

Flexibility

Vs. Stubbornness

I WILL:

- not get upset when plans change
- respect the decisions of my authorities
- not be stubborn
- look for the good in changes
- not compromise what is right

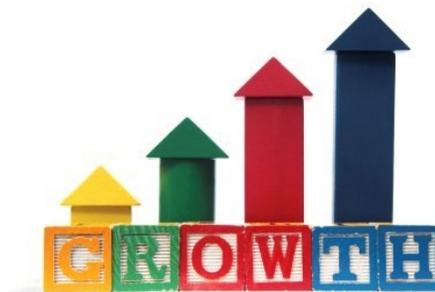
FEATURES

No Matter How You Say	2
Quotes	3
Curriculum Connection	3
Hero	4
Team-Building Activity	4
Crosky's Corner	9
Character in the Classroom Continuously	10

Adjusting to change with a good attitude

Life is all about change. Think about how many changes occurred as you grew from a baby into a toddler, from a toddler to a walker? Each new grade in school brought new teachers, new rooms, new rules, new classmates, and new lessons. Then there was old enough to drive, old enough to vote and old enough to drink. Back then we looked forward to change, expected it, prepared for it and accepted it. We couldn't wait for it. As adults, we also know that the only constant is change. When we resist change, whether it is a simple change in an event or a reorganization at work, we miss the opportunity to grow up just a little bit more.

This month, identify something you have resisted and give flexibility a try.



IN THIS ISSUE

Winds of Change	5
Flexi-Ball	5
Flexible vs. Stubborn	6
Squiggle Art	6
The Egg vs. the Tennis Ball	7
Goldilocks	8

No Matter How You Say It

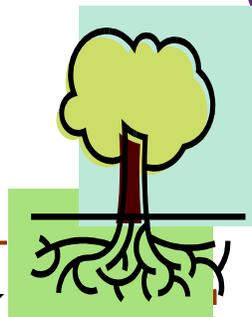
Flexibilidad

vs. Resistencia

La disposición para cambiar planes o ideas según los deseos de mis autoridades



↪ ↪ Go to the Root ↪ ↪



The Latin word *flexibilis* comes from the verb “*flecto*” which means “to bend”. Can you picture a palm tree bending against a strong wind to remain standing?

(for more visit www.etymonline.com)

Sign Language

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

Flexible <https://www.handspeak.com/word/search/index.php?id=821>

Stubborn <https://www.handspeak.com/word/search/index.php?id=2098>

Can you see how these visual signs describe the qualities?

Large, bold Kanji characters for the word 'Flexibility'. The characters are 軟 (soft) and 柔 (flexible), written in a traditional style.

Kanji characters for Flexibility

For more visit
http://redfinchjapanese.com/?action=kanji_dictionary&kanji=10990

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

Character Quotables

“Stay committed to your decisions, but stay flexible in your approach.”

~Tom Robbins

“When written in Chinese the word “crisis” is composed of two characters - one represents danger and the other represents opportunity.”

~John F. Kennedy

“Mishaps are like knives, that either serve us or cut us, as we grasp them by the blade or the handle.”

~James Russell Lowell

“Rock bottom is good solid ground, and a dead end street is just a place to turn around.”

~Buddy Buie and J.R. Cobb

“Life is change. Growth is optional. Choose wisely.”

~Karen Kaiser Clark

“The block of granite which is an obstacle in the pathway of the weak becomes a stepping stone in the pathway of the strong.”

~Unknown

Chance favors the prepared mind.
~Louis Pasteur

“In an earthquake, the most dangerous place to be is in a tall building that is not flexible. Yet, one of the safest places is a tall building that has been stressed for earthquakes -- in other words, one that has a deep foundation and is flexible. So, too, over the coming years, large organizations that remain rigid will crumble and fall, while those that succeed in adding flexibility, teamwork and creativity to their cultures will thrive.”

~Unknown

“Blessed are the hearts that can bend; they shall never be broken.” ~Albert Camus

“If you learn something from a defeat it isn't a loss.”

~Autum Worcester

“Prepare yourself for the world, as the athletes used to do for their exercise; oil your mind and your manners, to give them the necessary suppleness and flexibility; strength alone will not do.”

~Lord Chesterfield

“The weather-cock on the church spire, though made of iron, would soon be broken by the storm-wind if it did not understand the noble art of **adapting** to every wind.”

~Heinrich Heine

“If the plan doesn't work change the plan but never the goal.”

~David Oragui

Curriculum Connection



Biology

Animal Adaptation - Animals must adapt their behavior and their physical characteristics based on their environment in order to ensure their survival. Here are some lesson plans that teach how many different animals adapt.

<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/ecological-adaptation/animals/6989.html>

<http://www.lessonplanspage.com/ScienceAnimalAdaptations3.htm>

<http://www.lessonplanspage.com/ScienceAnimalAdaptations58.htm>



Bethany Hamilton, Hero of Flexibility

In April, 2011, the film *Soul Surfer* was released based on the 2004 biography of surfer Bethany Hamilton. The book chronicles her pursuit of a surfing title both before and after a shark attack in which she suffered the loss of her left arm just below the shoulder.

The movie identifies many of the adaptations she needed to make in order to return to daily living as well as return to surfing.

In July 2004, Hamilton won the Best Comeback Athlete ESPY Award. She was also presented with a special "courage award" at the

2004 Teen Choice Awards.

In 2005, Hamilton took 1st place in the National Scholastic Surfing Association National Championships, a goal she had been trying to achieve since before the shark attack. In 2008, she began competing full-time on the Association of Surfing Professional World Qualifying Series. In her first competition against many of the world's best women surfers, she finished 2nd. The changes she faced didn't stop her. Hamilton used flexibility along with determination and courage to not only

survive but to excel.



Team~Building Activity

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



Hoop Circle

Have students form a circle and join hands. Break the circle and thread a hula-hoop on someone's arms and resume the circle. Without breaking hands, they must pass the hoop to the next person continuing around the circle with each player stepping into the hoop and then over his/her head and on to the next person. You can create two circles and have them compete against each other or put everyone in the same circle. If you use one circle, you can time them and then challenge them to beat that time a second time around. Be sure to encourage them to help students who may struggle with this exercise. The only rule is that they can't drop hands.



Winds of Change

Pinwheels demonstrate the concept of flexibility (a pinwheel that doesn't turn will tear) and being anchored (pinwheels must be fastened securely or they will blow away). For the pinwheel you will need a square of paper. Cardstock works best. At each corner, cut a straight line towards the opposite corner. Cut a quarter of the way to the other side (halfway to the middle). You may want to draw the line to cut for younger students. Fold half of each corner so that the points are overlapping in the middle. On the points remaining, the students can write ways they can be flexible. It might be easier to write on the corners before you fold the other sides down. Use a drinking straw as the stick. Attach the pin wheel to the straw with a straight pin. You can use a scissors (you may need pliers) to bend the pin against the straw. Fasten it with tape. Make sure that you attach it loosely enough that the pinwheel will spin.



Flexi-Ball

Wad a piece of aluminum foil into a ball. Make it the size of a ping pong ball. Give several students some toothpicks and ask them to wrap them around the ball. Obviously, they can't. Next give them a handful of rubber bands and ask them to wrap those around the ball. This works much better. Give each student a rubber band. Pass the ball around and have each of them add their rubber band to the ball. As they do so, they should give an example of sometime in the past that they were flexible. For younger students, you may want to provide them a list from which to choose.



Flexible vs. Stubborn

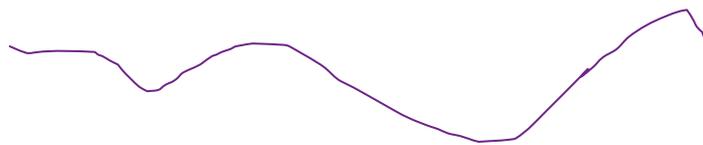
Give each student a clothespin and several pipe cleaners. Have them bend the pipe cleaners into the shape of a stick-man. Let them draw a face on the clothespin. As you read through the following list, have them hold up the pipe cleaner -man if it is being flexible or the clothespin-man if it is being stubborn. You may also choose to use a rubber band, cotton ball or clay for the flexible and a rock, bottle cap or Lego for the stubborn.

- ☺ Crying when the rain cancels a picnic
- ☺ Playing indoor games when it is too cold outside
- ☺ Refusing to eat broccoli
- ☺ Trying new foods
- ☺ Throwing building blocks when a toy tower falls
- ☺ Trying a different approach when the first attempt fails
- ☺ Complaining about mom's radio station in the car
- ☺ Learning to appreciate different music styles

Squiggle Art

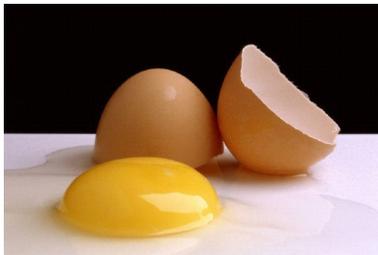
On a sheet of paper, draw some type of a squiggly line. Make a copy of the page so that each student has a copy. Instruct them to turn the squiggle into a picture of something. Encourage each child to turn the paper to see if a different perspective of the line allows them to picture it in a drawing. When they have completed their drawings, let them share them with each other to see how many different types of pictures can spring from a simple line. For younger students, you may want to demonstrate on the board first, asking for volunteers to make the line into something. If time allows then each student can do their own. Point out how many different things could be made from the same line. Liken this to situations that call for flexibility. In most cases, there are multiple ways to overcome an obstacle.

Another option is to use yarn dipped in paint and drag across the page to produce the initial squiggle from which to start. For more information on this option see the children's book, *The Squiggle* by Carole Lexa Schaefer.



The Egg Vs. The Tennis Ball

Cover part of the floor with newspaper (or do this outside where you can hose down afterwards). Have one of your students drop a raw egg onto the newspaper. Have your students observe its reaction when it hits an obstacle. Now have them drop a Tennis ball (but not in the egg mess!) and observe its reaction to the obstacle. Discuss with your students how these two reactions demonstrate how to react when something gets in your way that changes your plans. If you are like the egg, you crumble and stop when your plan hits a snag. If you are like the Tennis ball, you bounce and get right back in the game.



A Student's Perspective:

If you have attended a Character Council Educator Seminar since I joined in 2006, you may have heard me talk about the impact of character education on my life, including the single most memorable activity we ever did at my school: The Egg vs. the Superball (we changed it to a tennis ball because of the complaints of superballs going everywhere - oops!). The imagery created by this activity was so powerful that it has stuck with me since 7th grade, all the way through my recent college graduation. Not only was it a powerful memory, but it really helped me to incorporate the concept of flexibility into my everyday life. As I say in closing after every delivery of that speech, "...the lessons you teach kids lay the foundation for academic success, and ultimately success wherever I want to take it." This activity is a great example of these lessons really sticking and making a difference in my life.

~ Jacqueline Tomey Schmucki (in 2011)

Goldilocks

Start a class discussion on Flexibility from the concept of being too flexible (no backbone) to no flexibility (stubborn). Select 3 groups of students and assign each one of the two extremes or the middle ground (flexible). Each group should create a skit that demonstrates the quality they are assigned. When they are ready to stage their skits, have the stubborn skit go first. Introduce it as if you are Goldilocks. “And Goldilocks came upon the first skit (perform skit), but it was too stubborn so she went to the next one (perform no backbone skit) but it was too willy-nilly so she went to the next one (perform flexible) skit and it was just right!

(Note to male teachers - feel free to modify Goldilocks's name if you're not comfortable with it)



Croskey's Corner

When my wife, Nancy, began a new workout class, the trainer started by giving each class member a Flexibility evaluation. She was told that she was very Flexible. Must come from being a teacher for more than 30 years! When thinking about the August Character Quality, I like the term Adaptability as defined by Character First! - "adjusting plans or ideas without getting upset." But I prefer the word "Flexibility" because it conveys the idea of being willing to change while being able to bend, but not break. That seems important to me when facing change.

Educators certainly have to be able to handle change. State-wide, high stakes, testing, Common Core standards being adopted, challenges to accepted ways of negotiating teaching contracts, attacks on pension plans, rising insurance costs, lack of teaching job availability, as well as the Usual Gang of Educational Stressors, all make being an educator less secure and more frightening these days. That which has not killed you has made you bend almost in half.

I have been pondering what it is that makes change so difficult. Perhaps some of the challenge comes with our personal philosophies. Adapting to change has an odor of "giving in." One might be fearful of not standing up for personal beliefs. "Stand up!" we tell ourselves; we must Stand and Deliver! Have standards. If we don't stand for something, we will stand for anything. We have to hold out for our standards. Enough? I can't stand it!

Interestingly, though, with Character First! the opposite of Flexibility is not Giving In. It is Resistance. I researched the quote, "Resistance is Futile." There are a whole lot of references to Star Trek and other modern science fiction stories. I recall it from 1950's sci -fi movies in which the aliens (stand-ins for Communist governments!) demanded that Earthlings surrender and reminded them it would be useless to resist. Is that still true? Does resistance end up being an exercise in futility? It seems like it depends on whether you see the change side or the resistance side. If you are an American colonist in the 1770's, Great Britain is asking you to remain a subject of the King and you are insisting on changing the colonial system. Change seems good for a colonist, bad for a Tory supporting Parliament and King George. But if you are asking the colonists to change – to start paying for a previous war and sharing the financial bounty of the prosperous American colonies - change seems good for a Tory, bad for a colonist. No, all change is NOT good. But it may help us to be Flexible by improving our skill at finding good in change. I had often heard that, in ancient times, wine was made and stored in animal skins. But then I found out that, as it fermented, the wine's volume changed. Makes sense. But, apparently the "stretchiness" of the animal skin also changed, as the skin matured. So, as one made wine in an animal skin, the wine and the skin adjusted to each other! When you are confronted with change, you are being asked to make new wine in older skins – You! (Notice I did not call you an Old skin.) You have done your stretching and adjusting at an earlier time in your life. Yet, you are continually being asked to make new batches of wine and to accommodate these new batches with more stretching. This leaves some of us older "skins" with stretch marks – even if we are Men!

So, how do we combine the process of looking for the good in change, being flexible through stretching, and still stand up for our standards? Part of this involves remembering that we, though adults, do not stop our growth and development. Life is a roller coaster of change. The name says it all. Part of life is rolling (with change) and part of it is coasting at a more comfortable speed and angle. The cycle is something like this: Coast a little in comfort. Be confronted with a change (a hill). Coast up to the hill. Climb. Accept the new change (careen down the hill). Assimilate the change into what we are used to. Coast a bit. Accommodate and accept the change. Then prepare to have to assimilate a new change (hill) into our way of looking at the world. And once we have survived the change (gotten to the bottom of the hill), we accommodate flexibly. Repeat as often as needed. You know, Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget told educators about this a long time ago. He described children as going through these assimilation/accommodation cycles. Nothing new under the sun! Especially change. Well, just because we grew up does not mean that we don't still have to go through this assimilation and accommodation cycle.

But some of us hate roller coasters. Maybe we have been eating right before we have to ride the coaster. Some of us hate wine. We don't believe in raising animals for our drinking habits. Some of us are afraid. That is not a taunt. If you are never afraid, you are either foolish or dead. So, try to stretch. Don't snap. Try to bend. Don't break. Remind others to cut you some slack, even if they can't unhitch your leash.

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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.