

Attentiveness

Character... It starts with me!

MONTHLY EDUCATOR BULLETIN

Vs. Distraction

I WILL:

- look at people when they speak to me
- ask questions when I do not understand
- sit or stand up straight
- not draw attention to myself
- keep my eyes, ears, hands, feet, and mouth from distractions

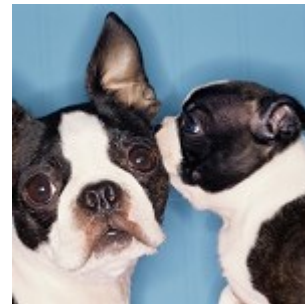
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Showing the worth of a person or task by giving my undivided concentration

Paying attention to people or tasks requires concentration and focus. Driving is just one example where we can see that being attentive to a small detail can make the difference between a close call and a tragedy. The same can be said for communication within relationships. How often have we been in conversation with someone and knew they were not paying attention to the point we were making? Probably as many times as we have been the one not paying enough attention to what someone was trying to communicate to us. It takes more than just listening to someone else. It takes reading between the lines, watching for clues in body language, facial

expressions, and voice inflections. It takes caring enough to spend the energy to block out distractions, formulate relevant questions and respond positively and appropriately. That's a lot of work in a few seconds. It is a skill that must be practiced to be acquired.



This month, determine who in your life has not had your full attention and practice listening attentively.

PLEASE HELP KEEP THIS BULLETIN FREE!

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To assist us with a donation, visit our webpage at www.charactercincinnati.org and click on the Donate button.

THANK YOU!

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No Matter How You Say It

Atención

vs. Distracción

Concentrar en la persona o la tarea antes de mí



↻↻ Go to the Root ↻↻

Attentiveness is derived from the Latin, *attentus* which means to be heedful or observant. It is a word form of attend and in this sense it is an active verb. Can you see where attentiveness is more than just not being distracted but actively seeking to understand what you are focusing on?

Sign Language

Check out the following website for the American Sign Language interpretation of the word Attention and Distract for visual ways to describe attentiveness and distraction:

www.aslpro.com/cgi-bin/aslpro/aslpro.cgi

注意力
Chūi-ryoku
(Japanese)



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

When Mark Twain went out to the pasture to teach a mule the difference between "gee" and "haw" (that is, left and right), he began by giving the mule a friendly but solid whack on the rump with a two-by-four. When asked why he did this, he said, "The first thing you have to do to teach a mule anything is to get his attention."

-Unknown

"There are many benefits to this process of listening. The first is that good listeners are created as people feel listened to. Listening is a reciprocal process - we become more attentive to others if they have attended to us."

-Margaret J. Wheatley

"Those who are silent, self-effacing and attentive become the recipients of confidences."

-Thornton Wilder

"The true art of memory is the art of attention."

-Samuel Johnson

"The highest ecstasy is the attention at its fullest."

-Simon Weil

"Genius is nothing but continued attention."

-Claude Adrien Helvetius

"Order is never observed; it is disorder that attracts attention because it is awkward and intrusive."

-Eliphas Levi

"I envy paranoids; they actually feel people are paying attention to them."

-Susan Sontag

Character Quotables

"The success of a production depends on the attention paid to detail."

-David O. Selznick

"You learn to love by loving, by paying attention and doing what one thereby discovers has to be done."

-Aldous Leonard Huxley

"In the successful organization, no detail is too small to escape close attention."

-Lou Holtz

"Give whatever you are doing and whoever you are with the gift of your attention."

-Jim Rohn

"Success in life is founded upon attention to the small things rather than to the large things; to the every day things nearest to us rather than to the things that are remote and uncommon."

-Booker T. Washington

"No matter what you've done for yourself or for humanity, if you can't look back on having given love and attention to your own family, what have you really accomplished?"

-Lee Iacocca

"The moment one gives close attention to any thing, even a blade of grass it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself."

-Henry Miller

"The ego is nothing other than the focus of conscious attention."

-Alan Watts

"An expert is someone who has succeeded in making decisions and judgments simpler through knowing what to pay attention to and what to ignore."

-Edward de Bono

"Pay attention to your enemies, for they are the first to discover your mistakes."

-Antisthenes

Curriculum Connection Science

A microscope is an excellent tool to teach the art of focusing. A microscope is almost never focused on the subject when you first look through it. You need to adjust the knobs to bring the item into focus. The same is true in the classroom. It isn't enough to be present in the classroom in order to be attentive. Staying focused on a lesson requires actively adjusting yourself to stay focused on your spelling words rather than what is going on outside the window. Have your students experiment with a microscope and see how small an area on which it can focus. Next give them a written seat assignment from one of your lessons. Have them pretend to be a microscope and focus on just that assignment.



Sherlock Holmes, Model of Attentiveness

Sherlock Holmes was a fictional crime detective created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. His powers of observation were the key to solving crimes. By paying attention to detail, he was able to draw conclusions that became vital clues to solving criminal mysteries.

The character of Holmes is likely based on Joseph Bell, a medical lecturer at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Bell emphasized the observation of detail

before making a diagnosis and was a pioneer of forensic science. Conan Doyle worked for Bell as a clerk at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.

Sherlock Holmes admonished Dr. Watson with the classic quote: "You have seen but not observed." He recognized observation as a primary investigative skill. Today you can see the powers of observation in the following recent and not so recent TV shows: *House*, *Psych*, *The Mentalist*, *Monk*,

and of course the Jedi Knights in the Star Wars saga. Sherlock Holmes and these TV fictional characters use attentiveness to observe what others overlooked.



Boost your own powers of observation:



Team~Building Activity

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

Snowballs Have each student write a fact about themselves on a white sheet of paper. Make sure that they know that the fact will be shared and used to identify them. Do not put a name on the paper. (Younger students can draw a picture of something that they like.) Once they are done, have them crunch up the paper into a "snowball". Choose an appropriate snowball activity. They can throw them at a target, toss them back and forth like an egg toss, stack them into a snow mountain or any other snow game that mixes up the snowballs. When they are done with the game, have each student grab a snowball, open it up and share it with the class. They need to see if they can guess who it is.



Tips and Tricks to Keep on your Toes!

Hugs and Bubbles

Want to get your students attention? Try Hugs and Bubbles. Teach your students that whenever they hear Hugs and Bubbles, they are to give themselves a big hug and puff out their cheeks with air as if they have bubbles in their mouth. If they are making bubbles, they can't talk and if they are hugging themselves they are keeping their hands to themselves.

Eating and Attentiveness

Studies have shown the importance of eating breakfast on academic success but did you know that what you eat makes a difference? Protein and whole grains are the best choices for a breakfast that helps attentiveness.

For more information visit:

www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/806.html

The Power of Language in Regulating Attention

When young children are learning something new they often think out loud to help them learn a task. As they mature, this private speech does not always get internalized. One way to help children stay focused is to teach them how to (think) talk to themselves to stay focused. Jane M. Healy, Ph.D., a teacher and educational psychologist, tells this story:

I remember one impulsive eight-year-old who could not remember to bring both book and pencil to the reading table. Every day the teacher said to her, "Tell me what you will need. Now ask yourself, 'Do I have my pencil? My book?'" She thought this was a wonderful game, and soon we only had to say, "Have you asked yourself the question?" Eventually, Daneesha was able to do it herself. Now a sophisticated preteen, she sidled up to me in the hall not long ago with a big grin on her face. "You know," she said, "I still ask myself the question."

For more information on this topic visit: www.parentsleague.org/publications/selected_articles/helping_children_learn_to_pay_attention/index.aspx

or

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_speech



Scramble your Senses

Mr. (or Mrs.) Potato Head has removable parts that are related to all 5 senses. Use a Mr. Potato Head to set up some games to focus on each of the senses. They can be activities that deprive a sense (remove his eyes if you are using blindfolds) or focus on a sense (only insert the sense you are using).. Some examples:

- blindfolded students must fold paper according to vocal instructions
- go outside and have students listen and identify what they hear
- make a recording of various sounds and have the students guess what they are
- hide items in paper lunch bags or cloth bags and let students feel the bag to guess what's inside
- create some vials of smelly foods and see if they can identify what they are
- make some simple candy that has a flavor that doesn't match the color (i.e. the cherry flavor is yellow and the grape flavor is orange) and have the students try to identify the flavor. Find out if they are paying attention to the color or the taste.

Once you have completed several of the activities, relate attentiveness to training your senses to stay focused on what is important.

Too Much of a good thing...

Start this activity by having the students make a list of things that can happen when someone is not attentive such as missing an assignment or distracting another student. Once that list is complete, start a discussion on too much attentiveness. Is it possible to be too focused? Of course! Think about being so involved in an activity that you do not smell smoke or notice that a child needs attention. Have the students add to the list times when someone may have been so focused on something that they forgot something else.

Telephone

This age old game can be used to teach attentiveness. Divide the class into two teams. The same phrase is given to the first student on each team. Have each team race to see how fast the phrase can be whispered from student to student. See how different the ending phrase is from the beginning phrase. Play a second time, but this time add the rule that the team who gets the correct phrase to the end is the winner. Identify that the second time, there was additional attention on accuracy as well as speed.



Wake Up!

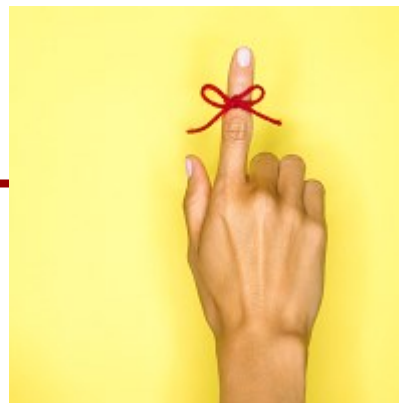
Part of staying focused is learning to recognize when you have lost your focus and bring yourself back. Frank Logan, at The University of New Mexico, in a document titled “College Learning: Whys and Hows” discussed attention in college students in an effort to help them with their studies. He proposes that selective attention is a learnable response. Help students identify what they are doing when they recognize that their attention has wandered. Are they looking out the window or fidgeting with a pencil. If it is their hands getting them into trouble, perhaps sitting with their hands folded will help them to stay attentive.

For more information on Logan’s discussion on attention visit:
www.unm.edu/~quadi/college_learning/attention.html



Memory Game

We've all played the memory game with a deck of cards. Several pairs of cards are shuffled together and then laid out upside down in a grid. The students take turns turning over 2 cards to find the matches. They need to pay attention when the other students are playing so that they know where the cards are laying. You can play this game with vocabulary from any other class matching words or matching words to definitions or synonyms or antonyms. You can match math problems to the answer. Whatever you choose to match, be sure to discuss the value of attentiveness to being successful in this game.



Directions Test

The following test is another old activity but can be effective if the students haven't seen it yet. Give this test to the students and see how many of them read all of the instructions first. When the test is done, discuss the importance of following directions.

1. Read everything before doing anything, then work as quickly as possible.
2. Put your name in the upper right hand corner of the paper.
3. Draw a box around your name.
4. Circle this instruction.
5. Pat the top of your head twice.
6. Draw four smiley faces at the bottom of the paper.
7. Clap three times.
8. If you are left handed, put an X in the lower left hand corner of this paper.
9. If you are right handed put an X in the lower right hand corner of this paper.
10. Draw a circle around the X.
11. If you are the first person to get this far on the test, call out "I am the first person to get to number 11!"
12. Now that you have finished reading carefully, do only sentence number 2 then sit quietly and say nothing to anyone else.

Tongue Twisters

Tongue Twisters can help teach attentiveness. Find some age appropriate tongue twisters. Have the students pair up and practice saying the tongue twisters that you give to them verbally. See how fast they can say them. Now pass out sheets with tongue twisters printed out and see if having the words to focus on helps in either their speed or accuracy. Discuss how attentive they needed to be to the differences in the words in order to say the tongue twisters without messing up.

*Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
Did Peter Piper pick a peck of pickled peppers?
If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,
Where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper
picked?*

*Betty Botter bought some butter,
"But," she said, "this butter's bitter.
If I bake this bitter butter,
It will make my batter bitter.
But a bit of better butter -
That would make my batter better -
So she bought a bit of butter,
Better than her bitter butter,
And she baked it in her batter,
And the batter was not bitter.
So 'twas better Betty Botter
Bought a bit of better butter."*

*She sells seashells on the
seashore.
The shells she sells are
seashells, I'm sure.*

**A tutor who tooted the flute
Tried to tutor two tooters to
toot.
Said the two to the tutor:
"Is it harder to toot or
To tutor two tooters to toot?"**

For the Family

We are studying the character quality of **Attentiveness**: Showing the worth of a person or task by giving my undivided concentration

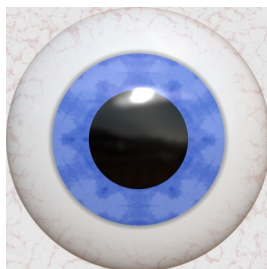
To practice Attentiveness I will:

- look at people when they speak to me
- ask questions when I do not understand
- sit or stand up straight
- not draw attention to myself
- keep my eyes, ears, hands, feet, and mouth from distractions



Family Activity:

The Focus Game



Start this game by asking the family if they are breathing. Immediately they will think about their breathing. Some may even look at their chest or focus on the air going in and out of their mouth. Point out that they had been breathing all day without thinking about it but when it was mentioned, it got their attention. Now have them look for things that are circles in the room. Let them point them out for everyone to observe. Ask them if they had noticed that there were that many circles in the room. Explain how you find what you focus on. Next look for rectangles.

The same can be done with colors. For the rest of the day, challenge each person to be more focused on a shape or a color as they go through their day. At the end of the day or sometime in the following day, have them report back the how many things they noticed. Did they notice circles even when they weren't really looking for them? Relate this exercise to selective attention.

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

At least since *Sleepless in Seattle*, and no doubt long before, Americans have taken an interest in that city's Pike Place Fish Market. Scenes of fish flying (being thrown, actually) through the air, performances with fish as ventriloquist dummies, these and others have become common place. Besides serving as a featured location in the Tom Hanks film, the business has shown up in countless Food Network film clips, and inspired a business morale booster book called *FISH!* This book came about after John Christensen, a leader of motivational programs, visited the Market and noticed that the attitude of the employees seemed unusually positive. He, Stephen C. Lundin, and Harry Paul developed a motivational video along with the series of books to describe the FISH! Philosophy. Charthouse Learning <http://www.charthouse.com/content.aspx?nodeid=16741> has expanded these ideas into a program and materials for schools. Now educators can turn throwing fish into a way to teach Character to students.

The Four principals from the FISH! Philosophy are (1) Choose your attitude. (2) Play. (3) Be there. (4) Make their day. The book *Schools of Fish!*, written by Christensen, along with Phillip Strand and Andy Halper, provides ideas for educators to demonstrate to students and to staff what the philosophy looks like in action. Real-life examples are provided where schools encourage choosing a positive attitude, having fun while you learn, being an Attentive learner, and providing meaningful, flow-like experiences which can make learning memorable. My wife and her teaching colleagues adopted the FISH! Philosophy for their team. One quarter they showcased Being There by having students invite the family member or friend who had always Been There for that student to be honored at a Be There Breakfast. Another quarter, the students had great fun throwing a real fish - half as long as some of them! - back and forth in a hilarious example of Play. Choosing Your Attitude was a daily goal, but was illustrated when the classes collected coats for those who could not afford them. The culminating activity was a visit to a retirement and assisted living facility where the students played cards with the residents, gave them and-made gifts, or just sat and talked in a successful attempt to Make Their Day. Needless to say, the students often Made Their OWN day through these activities!

I was explaining the FISH! Philosophy to my Xavier students as a way to provide learning and growth experiences for the Whole Child. As my students reflected on the tenets of the Philosophy, one offered the opinion that Being There was perhaps the most difficult of the four to put into action. That reminded me in turn of the Character Quality of the Month, Attentiveness. Indeed, the hardest part of Attentiveness may be to Be There. There is more to giving someone my undivided concentration than eye contact, actively listening and questioning, showing attentive body language, and not fidgeting. So, I got to pondering Being There.

Woody Allen said something like 80% of success in life is showing up. That has turned into the comment, "Fifty percent of life is showing up." Is that what Being There for people has come to - just showing up part of the time? I don't think that is all there is to being Attentive.

Or consider the 1979 film called *Being There*. In it, Peter Sellers plays a gardener named Chance. He is so naïve and simple that when he says something entirely superficial, the public thinks he is uttering brilliant pronouncements. It has a kind of "Emperor's New Clothes" feeling about it. Leonard Maltin says this film is full of "savagely witty comments on American life." But Chance is full of ... not much. I think *Character First!* expects more out of our Attentiveness than just simple-minded observations.

In fact, I think Being There for people is a lot of work. There's a good deal of overlap here with Patience. It seems like the general consensus is that Patience is a gift that some people have been given. Not true. Patient people want to end the waiting, move on to something more stimulating, take care of their own needs. But discipline makes them wait. Faith makes them put off their needs and listen, believing it will pay off with insights for the speaker, and for them. Real Patience is making a conscious decision to delay personal gratification and to hit the Pause button. Well, Being There Attentively is the same. To Be There fully is to reprioritize one's own needs. I have to say to myself, "Right now, my own wants and needs are second. I am going to ignore what I wish I could do. Instead, I am going to sit near this person, look at them, ignore distractions, forget my electronic devices, ignore my desire to eat or drink or flee, and I am going to listen as if my understanding of what I hear is life-changing." Because, it is! You know how it feels when someone else listens Attentively to you! You know how great it is when someone cares enough to Be There. Well, wouldn't you like to return the favor? You can. It takes discipline, Patience, and faith. You and the one who is benefiting from this will Both be glad you did.

Bill Croskey is a retired
school
psychologist from the
Loveland
City Schools



The Character Council of Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky

P.O. Box 33144
Cincinnati, Ohio 45233

Mary Andres Russell, Executive Director

Phone: 513.467.0170

E-mail: mrussell@charactercincinnati.org

www.charactercincinnati.org

Written by Jill Tomey, Education Consultant

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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.