

Discipline

Character... It starts with me!

MONTHLY EDUCATOR BULLETIN

Vs. Self-Indulgence

I WILL

- not act impulsively
- not equate desires with rights
- set my own limits
- see my anger as a sign that something is wrong in me
- walk away from things that are not right

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Choosing behaviors to help me reach my goals.

Discipline starts with our self-talk, those things we say about ourselves to ourselves in our head. If we are constantly saying negative things about ourselves our actions and reactions will reflect this negativity. Just as we wouldn't choose to hang around a group of friends that only said negative things about us, we need

to discipline our thoughts to eliminate the negative chatter we generate in our minds.

Increasing positive self-talk gives us a more optimistic outlook which enables us to cope better with stressful situations and have a proper reaction.

This month, improve your discipline by choosing positive self-talk.



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

Character Quotables

"You cannot control what happens to you, but you can control your attitude toward what happens to you, and in that, you will be mastering change rather than allowing it to master you."

Brian Tracy

"Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment."

Benjamin Franklin

"The happiness of a man in this life does not consist in the absence but in the mastery of his passions."

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

"Mastering others is strength. Mastering yourself is true power."

Lao Tzu

"We cannot always control our thoughts, but we can control our words, and repetition impresses the subconscious, and we are then master of the situation."

Jane Fonda

"Discipline and concentration are a matter of being interested."

Tom Kite

"Bad habits are like a comfortable bed, easy to get into, but hard to get out of."

Anonymous

"Finding oneself was a misnomer; a self is not found but made"

Jacques Barzun

"Talent without discipline is like an octopus on roller skates. There's plenty of movement, but you never know if it's going to be forward, backwards, or sideways."

H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

"If we don't discipline ourselves, the world will do it for us."

William Feather

"What we do upon some great occasion will probably depend on what we already are; and what we are will be the result of previous years of self-discipline."

H.P.Liddon

"Self-determination is fine but needs to be tempered with self-control."

Anonymous

"You must have discipline to have fun."

Julia Child

"Respect your efforts, respect yourself. Self-respect leads to self-discipline. When you have both firmly under your belt, that's real power."

Clint Eastwood

"Willpower is easy. Won't power is hard!"

Clifton Bauer

Curriculum Connection



Science



Interacting with the Environment

For younger students, use the examples of not littering as exercising discipline. For middle grade students, discuss how recycling or not recycling affects the environment. Making "green" choices is a form of discipline such as choosing to pack lunch in reusable containers rather than indulging oneself with the ease of throw-away. Older students can focus on issues of global warming, renewable energy sources and conservation as ways of using choices and behaviors to positively impact the environment.

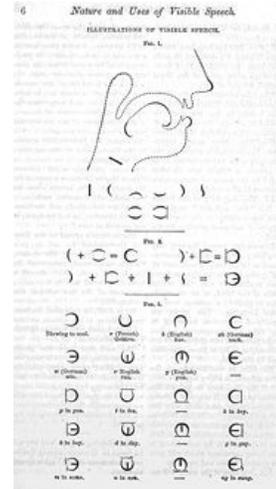
Alexander Graham Bell: Model of Discipline

When we think of Alexander Graham Bell we immediately identify him as the inventor of the telephone but this is not how he saw himself. He spent most of his time as a teacher of the deaf. His inventions were his “spare time” activity. His interest in speech, voice and sound is what interested him in improving the telegraph. His father, Alexander Melville Bell, had created a system for teaching deaf people to speak called Visible Speech. Graham Bell mastered his father’s

method and taught it at a school for the deaf in Boston. The image to the right demonstrates this method.

One aspect of discipline is taking your time to discover options, weigh their differences and choose the best option. As an inventor and a teacher, Alexander Graham Bell had to exercise much discipline in choosing options whether it was a teaching method or an electrical conduction experiment. A scientist must exercise discipline to look at results as they

actually are rather than jumping to conclusions that could be wrong.



Team-Building Activity

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



Change the World

This activity can either be done as a group or individually. Give the students drawing paper and any type of colored pencils, markers or crayons. Instruct them to fold the paper in half and draw something on the left hand side that they want to change. On the right hand side they are to draw an invention that would enact this change or what the world would look like once the change took place. For example, the pictures below could explain that the change you want to make is to reduce pollution from cars. The problem doesn't have to be global in nature. It could be something in their community, school or sports team . The solution can be real or imaginative.



How Do You See Yourself?



Tape a piece of aluminum foil, (heavy duty works best) to a sheet of paper. Have the students reflect on some of their positive attributes and write them on the foil using a pen. They will not be able to correct mistakes as the writing will make an engraving on the foil. Younger students may want to illustrate something that identifies a good quality they possess.

Discipline is learning to manage how we think of ourselves. It is important that we take time to reflect on how we react to situations for the purpose of improving our behavior. It is very easy to let these evaluations become negative and self-defeating. It takes discipline to keep our focus on the positive and looking for ways to improve rather than belittle ourselves.

Control Thyself

For this game, you can use anything to make noise. It can be a New Year's Eve noisemaker, recorded music, or even just the clapping of your hands. Give the class a bodily motion to do - waving their hands, shaking a leg, or whatever you choose. Instruct the class that they are to do that motion only when you are making the chosen noise. When the noise stops they must also stop. Begin making the noise and make sure everyone is doing the motion. Then stop the noise. Watch as everyone stops. Praise their success. Start and stop the noise several more times observing reactions. When you have finished, asked them who controlled when they did the motion and when they stopped. The answer is that they did. They were reacting to the noise by controlling their behavior. They were the ones who decided to play by the rules and control their responses based on the instructions they have been given. Discipline is the ability to recognize the right responses and control our behavior accordingly.



control

Be a S.T.A.R.

Stop, Think and Then React is what the acronym stands for. Explain that sometimes when we lack discipline we have not stopped a moment to consider our reactions. Later, we often regret our response. Taking a little time to think first can save embarrassment later. To practice this thinking, divide the class into small groups. Each group will create a "quiz" for a different group. They will create a scenario which describes an event that someone can react to appropriately or inappropriately. They will then give a good and a bad reaction. Give an example to get them started such as: When Stella was putting on her coat, she knocked over a few books on the top of a stack of books on her desk. A good reaction would be to pick them up and move on. A bad reaction would be to knock over the rest of the books. Some options for this exercise would be having each group write out a scenario, role play the scenario or sketch the scenario. When the activity is completed, remind them to always "Be a S.T.A.R.!!"





A Habit of Discipline

This exercise will demonstrate the strength of habits. Ask students to fold their arms across their chest. Ask them to identify which arm is on top and take a poll. It will vary and it has no relationship to being left-handed or right-handed. Now ask them to fold their arms with their other arm on top. It should be awkward or at least something that they have to think about to accomplish. The first time they folded their arms it was easy – it came from habit. If you made a rule that everyone now had to fold their arms opposite it would take awhile to unlearn the old habit and develop the new habit. Research shows that it takes doing something new about 12 times before the habit begins to form – longer if you are unlearning an old behavior. Find a habit /behavior that you want to change in the classroom – something small such as quieting themselves down when the bell rings in the morning. Count how many days it takes them to remember to do it on their own. After twelve school days, evaluate the progress. If it isn't working, give them some hints of how they can remember - a note taped to the desk, etc. and then keep working on changing. Just because it doesn't change in 12 days doesn't mean give up. Reflect on progress actually made – is it getting easier? Once this challenge is over, reward them for achieving success. Now leverage this success to challenge the students to identify a bad habit they want to break or a good habit that they want to start in their personal life. You can ask them to write it down in a planner or agenda or give them a special paper to write it on. You can also partner them up to share their habit but make sure they know they will partner before they pick their habit. (You can relate this to math class by graphing the results of what day each student remembers the new habit without having to think about it.)

Response Gauge

Discuss discipline as it relates to controlling angry reactions. (Make sure anger is not viewed as bad – just how we handle it can be.) Draw a gauge on the board. (a half-circle, flat spot on the bottom.) Divide it into 3 sections. The first section is green – normal events; Middle section is yellow – anger-provoking events; last section is red – life-threatening events. Use examples of proper and improper reactions in all three cases. Things that are an appropriate response to a life-threatening situation aren't appropriate if someone angers us or we don't get our way. After this discussion you can use role-play in small groups to let them practice disciplined responses.



Croskey's Corner

Carolyn Hax is a Washington Post writer who gives advice on how to handle romantic relationships, parenting, and friendship pressures. I find her advice to be pragmatic and honest. Some years ago, she had a column about two co-workers. One was described as overweight, ate lots of fast food meals, and spoke openly about her frustration with not losing weight. The other, the letter writer, was slim. The thinner person wanted to give the other woman unsolicited advice on how to lose weight. Carolyn advised that just because the woman was worried enough about her weight to discuss her frustration in public, it does not mean that she is ready to accept suggestions or that she even wants advice. Rather, as Carolyn put it, "Weight control is such an individual thing." Someone who complains about her weight while eating fast food regularly is not clear yet on whether she wants to make changes in her life style.

I see a parallel between this column and the current Character Quality, Discipline: "Choosing behaviors to help me reach my goals." See if you agree.

In terms of unhealthy life styles such as smoking, drinking excessively, over eating, or some other indulgence, the clear message is that succumbing to my desires is wrong and Discipline is right. That is kind of a frustrating dichotomy for me. As we emerge from the end-of-the-year holidays, we may have guilty memories of the food, drink, and celebration opportunities in which we indulged. In addition, holiday gift-buying decisions either already have come home to roost in our Monthly bills - or they soon will! More guilt about spending too much money. More obsessing about weight and appearance. New Years Resolutions in January try to rectify all of our end-of-year "sinning." So, we feel regret, it turns into guilt, we resolve to do "better," we sometimes fall short, and we complete the circle with new regret!

A roller coaster ride like this really toys with our emotions. We are trying to build solid habits which will make our life style changes more permanent. Will power becomes our only hope, and that will get used up by most of us, often before we have achieved a permanent goal. Not a recipe for a positive outcome!

There is a different way to view this. Instead, we could find ways to make pragmatic choices which continue to seem sensible. Denial of our wants is tough, partly because we may have misidentified what is important to us. Something about being human often leads us to mistaking our wants for the needs we actually have. As an example, when a person wants to lose weight to be thinner, that is a want. But maybe the underneath need is about not feeling loved or worrying about health. That deeper need is worth figuring out. I think the way we sort this out is to use that oh-so-precious Character Quality, Patience. Instead of a quick dive into some impulsive course of action, Patience says we could evaluate the situation, and figure out what we really need. Then, with that knowledge, we can begin to feel like we are in Control. Our actions will be guided by the Hope that we will get our needs met, and by the clearer path which will then emerge to satisfy those needs. We have a chance then to make a decision which will help achieve goals - we have acquired some self-Discipline!

I hope you will not beat yourself up during the post-Holiday "blues" about how you ate too much, spent too much, or in some other way "Lost Control." I wish you Patience until your needs become distinct from your "wants." Patience will help you wait for that clarity of goals which signifies Discipline. The Patience - Reasonable Goals - Discipline - Repeat habit will, through repeated practice, eventually come to us more easily. I hope you had a great holiday and I hope you get everything you asked for on your NEED list.

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school psychologist
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Schools

For the Family

We are studying the character quality of **Discipline**: Choosing behaviors to help me reach my goals.

To practice Discipline I will:

- not act impulsively
- not equate desires with rights
- set my own limits
- see my anger as a sign that something is wrong in me
- walk away from things that are not right



Family Activity:

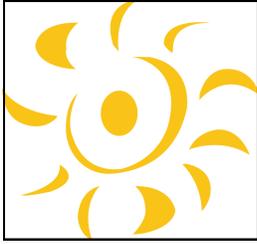
Fizz All Over



This activity is best done in the kitchen or even outside. Get a bottle or can of warm soda pop. Begin talking about how sometimes things happen that shake up the day. (Begin shaking the can or bottle.) Sometimes it's big things that can be upsetting. (Shake harder) and sometimes it can be just a lot of little things (shake softer). Discipline is all about how we react when things don't go our way. Ask the family how they think someone would react if they didn't possess discipline. (Yelling, Cursing, Tantrums) Demonstrate those reactions by opening the soda pop and watch the explosive reaction. Involve everyone in the clean-up. Now discuss ways that each person can diffuse such a reaction. If the pop can were allowed to sit undisturbed, the carbonation would settle down and not be so explosive. What would have happened if someone would have stopped the soda from being shaken early in the demonstration? Would it have been easier to settle down if it were stopped earlier? Discuss ways to identify when you are getting angry or reacting inappropriately. Perhaps recognizing others in the family as "being fizzy" when they need a discipline reminder is a gentler way to settle someone down.

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



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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.