

Alertness

Character... It starts with me!

MONTHLY EDUCATOR BULLETIN

Vs. Carelessness

I WILL:

- Keep my eyes and ears open
- Recognize and heed warning signals
- Choose to do right before I'm tempted
- Tell others of danger
- Stay away from unsafe places

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Being aware of what is taking place around me so I can have the right responses.

So often, we go through the day on autopilot, doing those things we habitually do everyday and reacting to those things that are variable events. Picture a small boat being gently tossed around in the waves. Alertness requires us to live deliberately, to be looking for that next wave so that we can hit it head on, to put up the sail and harness the wind for our advantage. How often do we fail to recognize signs of the wind shifting and are unable to react appropriately, especially if it's because we put off doing something important?

This month, practice Alertness, by choosing something that you procrastinate doing and hit it head on.



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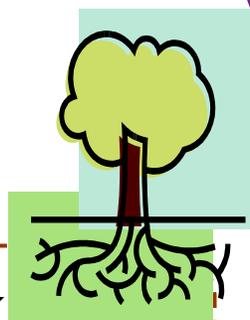
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No Matter How You Say It

Cuidado vs. Descuido
Estar consciente de lo que
sucede a mi alrededor
para responder correctamente



↻ ↻ Go to the Root ↻ ↻



Alertness is derived from the 16th century Italian military call “*Alla erta!*” Meaning “to the lookout!”. Can you see how alertness requires us to be on the lookout?

Sign Language

Check out the following website for the American Sign Language interpretation of the word Alert and Careless

Alert <https://www.handspeak.com/word/search/index.php?id=3816>

Careless <https://www.handspeak.com/word/search/index.php?id=2821>

Zanshin is a word used commonly throughout Japanese martial arts to refer to a state of relaxed alertness. Literally translated, *zanshin* means “the mind with no remainder.” In other words, the mind completely focused on action and fixated on the task at hand. *Zanshin* is being constantly aware of your body, mind, and surroundings without stressing yourself. It is an effortless vigilance.

In practice, though, *zanshin* has an even deeper meaning. *Zanshin* is choosing to live your life intentionally and acting with purpose rather than mindlessly falling victim to whatever comes your way.

For more visit <http://jamesclear.com/zanshin>

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

Character Quotables

“Be always vigilant; there are many snares for the good.”

~Accius

“Good watch prevents misfortune.”

~English proverb

“To see, to hear, means nothing. To recognize (or not to recognize) means everything.”

~Andre Breton

“Be alert. The most important things in life are seldom the most obvious.”

~Jonathan Lockwood Huie

“I was always afraid of dying. Always. It was my fear that made me learn everything I could about my airplane and my emergency equipment, and kept me flying respectful of my machine and always alert in the cockpit.”

~Chuck Yeager

“Awareness without action is worthless.”

~Phil McGraw

“Beware lest you lose the substance by grasping at the shadow.”

~Aesop

“It is more from carelessness about truth than from intentionally lying that there is so much falsehood in the world.”

~Samuel Johnson

“Awareness is empowering.”

~Rita Wilson

“Be on the alert, like the red ant that moves with its claws wide open.”

~African Proverb

“To be a leader is to be awake and alert, to be dissatisfied at all times.”

~Peter Koestenbaum

“Observation, not old age, brings wisdom.”

~Publilius Syrus

“Every human has four endowments- self awareness, conscience, independent will and creative imagination. These give us the ultimate human freedom... The power to choose, to respond, to change.”

~Stephen Covey

“Short as life is, we make it still shorter by the careless waste of time.”

~Victor Hugo

“Beware of little expenses. A small leak will sink a great ship.”

~Benjamin Franklin

Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted with important matters.

~Albert Einstein

Curriculum Connection Science

Why is it that one person may notice the sound of a ticking clock and another ignore it altogether? Inside the base of the brain is the reticular formation which filters and prioritizes the signals collected by the eyes, ears, hands and other sensory organs. It identifies what deserves attention so that you are not barraged with too much sensory information. One of the ways this filter is created is based on what signals you have treated with importance in the past. The design of the human brain teaches us that alertness tomorrow will be trained by our actions today.



Kate Shelley, Model of Alertness

Kate Shelley was 15 years old in 1890 when she became known for her alertness. She was helping her mother clean up after dinner while a storm brewed outside. Kate was concerned for the animals in their barn that was near a creek.

Kate was listening intently for sounds of distress from the barn when she heard sounds coming from a nearby railroad track of a railroad crew checking the track. When she heard a loud



crack she became even more alert to determine what happened. It was then that she realized that the bridge had collapsed and the lone engine had plunged into the creek.

With that, Kate took off for the bridge. When she arrived, she called down into the creek and then listened for voices. The trapped men below responded.

She ran back along the track, all the way back to the station in the howling storm. She delivered her message about the bridge collapse and the trapped men and then collapsed herself from the exhaustion of the long trek.

The men in the station

sent out a search crew and alerted the midnight passenger train headed their way to stop at the station. The men were rescued and the passenger train was stopped saving the lives of those involved.

After the rescue, Kate was recognized for her alertness and action with a medal from the state of Iowa, a scholarship, a lifetime railroad pass and many other honors. A Chicago newspaper raised enough money to pay off her family's mortgage on their farm and a new bridge was built that bears the name of *Kate Shelly*.

Team~Building Activity

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

Martian Names



To create your "Martian Name", you reverse your first and last name and spell them backwards so Abraham Lincoln's Martian name would be Nlocnil Maharba. Since Martians are named for a quality, you must translate the meaning of your new name by describing something about yourself. For example, Abraham Lincoln's name could mean "one who frees slaves" or "one who is very tall". Create your Martian name and spell it out on the board for the students to see. Explain how to create their own Martian name and how to come up with its meaning. Have them write it on paper so that others can see the name. Have each one individually share their name and its meaning with the class. You may also choose to do this activity in small groups and have everyone in the group help decide the meaning of everyone's name.

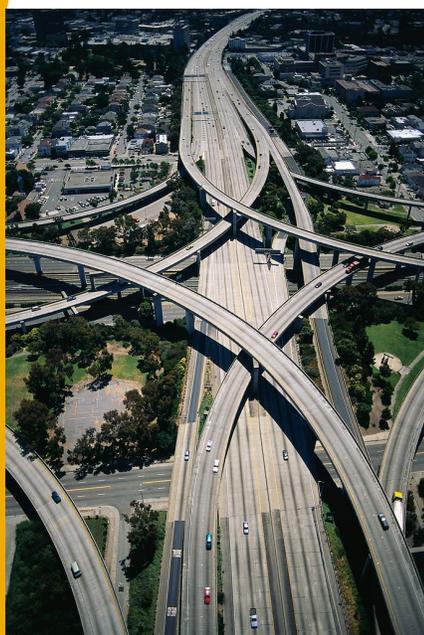


Little by Little

You will need a clear glass jar filled with water. You will also need food coloring and bleach. (I suggest that you practice this first to determine how much bleach you will need so that you can bring in the smallest amount needed.) Create a story about two friends that is age appropriate for your classroom. One of the friends starts out getting into trouble doing small things. Each time you give an example of getting into trouble, add a drop of coloring to the water. As the story progresses the trouble gets worse. The other friend tries to warn him/her about the trouble. Because of the troubles the two friends do not remain friends. At some point in the story, have the first friend recognize just how much trouble they are in and they have a change of heart. To correct their previous bad actions, have them go back and apologize or fix the situations in some way. Each time they take responsibility for their actions, add a drop of bleach to the water. At the end of the story, the water may still be murky. Explain that sometimes it takes a while to repair the damage done. Use this story to explain that bad people do not start out being terrible. They start with small things and work their way up (or down!) to terrible. It is important to be alert to the small things and to stay away from situations that can cause trouble.



Test Your Alertness



A game for older students: Start this activity by talking about how driving while under the influence affects your alertness. Explain that driving at 60 MPH you will travel 88 feet in 1 second. (As a math connection you can let them figure this out for themselves!) Waiting 1 additional second to stop increases your risk of hitting something in this range. Reaction time is crucial. Measure off 88 feet in the hallway so that they can get a visual feel of the space traveled in that 1 second. Talk about distracted driving such as texting or trying to change CDs while trying to drive. Relate reaction times to the importance of being alert.

A game for younger students: Have the students close their eyes while you change something in the classroom. Have them open their eyes and guess what has changed. Repeat this several times, making the change less noticeable each time. Relate this exercise to the need for being alert to clues of something that will get them into trouble.

Warnings at Work

Name different careers and have the students identify what type of alertness each job requires. Start with jobs that teenagers often have, such as waitress, cook, fast food attendant, movie theatre ticket taker, etc. Discuss the repercussions if they fail to be alert - what happens. For example, a waitress needs to be alert to refilling coffee cups. If he/she fails to refill coffee in a timely manner it could affect the size of their tip as well as the dining experience of their customer. Move on to more dangerous jobs such as fireman, construction worker, or an electric lineman. Next, discuss jobs that are typically not dangerous, such as an accountant or secretary. They need to be alert to what is happening in the office such as being alert to what time it is for attending meetings on time, how fast a job is getting done to determine if you have to ask for help or stay late to meet a deadline. Now look at alertness from the eyes of a student in your classroom. What do they have to be alert for? Some of the same things the office worker does with awareness of tasks and being ready to change classes or catch the bus. What about when they are at home? - on the bus? - at a sports event?



Learn from your Mistakes

Provide an age-appropriate maze for your students to solve. When they are done, ask them if they used trial and error to determine a way to complete the maze. Discuss the benefits of using a trial and error strategy to learn from mistakes when trying to solve a problem. Now expand this concept to debriefing after a project or event. Explain that in many professions a de-briefing session occurs after an event or project where the participants in that event or project discuss what went right about the process and the outcome as well as what went wrong. It is done so that they can determine best practices for future projects or events. How can students use this in the classroom? Use a class assignment or test to also teach this strategy. When they have completed an assignment or a test, ask them to de-brief the process they used to complete the assignment or study for the test. Did it provide the results you wanted? If not, ask them to determine what they could do better next time. If they had good results, ask why so that they can repeat that for the next test or assignment.



Un-Procrastinate

We all have tasks that we don't like to do so we put them off. For this exercise, ask the students to identify either something they always put off doing until the last possible moment such as pack your lunch in the evening or a single task that is currently on their "to do" list that just never seems to get done such as cleaning out their closet. Have them examine why they put it off. Does it get any easier? Usually not. Ask them if the task is really that bad. Have them try to put a positive spin on the task. For example, being grateful there is food for packing a lunch or being grateful that you have possessions to stuff in a closet. Now for the challenge: If they choose a repetitive task that they put off, then their challenge for this week is to do it FIRST! If they choose a single task, then their challenge is to complete it this week. Each day offer encouragement to Un-procrastinate. For repetitive tasks, you may offer for them to draw a picture of doing the chore and hang it where it will remind them. They may want to ask a family member for help in reminding them of their challenge. For single tasks, you may want to help them break the job into smaller portions and suggest they do just a piece of it everyday. When the week is over, ask them how it felt to complete something and get it out of the way. Is there anything else they can Un-procrastinate about???? It's important to be alert to the tasks that require our attention so they can be completed in a timely manner.



For the Family

We are studying the character quality of **Alertness**: Being aware of what is taking place around me so I can have the right responses.

To practice Alertness I will:

- Keep my eyes and ears open
- Recognize and heed warning signals
- Choose to do right before I'm tempted
- Tell others of danger
- Stay away from unsafe places



Family Activity:

Clues

For this activity, everyone needs a sheet of paper and something to write with. Young non-writers can be paired with a parent and their answers recorded for them. Fold the paper to create the number of columns so that there is one column for everyone playing, i.e. a family of 4 would fold their paper into 4 columns. At the top of the first column everyone writes their own name. At the top of the other columns they will write the name of the remaining family members in any order. Number each column from 1 - 5 (you can go higher if you wish to add your own questions that are appropriate for your family). Ask each question and let every family member record their own answer and what they think the other family members will answer. Make sure each person can not see the other papers.

1. What is your favorite color?
2. What is your favorite board game?
3. What famous person would you like to meet?
4. What is your favorite thing to do with chocolate?
5. If you could have one food everyday, what would it be?



Once everyone has finished, start back at the beginning and for each question, have everyone share their answers and let everyone correct their papers. How well did you do? Pick one that someone got right and ask them what clues told them the other person's answer. If anyone was surprised that no one got their answer correct, ask what clues the family missed. Did anyone learn something new about a family member? Why is it important to be alert around the house?

Other ways to teach character in the home:

- Display the character quality and definition in a prominent place such as on the refrigerator or let each child decorate it for their bedroom door.
- At the dinner table ask if anyone noticed anyone (not just family members) demonstrating the character quality (or not demonstrating it).
- Point out news stories where character was or was not involved.
- Review the "I wills" and see if there are specific actions you can add to this list.
- During car trips, challenge the kids by describing scenarios and having them identify if it describes being the quality or being the opposite.
- Praise with character by recognizing the character quality involved rather than the achievement.
- For more ideas visit www.charactercincinnati.org/education.php

Croskey's Corner

The other morning, I woke up to the clock radio alarm. As I finished shaving, I noticed the light on my shaver flashing, signifying that it needed a recharge. I heard the coffee maker beep, signifying the coffee was ready. I walked downstairs with my cell phone vibrating in my pocket, indicating that I had a text message waiting. I poured my cup of coffee. I sat down to read the text message and my laptop “dinged,” denoting that I had just received an e-mail. As I put down the cell phone (without actually retrieving the text), I opened my e-mail. But out of the corner of my eye, I noticed the kitchen faucet blinking. That meant that the water filter was about worn out and it was time to replace it. I opened the refrigerator door and the filter on the ice maker was burning red instead of green. Time to replace THAT filter. Completely forgetting about the text and the e-mails, I went to the garage to find the replacement filters. As I walked by the dryer, I heard it “buzz.” The clothes were dry. (That's not as handy as the dryers in college dorms, which are programmed to send students an e-mail when their clothes are dry!) The house phone rang. It was a Xavier University automatic call letting me know that the power was out on campus. Ding! More e-mails. Beep, the microwave was done warming my coffee, which had gotten cold while I was looking for the filters. Vibration, letting me know a text had just come through! I stuck everything in the closet and went back to bed. But the snooze alarm went off 45 seconds after I pulled up the covers.

You can see that I may be wired, but some of my wires are crossed. I use technology, but sometimes I let it abuse me. It reminds me of my favorite robot. No, not R2D2; it's Robby, from the sci-fi movie, *Forbidden Planet*, a remake of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Robby went on to have a long entertainment industry career, and co-starred in the 1960's TV show, *Lost In Space*. He was good friends with the young boy in the family. When there was an imminent threat, Robby would announce, “Danger, Will Robinson!!” Well, our lives are full of technological warnings. “Danger, Modern Human Being!!” You have mail; you are needed; you must fix something. Henry David Thoreau said, “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.” Good luck getting away from “it” all in the woods of today, Hank!

The Character Quality, Alertness, is perceived as a great one for students. Parents and teachers would be thrilled if students went through the year being Alert. When given directions or information, Alert students would remember and respond. But let's look even deeper at being Alert to dangers. Wouldn't it be great if they were aware of what was dangerous around them and had the right responses? Part of this is recognizing and heeding warning signals. In technological devices and modern innovations, the warning signals are evident, programmed in, and usually obvious to most. (Though I have been known to hear a cell phone ring and ask, with genuine curiosity, “Is that my phone?”) But how will kids know what warning signals to heed, that is, what to look for, in life situations? How can they pack 20 years of experience into just a few years of living? Even though we know they learn best by doing, we are afraid that if they learn about danger through doing they will get hurt or die in the process. Or, to put it in reality-based terms, we want them to know a stove feels hot, but not get a serious burn from the lesson.

I often say in this space that I think we mostly know what to do and are fumbling around for the courage to do it. With inexperienced kids, though, they may truly NOT know what to do. And research on kids' brains tells us that they are impulsive, not just because they are kids, but because their brains' inhibition or impulse control center is still maturing. So, maybe we can do them the most good by focusing on teaching them the Signals.

Here are some Signal suggestions:

If you wouldn't want your parents to read about this in the local paper, maybe it's dangerous.

If you'd stop your best friend from doing this, be your own best friend; stop yourself!

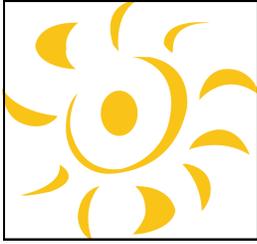
Is there something fun but safe you could do instead of doing this?

If your parents would tell you not to do this, use that: Tell your friends your old-fashioned parents would kill you.

Would skateboarding, or a roller coaster, or river rafting be just as fun but not so embarrassing if you are caught?

Ask yourself: If I don't do this, will I always regret it? Or, if I do this, could I get hurt and always regret it? Being a kid is not Ready? Aim! Fire! It's Ready? Fire!...Aim...Help kids learn the signals that will help them stay on target for living.

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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.