statements is to "Not allow my emotions to rule my mind." Few could argue that, in a perfect world, we would maintain a good attitude even during unpleasant times. (However, in MY perfect world, there would be NO unpleasant times!) I am torn, however, by the debate of whether to direct my mind to rule my emotions, as *Character First!* suggests, or whether to let my heart see the truth and then lead my mind, like the Little Prince.

It seems like the true path might lay somewhere in between. I am old enough to know that my eyes only show me what is on the surface. Though my friends kid me about wanting to be Superman, I do not have X-Ray vision. I see what the rest of the world sees, if my bifocals are working. So, I need a LOT of heart to make sense of what my eyes see. That heart-felt interpretation tells me WHAT is essential, most of the time. But then, I lack the Courage and Faith to follow my heart. So, I have to adopt an "as if" mode. I try to act with good character; I see NO results; I continue acting with good character "as if" I HAD seen results. How do I maintain this? I use my mind to discipline myself to act "as if" what my heart saw was really true. And maybe, with enough mental discipline, standing in for a faithless lack of courage, my "as if" world becomes true, becomes what my heart saw.

The Little Prince knew this. He could heed his heart because he had Faith. Since I waver, I try to build my mind for those periods of doubt. My mind does not really rule my emotions; at best, it helps guide my feelings until the heart gets everything back on track.

What happens if I DO manage to get my heart to see what is essential and to use my mind to guide me in acting as if these insights are true? Will I be Joyful? Not sure. It is difficult to maintain a Joyful attitude. Situations, or brain chemistry, or both, can interfere. I've been told that times when I feel down are so good for me. They help me to appreciate the good times more. Maybe I won't start to feel better until I am good and ready. First, the sun will start shining. Then, time will pass, and, gradually or suddenly, I will once again be back in happy action. But it will all happen naturally over time. I will look back and say, "Boy, that low point stunk, but look at where I am now." So, I guess I'd advise you to steer clear of me when I am down, but know that I will eventually be back on track, attempting to let my heart guide me!

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Character...It Starts With Me!

Character in the Classroom *Continuously*

There are many ways that you can teach the Character Quality of Month. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Ask students to make posters to hang in the classroom or around the school.
- Challenge students to find quotes, news stories, current (or classic) songs or movies that portray the character quality of the month. Be sure to share these with the class and “archive” these to use in future years.
- Add the character trait of the month to the spelling word list. (Even if it is posted in the classroom to copy!)
- Offer for students to make a video or write a rap that demonstrates the Character Quality of the Month.
- If you teach younger students, see if you can “borrow” some older students to lead your students in an activity or switch the roles and have the younger students “teach” a rhyme to the older students.
- If you teach older students, you can be the initiator in the previous activities.
- Invite local business leaders or small business owners to talk about the importance of a character trait. If you teach older students, aim to get a representative from a business that typically hires teens so that they can relate the importance of good character when applying for and *keeping* a job.
- Men and women in uniform usually make impressive guest speakers. Police departments, fire departments and military recruiting offices are usually willing to come into a classroom. Do not be afraid to give them specific requests or guidelines for speaking so that it is pertinent to the lessons of the month.
- Always have a generic character activity planned and ready to go that you can use as filler when you have time to kill or that a substitute teacher can use in your absence.