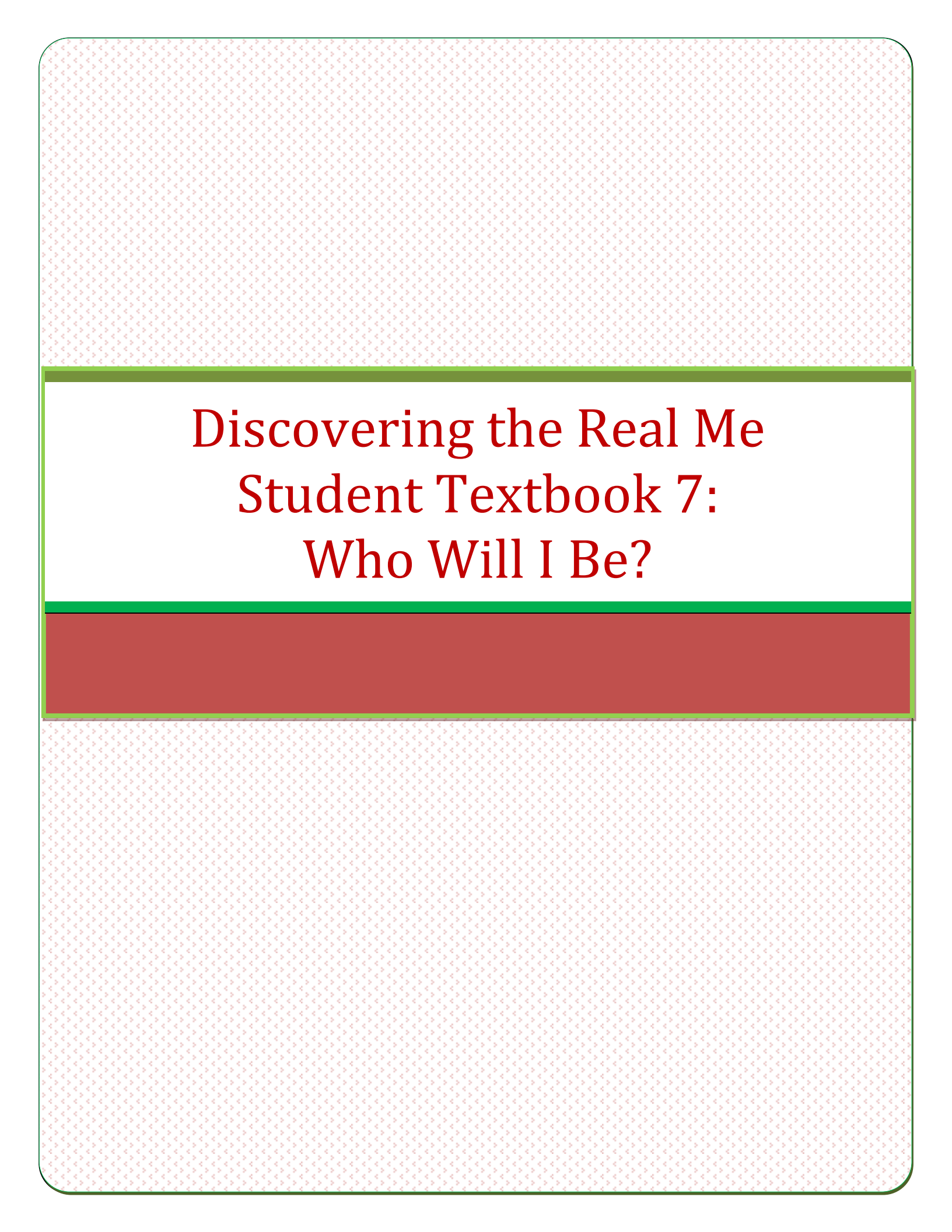


The book cover features a repeating pattern of small, light-colored crosses on a white background. A central white rectangular area is framed by a green border. Within this white area, the title is written in a red serif font. Below the title, there is a solid red horizontal band.

Discovering the Real Me

Student Textbook 7: Who Will I Be?

INTRODUCTION

The years of entering adolescence are a difficult period in many people's lives. It is a time of many changes—physical, mental, and emotional. The changes happen so fast that sometimes we start wondering who we really are. We think, feel, and act differently than we did even a year earlier.

This book can help to guide you through this crucial period of your life. We cover a wide range of issues relevant to young adolescents, from changing social relationships and peer pressure problems to the value of loyalty, commitment, and friendship. We talk a great deal about personal character issues, such as courage, integrity, self-discipline, humility, responsibility, honesty, patience, and listening to our consciences. These qualities, of course, all impact our relationships with others. In addition to the points mentioned above, we also address the importance of showing respect for others and being fair in our relationships.

Early adolescence is a time when our inner world is developing rapidly. We start thinking about things that never entered our minds before. We start feeling things we never felt before. Many of these emerging thoughts and feelings concern basic questions about life. We start wondering in a serious way about our future. We may question why we need to study the things we are being told to. We may even start feeling that everything is pointless and lose the energy and desire to engage in many activities. Most teenagers go through such a period at some point. You'll find stories of young teenagers going through such experiences in this book, and you'll see how they cope with it all.



The final chapter, entitled “My Purpose in Life”, seeks to address the fundamental question of what we are here for. We direct our attention to three basic life goals, the fulfillment of which can lead us to the lasting happiness we seek in life. They relate to the individual, to the family, and to society at large. Fulfilling our purpose in each of these realms is the key to true satisfaction in life.

Each chapter in this book begins with a story that brings to life the main subject of that chapter. These stories try to present situations typically encountered in most young teenagers' lives. We then move on to a discussion about the issues raised by the story, followed by a series of questions in order to stimulate you to think about the subject in relation to your own life. Each chapter concludes with exercises through which the student can come to a deeper understanding of the issue at hand.

We hope that this book will provide you with helpful ideas and insights into this important time of your life. Let's begin!

CHAPTER 1: Everything's Changing!

Jenny ran out of the house and down the street as fast as she could. What's wrong with me? she thought. Why was it that recently it seemed every conversation with her parents turned into a shouting match? Everything they did irritated her. Their questions, their advice, even seemingly harmless things like, "Dinner's ready!" could set her off.

Now thirteen, Jenny's whole world seemed to be turning upside down. She was becoming a different person, but who? Where was that sweet little daddy's girl of just six months ago, who loved to cuddle up in her father's arms? Now it seemed there was someone else inside of her that wanted to push him and the rest of her family away.

Things were happening too fast. Life was suddenly speeding up, and Jenny felt out of control. Where was it all leading?

While all this was swimming around in her head, her legs had taken her into a nearby park. At first not noticing her surroundings, she gradually calmed down as she walked past elderly people on benches, young parents with small children in the playground area, and a small ice cream stand. Beyond that area, the park became quiet, and she found a secluded spot off the footpath where she could lay on the grass and collect her thoughts.



What a weird time of life being a teenager is, she thought. Life used to be so much simpler. Now everything seemed complicated and confusing. She didn't even like herself anymore. Her neck was too long; her feet were too big; and, worst of all, she was as thin as a rail. While all her classmates were developing nice figures, she was turning into a thin basketball-type player.

As Jenny lay on the grass thinking about her miserable life, she looked up at the trees and the clear blue sky beyond. Her eyes fastened on something hanging from a branch directly above her head. It was brownish-green, and, although there was no wind, it was moving. Slowly, she sat up, then got up on her feet and stretched her long neck even longer to get a good look at this mysterious object.

It was about two inches long, and it hung straight down from a branch at the end of a tiny twig. Too thick to be a leaf, Jenny realized at once it was the cocoon of a butterfly, and its occupant was getting ready to emerge. Fascinated, Jenny kept still, not wanting to miss the moment of the butterfly's appearance. The cocoon shook back and forth a few more minutes, then suddenly began to open. Slowly, the butterfly pushed itself out of the cocoon, its damp crumpled wings beginning to show. As it emerged, the wings began to spread, revealing a beautiful blue and yellow pattern. It wasn't long before it was completely out, hanging its gorgeous new wings out to dry. Soon, it would flutter away high into the sky.

There is a lot to be learned by watching nature. After all, we are part of nature too.

In one way or another, every living thing goes through a process of transformation as it gets older. The butterfly's transformation is particularly spectacular. Jenny was lucky enough to catch the moment of its emergence from its cocoon. From this time onward, it would begin its adult life as a free and beautiful creature. However, up until that moment, its life had been pretty dull—crawling and eating constantly as a caterpillar, then wrapping itself in a cocoon for several weeks. But all that served the purpose of preparing for the time when it would be able to take flight.

In the coming years, you too will feel the growing urge to take flight as you approach adulthood. This is natural, as your destiny is to become an independent and responsible adult. At the same time, it is important to wait until the proper time. We cannot hurry the process, just as the caterpillar has to wait until the process of transformation is completed before emerging from its cocoon.

The process of human transformation is called puberty, and it means changing from childhood to adulthood. Sometimes the process is not pretty, just as caterpillars and cocoons are not very pretty. But it is all a necessary process of growing up.

Still, if it's all so natural, why all the emotions, anger, frustration, and impatience? Why is the body so out of control? To explain, we have to get a little technical.

External changes

It starts with your pituitary gland (a pea-shaped gland located at the bottom of your brain) releasing special hormones. Hormones are body chemicals that carry important messages to cells. "Hormone" comes from a word that means "to spur on". Hormones "spur on" chemical changes at the cellular level necessary for growth, development, and energy.

These changes take place at different rates for different people. Some of your friends may still look like young kids, while others look more like adults. Everyone is getting or going to get taller. When this growth spurt happens, it usually lasts for two to three years. At its peak, some kids can grow four inches or more in one year.

With all this quick growth, it can seem like one part of your body—your feet, for instance—are growing faster than everything else. This can make you feel clumsy or awkward. This is normal. The rest of your body will eventually fill out and shape up, and you'll feel less clumsy.



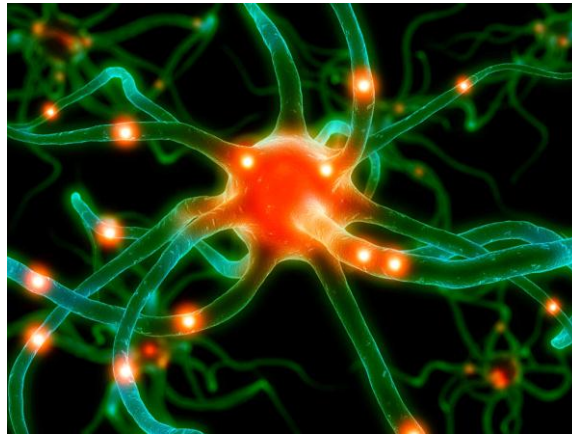
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Internal changes

Hormones not only affect the way you look on the outside, but they also create changes on the inside. They influence your emotions and thinking. You might find yourself getting confused or flustered. You might feel overly sensitive or become upset easily. Some kids lose their tempers more often and get angry with their families or friends. And, of course, you may feel anxious about how your changing body looks.

It can be hard to understand all these new emotions. It's important to know that while your body is adjusting to the new hormones, so is your mind. When you get upset at people, try to remember that they usually aren't trying to hurt your feelings on purpose. With these changes happening so fast, even family and close friends may find it difficult to keep up with them.

You might also have new, confusing feelings about sex—and sexual feelings that you've never felt before. And you will probably have lots of questions. When you have new adult hormones, it means that you have new adult responsibilities for what you do with your body. That's why it's important to take time to understand these changes and what they mean for your life.



Values for life

People are all a little different from each other, so it makes sense that they don't all develop in the same way. During puberty, everyone changes at his or her own pace. Maybe some of your friends are getting curves, and you don't have any yet. Maybe your best friend's voice has changed, but people still mistake you for your sister on the phone. Or maybe you're sick of being the tallest girl in your class, or the only boy who has to shave.

In the end, just about everyone catches up eventually, and most differences between you and your friends will even out. What is important are the values that you choose to adopt as guidelines for your life. Values are the things that are important for your life and have to do with what you feel about right and wrong. Your values influence the kind of person you will become.

You may not have much control over your bodily transformation, but you do have control over your internal transformation. Growing up is not just a matter of starting to *look like* an adult, but of learning to *act like* an adult. To do that requires taking responsibility for your actions and behaving in a mature manner. When you can do that, you will be ready to leave your “cocoon” and be as independent as you like.

Questions

1. What is the meaning of the story at the beginning of the chapter?

2. What is puberty?

3. What are hormones?

4. Do you feel you are already going through these changes, or not yet?

5. In what ways has your body changed in the past year?

6. In what ways has your mind changed?

7. How have your relationships with family and friends changed in the past year?

8. What values are guiding your life?

Exercise: “Marking Time”

Make a timeline identifying the key milestones in your life. For example, your timeline could include when you first walked and talked, your first day of school, your first soccer game, and other activities up to the present, including any changes you have experienced due to puberty. Try to include at least ten items. Think about why you chose the events that you did. How do you think your timeline might be different from someone else’s?

Reflection Exercise: “My Values”

On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being high, please evaluate the importance of the following values to your life. Then rate how much you are practicing these values.

<i>Value</i>	<i>Importance</i>	<i>Practice</i>
Love in the family		
Respect for others		
Responsibility		
Honesty		
Self-control		
Patience		
Fairness		
Trustworthiness		
Taking care of things		
Generosity		
Forgiveness		
Cooperation		

CHAPTER 2: Friends and More than Friends

The bell rang, signaling the end of third period. Students poured out of classrooms into the corridor. Ben struggled to make it to his locker, like a fish battling upstream against the flow. He finally made it. His lifelong friend, John, was standing at the locker next to his, changing books. Ben gave him a friendly nudge.

“Hey, John, what’s up? Doing anything after school?”

His friend seemed a little cool, like he had his mind on something else. “After school? Yeah, I’ve got drama club.” He looked away.

Ben was surprised. “Drama club? Since when are you interested in acting?”

“Actually, I’ve always been interested in it. Just never told anybody, that’s all. Well, I’ve got to go!”

Before Ben could say anything, John was off down the hallway and soon was lost in the crowd.

Ben quietly got his materials for next period’s math class and closed his locker. John had been acting real strange lately, he thought, like he was trying to avoid him. They had been friends since first grade and always did things together, especially playing baseball and fishing in the local pond. Ben thought he knew John inside and out, but apparently not. Drama? That was the last thing he thought John would be interested in.

Before he knew it, Ben was standing outside the math room. At the same time, Jennifer Lauren came to the door from the opposite direction. She flashed him a big smile.

“Hi, Ben!”

“Oh, hi, Jennifer,” he replied. For a second, he stopped thinking about John. He opened the door, and they both went inside. As she headed for her desk, she looked back and smiled again at Ben.



Ben took his seat. He had known Jennifer, like John, since first grade, although not as a friend. He just knew her. She was a girl, after all. He had never paid her much attention; nor did she pay much attention to him—until recently that is. Now she seemed to be always smiling at him whenever he saw her. Ben didn’t quite know what to make of it. It made him a little uncomfortable. He would smile back at her and treat her politely, but he wouldn’t say much. What was there to say? They didn’t have much in common, it seemed to him. He liked sports and fishing, while she liked...well, he didn’t really know what she liked, but he was sure it wasn’t sports and fishing.

Math class was the one class that they had together. He sat near the front, and she sat a couple of seats back in the next row. During the class, he found himself looking back towards her. Occasionally, she would look over at him and smile. When the bell rang to end the period, he noticed Jennifer stand up and start walking towards him. Without looking at her, he quickly gathered up his things and bolted out the door as fast as he could.

As we enter adolescence and notice our feelings, thoughts, and interests changing, so we find our relationships with others changing.

Changes in our social relationships are mostly due to the changes taking place inside us. Our interests are changing and growing. Naturally, we begin to be attracted to those people with whom we share interests. Because of this, even close friends can begin to drift apart, like John and Ben. Every relationship is based on something or some things that the two have in common. The basis of John and Ben's friendship had been fishing and baseball. Now John was developing a different interest—drama—and his attention was shifting in that direction. It is likely in the coming months, certainly in the next year or two, Ben will also develop new interests, which will lead him into new social relationships, too.



Speaking of drama, you've probably already noticed that relationships between boys and girls also change at this time of life. Until now, neither side paid very much attention to the other. Your closest friends were probably those of the same gender. Boys hung out with boys and girls with girls. Instead of attraction between boys and girls, there was more likely a sense of repulsion. With adolescence, things begin to change. Because we all develop at different rates, only a few boys and girls may show some interest in each other at first. But as time goes on, you begin to notice a lot of pairing up among teenage boys and girls.

This is a natural development due to biological changes taking place inside our bodies. Adult men and women are so attracted to each other that they marry and have children, making a family. Adolescence marks the beginning of a profound transformation process that will take you out of childhood and propel you into adulthood. It is something that happens to all of us, whether we like it or not, whether we are ready or not. And the transformation happens very quickly, so that we may no longer recognize the person we were even a year ago.

With such dramatic changes taking place, we can easily become confused and disoriented—not knowing who we are or where we are going. What is our source of stability and continuity? Our parents. They have been through it. They can be a source of great wisdom, strength, and comfort as we try to navigate the teenage years. Of course, as we spoke about in the previous chapter, this relationship too will undergo stress and strain as we change and seek greater independence. Still, no matter how independent we become, our relationship with our parents is one of the most important ones we will have in our whole lives.

As we meet new people and make new friends, it is helpful to realize that no one our age is having an easy time of it. Everyone has to cope with these rapid changes. Even those who seem to be confident and happy are going through their own struggles. At this age, it is very easy to think that no one understands me; no one is going through the kinds of things I am. But this is not true. Everyone feels awkward to some degree and unsure of themselves in new situations and relationships.

The best thing we can do is to put aside our doubts and fears and plunge in. More times than not, in the end, things turn out for the best.

As we face changes in our relationships, one of the best things to remember is this: "To make a friend, be a friend." If we make that our focus, we will never lack for friends in our life, even when everything is changing.

Questions

1. In this chapter's story, in what ways were Ben's social relationships changing?

2. Who seemed to be changing more, Ben or his friend John? Why do you say so?

3. In your life, in what way are your social relationships changing?

4. Do you feel you are changing faster, slower, or at about the same speed as your friends?

5. Do you see any changes taking place in the relationships between boys and girls around you?

6. Do you feel these are healthy changes or unhealthy ones? Why?

7. Do you feel you can trust your parents' guidance at this stage of your life? Why or why not?

8. What does the phrase "To make a friend, be a friend" mean?

Exercise: "To make a friend, be a friend."

Try being a friend to someone new this week—someone you have something in common with. It may be that guy on the basketball team that you've always respected but never talked to. Try to do him a favor or two this week, or walk with him out of the gym or down the hall and start a conversation about basketball. It may be the girl who is always so polite and kind to you in class, picking up your papers when they fall. She might make a good best friend! Give her a compliment, and ask her how she does her hair. This kind of "girl talk" about external things can soon lead to talking about things of more depth and meaning.

Reflection Exercise: "My Social Relationships"

Think back upon your three closest relationships of five years ago. What was the basis of these relationships? Perhaps it was simply that you were neighbors, or maybe there was some activity you liked to do together. Next, think of your three closest relationships of two years ago and what they were based on. Finally, do the same for the three closest relationships in your life today.

Are there any people with whom you have kept a close relationship? How has it changed? How has it remained the same? In what way has the basis of your relationships changed in general?

CHAPTER 3: Joey's Dare

"Go on, Joey. I dare you." Joey's classmate, Dennis, was practically shouting in his ear. Behind him stood two other boys from his seventh grade class. They all were standing by the entrance of their school, looking at a lone boy sitting at a table on the playground, eating his lunch. This was William, the boy everyone made fun of for being so smart.

Joey was "the new kid" at school. His family had just moved to the neighborhood. Joey was a bit overweight, kind of awkward in his movements, and very self-conscious. He so much wanted to make friends in his new environment and was trying his best to please the other boys in his class. They were now using his desire to be accepted to make him go after William.

William was skinny, pale, and shy, but he got excellent grades. He was always by himself during recess and lunch period. While the other children played games together, he was usually off in a corner reading a book.

Joey's assignment was to pretend to make friends with William, win his trust, and get him to supply the other boys with the answers to the math homework each week. As a newcomer, Joey had a chance of fooling William into doing what the boys wanted.

Joey didn't feel good about it, but he wanted to belong to the group. If this is what it took to be accepted, he was ready to do it.

He made his way slowly over to where William was sitting. Stopping a few feet away, Joey said, "Do you mind if I sit down here?"

William looked up from his sandwich with a suspicious look. No one spoke to him unless they were up to something mean. His guard was immediately up, but this was a new boy, after all. Maybe he wasn't mean.

"Go ahead," he muttered, and went back to eating.

"My name's Joey," Joey said, sitting down and holding out his hand.

William shook it. "My name is William."

"This morning that was really cool the way you figured out that math equation in class. I could never do that."

Out of the corner of his eye, Joey could see Dennis and the other two boys standing by the school entrance, giggling.

William looked happy. "Somehow math comes easy to me. And I like it."



"Really? Do you think you could help me with this problem? I just can't seem to get it..."

Over the next few weeks, William helped Joey with his homework every day. He was happy to help this new kid in school and finally to have a friend. Joey would then let Dennis and the two boys copy the answers off his homework paper. They all got As, and the teacher praised their improvement.

Joey's uneasiness never went away. In fact, it grew, as he came actually to like William and feel guilty about using him so. He had to be careful about spending too much time with William, too, or the other boys would start teasing him, or worse, for being William's friend.

Have you ever been in a situation where you did something you knew you shouldn't, but you did it anyway? There are times when we may do such things when we're alone and no one can see us doing it—for example, taking cookies from the cookie jar when no one is looking, or, more seriously, taking an electronic device someone left lying around. We can also end up doing the wrong thing when we are with other people due to something called “peer pressure”.

Peer pressure is what we see at work in the story above. At the urging of some classmates, new student Joey goes against his own better nature in using another student. He would never think to do such a thing on his own, but he does it in response to the social pressure he receives from those he wants to be friends with.

Adolescents are especially influenced by their peers, both for good and bad. This is due to several reasons. First, as teenagers, we are seeking more independence from our parents, as we have spoken about already. We may not listen to or follow their directions or advice as much as we did when we were younger. We want to explore and learn things for ourselves. This is the natural process of growing up, but it also makes us more open to other influences, especially from our peers, who are people the same age as we are.



As we get older, these peer relationships grow in importance to us in comparison to those with our parents. We might find ourselves listening to, respecting, and following the opinions of our friends and classmates more than those of our parents. This can get us into trouble if the character and values of these friends and classmates are not good.

Another reason we can be so strongly influenced by our peers is our own insecurity about who we are, what we want, and where we are going. As we have said, adolescence is a confusing time due to the rapid changes taking place in our bodies, minds, and emotions. It's easy to start feeling you don't know what's right and what's wrong anymore. You start hearing things from your friends that your parents never talked to you about, or things that may be different from something your parents said. Who do you believe? What should you do?

As teenagers, things can get quite intense because our whole social life can feel at stake. If you don't go along with your friends, you may soon find yourself alone, even being teased or made fun of. If you go along with your friends, you may be betraying the values your parents taught you and which feel part of who you are. Teens often feel torn between the demands of their parents and the society around them.

Part of growing up is learning to understand the conflicting influences and come down on the right side. Those who have a good relationship with their parents and are more confident of themselves are less likely to be influenced in unhealthy ways by their peers than those who don't have good relationships with their parents and who are less sure of themselves. In fact, these two usually go together: good relationships with parents—meaning we feel their love and trust their judgment—and a greater feeling of confidence and self-worth. This helps to protect us against social influences that can sometimes tempt us to do the wrong thing.

In the end, it is best to:

- 1) Trust our parents and listen to them, even if we feel sometimes that they make mistakes or don't understand us. They care about us more than anyone, and they are concerned about our future happiness.
- 2) Be careful about the kinds of friends we choose. We need to be sure that they won't push us to do something we know is not right.

Questions

1. In the story, why did Joey do something he did not feel good about?

2. Why do you think Dennis and his friends wanted Joey to do this?

3. What kind of a person was William?

4. Do you know people like Joey, William, and Dennis in your school or neighborhood?

5. Have you ever been in a situation like Joey?

6. If you were Joey, what would you have done?

7. Why are teenagers so strongly influenced by their peers?

8. Who do you listen to and follow more: your parents or your friends?

9. Have your friends ever asked you to do something you knew was not right? What did you do and why?

10. How confident and sure of yourself do you feel?

Exercise: “A Different Ending”

Imagine you are Joey. Against your better judgment, you went along with your classmates’ desire and made friends with William in order to get the answers to the math homework. Now you feel very bad about it, because you really like William. You like him more than you like the other three, whom you know are just using you. At the same time, you are afraid of being teased by them, and perhaps some others in the school, if you openly side with William and refuse to continue to cooperate. What do you do?

Reflection Exercise: “Peer Influence and Me”

The text states that teenagers may give in to peer pressure for the following reasons:

- 1) A difficult relationship with their parents;
- 2) The stronger influence of friends and other peers; and
- 3) Lack of confidence due to rapid changes taking place in their bodies, minds, and emotions.

Measure the situation in your own life against these three reasons. Do you feel yourself very likely to give in to peer pressure, somewhat likely, or not so likely?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

CHAPTER 4: Brendan and the Bullies

There was nothing special about Brendan. He was an ordinary schoolboy who did his homework (most of the time), played with his friends in the neighborhood, and helped his father on weekends around the house. He was liked by his classmates and friends and was never one to pick a fight.

Today, however, Brendan would face a situation that would challenge him to draw upon courage deep within him that he never knew he had.

The day began as usual. He was walking to school with David, his next-door neighbor and longtime friend. David was a bit small for his age. Perhaps because of this, he was not interested in athletics and recently had begun practicing the violin. This morning, he was carrying his new violin and case for the first time, as he had a lesson immediately after school.

David sometimes was teased by three older “tough” boys, who called him a weakling and other such names. Usually, he would just shrug it off and continue on his way. The other boys would turn their attention elsewhere...until today.

The three were hanging out at the entrance of the school playground as Brendan and David approached. Brendan noticed that they all had their eyes on David’s violin case. He had a warning feeling.

“Hey, Frankie,” one of them said to his buddy. “Look what the weakling’s got today.”

Frankie, the leader of the three, took a step towards David. “Is that a violin?” he asked threateningly.

The third one chimed in, “No, I bet he’s got a tommy gun in there, like one of those gangsters.” They all laughed mockingly.

“In that case, I should take this item for the protection of innocent children.” In the blink of an eye, Frankie lifted the case out of David’s arms.

“Give it back!” screamed David. Brendan had never seen him so mad.

“Make me,” Frankie shot back, and he easily pushed David to the ground.

Stunned, Brendan just stood there looking at David sprawled on the ground. It had all happened so fast. David looked up at Brendan with a pleading look.



Brendan turned his head towards the three bullies. They looked back, daring him to do or say something in David’s defense.

Brendan’s mind was swirling. What to do? There was his best friend lying on the ground. He had to do something.

“Stop it!” he shouted with a voice so strong and confident that it surprised even him. “Give it back—now!”

Brendan stepped forward, raising himself up to go almost chin-to-chin with Frankie.

Not expecting such a fearless response, Frankie took a step back. His two buddies also backed away. By this time, quite a crowd of students had gathered behind Brendan.

“Yeah. Give it back, bully!” they shouted at Frankie.

Frankie could see he was in danger of losing this fight. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see one of the teachers running towards them.

“Take the stupid violin,” he growled, shoving it at Brendan. “Let’s go, boys.”

The bullies pushed their way through the crowd while Brendan helped David up off the ground, handing him his violin.

“Thanks, Brendan,” David said, as he smiled at his friend gratefully.

Brendan felt power and joy swell up inside him. He had made the bullies back down!

“You’re welcome,” he said, as he saw other students smiling at him too.

From the story above, we can see that courage is not something confined to war or adventure sports like skydiving or jumping off a cliff into a lake. It is something we can find around us practically every day, if we keep our eyes and ears open.

One dictionary defines courage as: “The quality of mind that enables one to face danger with confidence, resolution, and firm control of oneself.” The dangers we usually think of are the physical ones of getting killed, dying of an illness, or getting injured in some way. There are certainly many dangers of these types in our world. We consider people with the courage to face these dangers heroes: the fireman rushing into a burning building to save children, the police officer chasing down a criminal suspect who has a gun, or the ordinary citizen facing a painful death from cancer with dignity.

Yet danger sometimes appears in less obvious forms: the danger of losing a friend by not doing what he or she wants you to do, the danger of being accused of a wrongdoing you didn’t commit, or the danger of being made fun of by your peers. These are social dangers that we all face on a regular basis. Sometimes it takes courage to face and overcome our fear of these social dangers in order to do the right thing.



In the story above, Brendan faced not only the danger of being beaten up by the bullies. He also risked being mocked by other students as he stood up to the bullies to defend his friend. Brendan’s courage worked in his favor: both the bullies and other students respected him for taking his stand.

For us to be able to do the courageous thing, the right thing, we need to have “confidence, resolution, and firm control” of ourselves. We need to have a strong desire to do what we think is right and not let anything sway us from it. This is where having “firm control of oneself” comes in. We may be resolved to do a certain thing, but when the time comes, we don’t do it. We allow our fears to overwhelm us, and we fail to act. Instead of showing courage, we demonstrate its opposite: cowardice.

Sometimes we may go to the opposite extreme and become “reckless” in our behavior. Recklessness is when we ignore the dangers of a situation. It can in certain cases be seen as heroic—for example, the soldier fearlessly charging into battle, with no care for his own safety. However, recklessness is more commonly regarded as a negative—this same soldier may endanger his fellow soldiers, or get himself killed for no reason. Recklessness can also mean ignoring the safety of others, such as “reckless driving”. This type of recklessness is almost always looked down on. Recklessness is a result of self-centered stubbornness, of not listening to reason, and not considering the consequences of one’s behavior to other people.

Courage, on the other hand, is a measured response in the face of danger. It does not put others in harm’s way for no reason. The one showing courage risks his or her own well-being first, which may inspire others to do the same in the cause of doing what is right. For example, in leading the American civil rights movement, Martin Luther King, Jr. put his own life on the line many times, inspiring countless others to do the same. The same is true of Mohandas K. Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and many others who stood up courageously for freedom.

In the story above, Brendan, too, inspired his schoolmates by his courageous action to stand up against the school bullies. They liked him for what he did. They probably had wanted to stand up to the bullies for a long time themselves!

Questions

1. What is courage?

2. What is cowardice?

3. What is recklessness?

4. Are there kids in your school who pick on others? How do you feel about it?

5. Is it realistic to think that an average kid could stand up for a friend like Brendan did, or is he a special case?

6. What do you think stops people from standing up against something they know is wrong?

7. Have you ever stood up for someone who was being picked on or treated unfairly? If so, what did you learn from that experience?

8. It is said that evil will triumph as long as good people do nothing. Do you agree?

9. Does it sometimes take courage just to be yourself? What does that mean?

Exercise: “Profiles in Courage”

Find five acts of courage by people in the news or by people in your school or community. What do they have in common? What is different about them? What difference did their actions make? What can you learn from these examples?

Reflection Exercise: “Courage and Me”

Think of a time in your life when you showed courage. What was difficult about it? What did it accomplish? How did people respond before you did something? How were they afterwards?

CHAPTER 5: Who Am I?

"You sure you don't want to come, Jan? It'll be fun." Jan's friend Terry pushed her shoulder playfully.

"No, you go on ahead. My mom needs me to do something."

"Oh, okay. Bye, Mrs. Perkins," Terry called out to Jan's mother as she went out the front door.

Next-door neighbors, Jan and Terry had been friends for as long as they could remember. Growing up, they did everything together—playing "house", riding bikes, birthday parties, studying. This Saturday morning they had just spent an hour going over their notes together to prepare for Monday's history exam. (It had been their mothers' suggestion.)

"How did that go?" asked Jan's mother, coming into the living room. "I know it's tough to study on a Saturday morning, but..." She looked into her daughter's face. "What's wrong?"

"I'm worried about Terry," Jan said. "Lately she's been—different. She comes over to study, but she just wants me to give her all the answers. She doesn't want to make any effort herself. She's changed in other ways too. She's got some new friends she hangs out with at the mall all the time. When she's with them, she's like a different person."

"How?"

"She dresses differently, talks differently. She even walks differently."

"Maybe it's just a phase she's going through," said her mother kindly.

Later that day, Jan and her mom went over to the mall to do a little shopping, and they stopped at the food court for a late lunch. While her mom went to order their food, Jan looked for a table. Then, off in the corner, she saw Terry with her new friends. She had changed her clothes from the morning to conform to the style of the group—her clothes showed a lot—a *lot*—of her figure, and she was dripping with jewelry and makeup.



"Hey, Jan!" Terry had seen her. "Come on over."

Jan slowly walked over to their table.

"Hey, Jan, pull up a chair. You know Diana and Michelle, don't you?"

Jan nodded to them. She knew them a little from school. They were known as the school flirts, and they liked to hang around with older boys.

"I—I can't, Terry," Jan said nervously, "I'm with my mother."

"Come on, Jan," Terry persisted, "You can stay for a minute, can't you?"

"No—no, sorry, I really can't," she repeated, backing away.

"Afraid she's going to get spanked by her mama for hanging out with us bad girls," Michelle said. Then the table of girls burst into loud giggles.

Jan tried to smile. Terry tried to smile too. But neither of them really smiled.

Jan went back to sit with her mother. She swallowed hard to get over the bad feelings the encounter with Terry and her friends had brought up in her.

Who was Terry these days? Jan wondered. Not Jan's old friend, that was certain. As she noticed how Terry kept glancing over at her table and how nervous her laughter sounded, Jan wondered if Terry knew who she was anymore either.

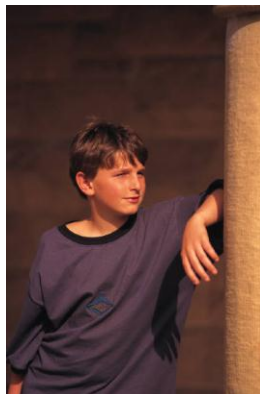
Because they are growing and changing, teenagers may sometimes "try on" different friends, faces, styles, and interests to find out which ones fit—like trying on a new set of clothes. A certain amount of this is natural as teenagers try to find out who they are and who they are becoming.

In this story, Terry is "trying on" a different personality. She is hanging around with girls who are different from the way she has always been. She is being lazy about her schoolwork. She is dressing differently, laughing differently. She is trying to see if this new personality "fits". Yet, as the story implies, Terry isn't really comfortable with the new things she is "trying on", and neither is her old friend, Jan. This new personality doesn't really seem to fit Terry.

Do you try to fit in with people who make you feel uncomfortable and like you are going against yourself? Or do you stay true to your best self?

Even though you are going through many changes, these are changes that will mature your personality—not change it completely. Your body is the same body you have always had—it is just maturing. You are still you, and it is important to stay in touch with that.

The person who is true to his or her best self is a person of *integrity*. Integrity means inner wholeness or inner unity. A person of integrity is one who has a unified personality and character; someone who is the same no matter where he or she is, no matter what the circumstances.



At home we act a certain way, at school another; and with friends at camp a third way. Depending on who we are with and the circumstances, we act a little differently. This is natural to a certain extent. You should behave differently towards your parents than towards your friends or strangers. You are going to act differently in a casual, recreational setting than you do in class. But beneath these differences of behavior, there should be a core identity that is unchanging. It rests on knowing what your values are, so that even in different circumstances you remain true to yourself: a person of integrity.

Life often puts our integrity to the test. The reality of our world is that many times it does not support or encourage what is best for people's development but sometimes actively seeks to lead us down the wrong path. Healthy growth requires having the ability to tell right from wrong and choosing to do what is right.

Most people agree that it is good to be respectful, responsible, honest, fair, caring, trustworthy and hard-working. These are universally known as good values, or virtues. Everyone's best self believes in these values and wants to do what is right.

But do we always do these things? Aren't there times when we are disrespectful towards someone, when we don't fulfill our responsibility, or we don't tell the truth about something that happened? Of course, nobody's perfect, as they say. But if we are in the habit of doing any of these things on a regular basis, we are likely to be suffering from a severe lack of integrity.

Our true or best self knows what is right and wants to do what is right. But to actually do the right thing often takes courage and resisting peer pressure. We need to resist the temptation to do wrong just to please others, or to gratify a selfish part of ourselves. In the end, we have to answer to no one else but to our own true self inside, for that is who we really are.

Questions

1. What does "integrity" mean?

2. How is it linked to the word "integrate"?

3. How do you feel when you hear people say one thing and do something different?

4. Why do you think people do that?

5. In what ways do you benefit from making choices that agree with your values?

6. How does it make you feel to see someone who's not willing to stand up for what they believe?

7. Why is it important to know right from wrong?

8. Why do we often act differently with different people?

9. Say you moved far away from where you live now. How would you like to be remembered by the friends and acquaintances you leave behind? What does this say about how you should live your life?

Exercise: “What I Value”

Look at your hand. Now, using your fingers and thumb to count with, name to yourself the five most important things in your life: family, friends, sports, music, freedom—it's up to you! Now think about why these things are important to you, what they mean to you. These are the things that you value. Now make a fist—you have to hold on tight to your values!

Reflection Exercise: “Fame and Integrity”

Think of ten famous people, both inside and outside your country. Which ones seem to have integrity? Which ones do not seem to have it? What makes one group different from the other? How are they treated and portrayed by the media? Which ones are held up as role models? Which ones are scorned? What kind of impact has each of them had on society and the world, for good or bad?

CHAPTER 6: My Inner World

Julie Magill was the eldest child in a family of five children. There were also two dogs, a cat, two parakeets—and two parents—her mother and father. With all those living creatures around, it could get pretty lively around the Magill household, like on this one Saturday morning.

“Jimmy, let go of that! I was playing with it.”

“But it’s mine, and I never said you could use it!”

While Jimmy and his brother were having their “discussion” in their room (did they have to keep the door open, so the whole house could hear it?) Julie’s two sisters were watching TV in the living room. Her mom was on the phone talking to a neighbor about some upcoming event. And Dad?

“Where’s my new tie? I got it especially so I could wear it today. Has anybody seen it?”

Dad was running around, getting ready for some important meeting and, as usual, couldn’t find what he was looking for.

The two parakeets were merrily chattering away in the dining room, while the cat was nestled in her favorite location under the dining room table, purring softly. How could she sleep with all the noise? There wasn’t a quiet spot in the entire house!

The dogs were lucky. They had the whole back yard to themselves. Julie watched them with envy.

For the past hour, she had been trying to get a book report done that was due on Monday so she could have the rest of the weekend free. It seemed to be getting more impossible by the minute. She felt like screaming, and was about to, when a better idea came into her head. Looking out at the dogs again, she felt they had the right idea. She would go outside, too—away from it all.



Behind their house and beyond the back yard was a small woods that didn’t seem to belong to anybody. On a previous Saturday, when she had also felt like screaming (as a matter of fact she actually did scream that day), she went running out of the house into the woods and came upon a tree whose branches and leaves drooped all the way to the ground, all the way around. It made a snug little room inside. In the coming months, Julie would return there many times—and today was a day she needed to again.

It had become a place where she could shut out the world. In there, she found she would think about things she could nowhere else. Thoughts and feelings about her life, her family and friends, school, her dreams and hopes, came to her in such a way that she could hold them in front of her and sort them out. Everywhere else she went, these things were all jumbled up in her mind and made her feel confused and anxious. Yet here, there was a calmness and serenity that helped her put them in perspective. Here, it all seemed to make more sense. Here, she would feel some kind of happiness inside that she experienced nowhere else. The only way she could explain it in her mind was that there under the willow tree was a place where she could meet “herself”—that is, the person who she really was.

Later, when Julie returned home to almost the same chaos she had left, she smiled to herself. Now she was carrying peace inside of her

When we are very small, most of our attention is taken up with the world around us. We are naturally curious about that world. Everything is new, and we can spend endless hours exploring our surroundings in many ways. Especially after we’re able to crawl and climb, we use this newfound freedom to get into almost everything, from hall closets and kitchen cabinets to our parents’ dresser and the bathroom medicine cabinet. If you ask your mom, she’ll probably tell you that you scared her to death with all your explorations.

When we were little, we liked to spend a lot of time building and creating things, whether it was blocks, drawings, imaginary stores, or hideouts. We liked to play games—indoors and out. Some of us probably made up our own games.



As our consciousness grew, so did our awareness of the world around us. We had experiences involving our family, school, neighborhood, some parts of our town or city, and some other areas we may have visited, perhaps on a school field trip, or with our family. Through our schoolwork and other reading, our knowledge of the world grew.

Our knowledge of the “outer” world continues to grow throughout our lives. But we also have an “inner” world. There is another vast world inside of us. By that, we are not talking about all of our blood vessels, muscles, and other organs of our bodies. We mean the world of our thoughts, feelings, and the ideas swirling around inside of us. Young children do not pay much attention to this world, but during adolescence, this part of our life will occupy more and more of our attention as we try to understand ourselves and the world we live in.

As we explore this inner world, we may sometimes become lost. Our thoughts and feelings may be confusing. In a sense, this is all part of the growing up process; something we all have to go through in order to understand who we are. Although we may go through difficult times, if we don't stop exploring, we will eventually find some real gems within us. This is because there is something special and unique about each one of us. It is said that every person is a genius at something. It is up to us to discover what our special gifts are.

We can think of our inner world like a hidden sanctuary, where no one but ourselves can enter. No matter what is going on around us, it can be a secret place that we can always retreat to and feel peaceful—a refuge from the outer world of constant activity and movement. From our inner world springs the strength not only to cope with the outer world, but to bring our unique contributions to it.

Questions

1. In the story above, why did Julie feel like screaming?

2. Why is the tree in the woods so special to her?

3. Are there times when you feel like Julie and want to escape somewhere?

4. At those times, what do you do?

5. What is an “identity”?

6. Have you ever been in touch with your inner world?

7. What is unique about your identity?

8. Do you have a special place where you can retreat and meet your true self?

Exercise: “Family Movie”

Watch a movie or TV show in which there is a family with several children of various ages. What kinds of interests do the children have? In what way are these interests dependent on their ages? Are the older ones somehow more aware of their inner world than the younger ones? How does each of them handle stressful situations in the family?

Reflection Exercise: “My Inner World”

Think of what was presented in this chapter in relation to you. How would you describe your inner world? Is there some place where you can go to explore this world—for example, a physical place like Julie’s tree, or perhaps a diary/journal? Is there a particular time of day when you can be alone with your thoughts—just before going to bed, or early in the morning, before anyone else wakes up? If not, try finding a time and a place where you can go to explore this world.

CHAPTER 7: Going Nowhere Fast

“Jimmy, c’mon, get up now! It’s a quarter to seven. You’ve got a half-hour to wash up, get dressed, eat some breakfast, and get out the door and catch your bus. You know the bus driver won’t wait.”

So begins the morning ritual of Jimmy Snyder, a just-turned teenager. Some days are better than others, but they generally follow the same pattern: His mom knocks on his door after his alarm clock fails to stir him, though it is loud enough to wake her, Jimmy's dad, and his two sisters! Jimmy lets out a few muffled grunts. His mom goes downstairs to start breakfast. Ten minutes later, she comes back up the stairs and stands outside his door. Hearing nothing within, she bangs and shouts a little louder. A few more grunts and some shuffling are the responses from Jimmy. She goes back downstairs, finishes making breakfast, and heads upstairs one more time. With five minutes until the bus comes, she pounds heavily and screams at Jimmy to get moving. Four and a half minutes later, his door flies open, and Jimmy gallops down the stairs and out the door. He is last seen running down the road, shirt-tail flying and shoes untied, with or without socks. Sometimes he actually catches the bus.

At school, the pattern continues. Jimmy is late for nearly every class, coming in several minutes after the bell rings. He often has forgotten his homework, usually because he didn’t bother to write the assignments down. Back at home, if he does happen to remember that he has homework, he can’t remember what it is. Then he has to call a classmate to find it out, but often he can’t be bothered to make the effort.

After school, he hangs out with his friends, either at a local store or over at one of their houses—one without anyone else home so they can have the run of the place, eating out of the fridge and playing video games, watching TV, or playing on the internet. When they get tired of this, Jimmy finally comes home, usually too late for dinner. He grabs what he can out of the refrigerator, and he spends the rest of the evening either watching television or playing computer games. Towards midnight he finally gets to bed.



The above story is an extreme, although not uncommon, example of a person who has a problem disciplining himself. Jimmy doesn’t seem to live much beyond the moment. He drifts from one thing to another without ever investing himself seriously in anything. He has no particular ambitions and lives passively, just letting things happen to him. He avoids making

commitments, except to his small group of friends to do fun things together. He probably does not have a very high opinion of himself. Deep inside, he probably believes that he is not capable of accomplishing much and, because of this, he is not motivated to work to improve himself in any area. Generally speaking, he does not expect much out of life. Jimmy would rather just get what he can out of the moment, even if it does not particularly bring him much joy.

Mind and body

Self-discipline involves the relationship between our mind and body. Which one is in control? In other words, do we "eat to live" or "live to eat"? Are we primarily concerned with satisfying our body's desires, or do we live for something greater?

If we simply eat when we are hungry, go to sleep when we are tired, and always seek comfort, we haven't developed much beyond the stage we were at when we were very young. As small children, we were naturally immature and self-centered, with limited control over our bodies. When we were hungry, tired or cold, we just cried until we were fed, rocked to sleep, or made warm and comfortable. We wanted our mommies, and we wanted them right away—to serve us and make us happy. We could really set up a howl, even in the middle of the night, in order to get our way. If you've lived with a baby, you know!



However, that way of life is not acceptable beyond a certain point. Can you imagine at your age waking up in the middle of the night and howling for your mother to feed you—or just falling asleep at the dining room table to be carried to bed? Part of growing up is learning to control our bodies' needs and desires.

Our body is naturally concerned with satisfying itself. It's wired that way in order to survive. Yet we can't allow it to dominate us. If we do, we end up becoming self-centered people whose minds revolve only around our own needs and desires—like babies.

Feeding the mind

In the story above, part of Jimmy's problem is his weak mind. We cannot dominate our bodies unless our minds are strong enough to do so. We easily understand the idea of feeding our bodies. We do it every day. But how much do we realize that we also need to feed our minds? Just as our bodies require wholesome food and exercise to be healthy and strong, so do our minds.

We need to ask ourselves: What are we feeding our minds every day? Are we giving them junk food or good, wholesome nourishment? Junk food for the mind is all the things that contribute to self-centered thinking. This includes much of what we see on TV, read in magazines, listen to in modern music, or find on the internet. The unfortunate reality is that much of what the media throws at us is not necessarily good for our minds. Just as we can get into the habit of feeding our bodies junk food to the point of addiction, so can our minds become addicted to these kinds of unhealthy influences.

Jimmy is a person who has allowed his mind to become addicted to such influences. He turns his mind off to those things that could help him to grow and develop, like studying. He has convinced himself that school is boring, his teachers are stupid, and that his parents don't care about him. He fails to see and take advantage of the many opportunities around him, which, if he took advantage of them, would make his life more interesting and joyful. Depending on where he lives, outside of the school curriculum, he could get involved in a drama club, run for class officer, try out for a sports team, work out at the local gym, or do some kind of community service. He could take up the guitar, or get a part-time job that could teach him valuable skills for the future and provide him with pocket money and savings.

Sadly, Jimmy does none of these things. The only thing holding him back is his own mind—a mind that he has allowed to be filled with all kinds of junk. Such a weakened mind is no match for a young body full of desires of its own. He is setting a pattern for himself that, unless he somehow finds the motivation to change, will finally lead him to nowhere.

Questions

1. What is your definition of “self-discipline”?

2. In the story, why do you think Jimmy is the way he is?

3. What kind of future is Jimmy building for himself?

4. Do you think it's the kind of future he really wants?

5. What kind of struggles do you have to control your body?

6. What is the difference between a weak mind and a strong mind?

7. What are you feeding your mind every day?

8. Do you think you are addicted to anything?

9. What kinds of activities could you get involved in that would help you to grow and develop in healthy ways?

Exercise: “A New Jimmy”

Reread the story at the beginning of the chapter. Now try to rewrite the story with a new and improved Jimmy. How does he get up in the morning? What does he do at school? After school? What are his eating and sleeping habits? What are his plans for the future?

Reflection Exercise: “A Day in My Life”

One aspect of self-discipline is learning to create and follow a schedule. Try the following experiment: Make a schedule involving the following activities and see if you can follow it for one day.

Activity	On time/accomplished?	Why or why not?
Wake up		
Breakfast		
Leave for school		
On time for classes		
Classroom work		
After school activity		
Homework		
Dinner		
Time with family		
Bedtime		

Once you are good at keeping your daily schedule, try to make and keep a weekly schedule.

When you succeed in keeping your schedule, how do you feel? Does it do anything for your self-image? Your energy? Your hopes for the future? In what ways?

CHAPTER 8: The Dark Horse

David and William were in a heated battle for student body president. Each of them had his supporters. The main thing they had to do was to convince the remaining undecided voters to cast their ballots for them. It seemed most of the girls were undecided.

David was a good athlete and a handsome boy. He always beat everyone on the playground, scoring the most points in basketball and hitting the most home runs in baseball. He was good, and he knew it. He liked to wear shirts that showed his muscles, and he had a way of tilting his head so that his hair fell over one eye as he grinned. Girls thrilled to the sight.

David was the leader of a group of strong guys who kept younger students in line by threatening to use their greater strength against them. This was what David called "strong leadership". The words "Strong Leadership" were on all his campaign posters.



His other campaign strategy was to make sure each and every undecided girl got a signed picture of his handsome face with his head tilted, hair falling over his eye, as he grinned.

"They'll think I'm looking right at them," he chuckled. "Ready to ask them out on a date! Then they'll vote for me!"

His opponent, William, was very different. William was only fair at sports, but he enjoyed them and was known as a "team player." He was not as handsome as David, and he wore glasses. Some of the girls said he reminded them of Harry Potter, but he did not take them seriously on that. He liked to read, and he did well in all his classes. He was thoughtful, polite, and considerate of others.

William's main issue in the campaign was that he wanted to make the school a more caring place to be.

"As students, I think we need to show more respect for one another," William said in his final speech before the vote. "Especially we older students should show a good example for the younger ones. We should feel like we're their older brothers and sisters and help take care of them. I know that some of them actually feel a little afraid of some of the bigger kids."

William made a proposal that, once a week, a class period be set aside so that the older students could be paired up with the younger ones as "reading buddies" where either the older one would read a story to the younger one or help the younger one with his or her reading.

David and his friends made fun of that idea, hooting at William and calling him a weakling. A lot of the girls looked thoughtful, though.

On the final day of the campaign David doubled his efforts to flirt with all the girls. William spent the day presenting a schedule he had made with the help of the faculty to show how his "reading buddy" idea could work.

"The girls seem to be the 'swing vote,'" a teacher noted.

David told his friends, "Then I'm sure to win."

When the votes were counted, though, William won. The faculty said he was "the dark horse"—meaning the not-so-famous one who got over the finish line first, even though no one had expected him to win. It turned out that the girls, many of whom had younger brothers and sisters in the school, liked the idea of a caring school community and the "reading buddies" program.



There is an old saying, "Pride goes before a fall." Sometimes when we are most sure of ourselves, that is just when we fall down, as if life wants to teach us a lesson in humility. David got a lesson in humility in the above story.

The word "humility" comes from "humus", which is decomposed plant and animal matter. It is a reminder that we all fade away and die someday, and that our youth and beauty ultimately end with old age and decay. No matter how much money we make, how many things we buy and own, what position or power we obtain, or how many degrees we earn, we all come to the same end. Such a thought should humble us, for in this sense, we are all equal.

Unfortunately, in our world there are people who for some reason feel they are better than others. They get their sense of value from this, instead of being confident in their value as human beings without having to compare themselves to anyone else. By living this way and adopting this kind of attitude, they become what we call "arrogant" or "prideful".

David in the story was like this. Because he had some skills, strengths, and gifts, he thought he was better than other people, especially William.

Such people are highly concerned with promoting themselves rather than being concerned with the greater good. They twist everything so as to present themselves in the best possible light, no matter what the truth is. They live in a false world in which they are the center of everything. They convince themselves of their own importance and fail to see how they are affecting those around them.

Humility, on the other hand, requires a sense of perspective from outside of oneself—an ability to see oneself and others objectively. True humility is equated with modesty and self-denial. Humble people are not concerned with promoting themselves, but with the greater good. People of humility, even when they do good things for others, do not call attention to themselves. Instead, they give credit and praise to the actions of others.

In the story, William was a humble person. He did not believe the girls when they compared him to Harry Potter, and he certainly didn't let it make him conceited. He wasn't concerned with the glory of winning the election—he wanted to make the school a better place for others, especially the younger students. He did not spend his time promoting himself—he spent time promoting a program he thought would help the school.

Truly humble people are so secure in their own value that they do not feel the need to promote themselves or draw attention to themselves. They are not afraid to do humble tasks and do not consider any work beneath them, because they know that this is not a reflection of their worth. Humble people are able to admit their own defects. They do not pretend to be something they are not. They are able to praise the good qualities in others without fear of lessening themselves. They recognize that while in some respects they possess talents and abilities others do not have, others possess different qualities which they do not have.

This perspective is more in keeping with the true nature of things. Everyone has both strengths and weaknesses. Humble people understand both their own value and the value of others.

We can say that humility is a moderating virtue, as opposed to pride, which causes us to emphasize excessively our actual strengths and abilities. In humility we recognize our limitations and do not pretend to be more than we really are. We see our gifts and strengths in proper perspective.

Because we are all prone to being too proud of ourselves at times, sometimes we need a good dose of humility to bring us down to earth and remind us that our true value comes not from lording it over others, but by doing good works for others.

Questions

1. What does it mean to be humble?

2. In what sense are we all equal?

3. What does it mean to be arrogant or prideful?

4. In what way do arrogant people deceive themselves?

5. Why is true humility equated with modesty and self-denial?

6. Why do humble people tend to praise and give credit to others?

7. Why is the perspective of a humble person closer to reality than that of an arrogant one?

8. Why may arrogant people consider certain activities to be beneath them?

9. Where does our value really come from?

Exercise: “School Election”

In this chapter’s story, David and William were competing for student body president. Who would you vote for? Why? Which candidate was more humble? Which was more arrogant? What evidences are there of humility and arrogance? Which quality makes a candidate more attractive? Why?

Reflection Exercise: “Humble or Proudful Me”

In view of the content of this chapter, conduct a self-evaluation: Where are you on the humility/pride scale? Do you tend to show more humble personal characteristics (concern for the greater good over personal advancement, ability to admit mistakes and faults, ability to credit and praise others, willingness to serve others) than proudful ones? Where do you see room for self-improvement? Choose one area where you can be more humble and work on it.

CHAPTER 9: Could I Have Been Wrong?

There is a boy named Victor in our class that I just couldn't stand. I always thought of him as selfish and arrogant. He's always showing off how clever he is. Like the other day...

"Hi, Jane, how'd you do on the Shakespeare essay?" he said with that innocent smile of his. I told him I got an 84.

And him? "Oh, I got a 91. It really surprised me."

Yeah, right, I thought. Go ahead and rub it in. Because of stuff like that, I usually just tried to ignore the guy. I really didn't like him very much.

What I could never understand, though, was why many of my classmates liked him. What did they see in this guy? I wondered, without really wanting to know. Couldn't they see through him?

Because we were in the same classes, it was really hard to avoid him, no matter how much I tried.

One morning, he came up to me and said, "Hey, Jane, do you want to come with me this afternoon to see Mrs. Whittaker? You were always one of her favorite students."

I looked at him over my shoulder with my best disdainful look. "Why would I want to go see her? She's old and retired. I had enough of her in sixth grade."

Before he could say another word, I turned on my heel and walked off. That'll teach him, I thought.

Later at lunch, my best friend, Rhonda, sat down next to me.

"What's wrong with you, Jane? Why do you treat Victor that way—like he's dirt or something? What did he ever do to you?"

"What does he do?" I repeated, turning towards her. "You see the way he treats me. He thinks he's so smart."

"What I see is that he always goes out of his way to talk to you, which is amazing considering the way you treat him. And it's not because he has a crush on you. It's because he respects you."

I shook my head. "He just wants to brag about his good grades to me because he knows I'm second best in the class compared to him."

Rhonda shook her head. "I don't think so. He always says he thinks you're just as smart as him. This morning, I saw you brush him off when he invited you to go see Mrs. Whittaker. Why were you so rude?"

"Why would I want to go see her?" I countered.

"Didn't you hear she fell and broke her leg a couple of weeks ago? Since then, Victor's been going there practically every day to bring her food and other things she needs."



I was dumbstruck. I didn't know that. Victor would be that nice to someone? Victor—the one I always thought was flattering the teachers to get his good grades? What was in it for him?

"I don't see anyone else going to help a teacher we all really liked," sniffed Rhonda. "Just Victor—the guy you think is so selfish and arrogant."

"I didn't know," was all I could say.

All that afternoon, I couldn't stop thinking about the way I had been treating Victor. After talking to Rhonda, I began to see him in a completely different light. I realized that I had been misinterpreting his words and actions. He wasn't the problem; I was.

When the bell rang to let school out, I stood in the hallway outside the classroom to wait for Victor. As he came out, I called him over.

"Victor," I began sheepishly. "I'm really sorry for the way I've been treating you. I had you all wrong. If your invitation is still open, I would love to visit Mrs. Whittaker with you."

Victor smiled. "That would make her really happy. And it would make me really happy too."

Treating people with respect helps us get along with each other, avoid and resolve conflicts, and create a positive social climate. Respectful behavior means treating others with civility and courtesy, accepting personal differences, listening to what others have to say, and refraining from ridiculing, embarrassing, or hurting others.

It also means giving others the benefit of the doubt, meaning that we don't judge them harshly or assume that we know all about them, the way Jane did to Victor.

Respect is one of the most basic values governing human life. Even gang members and street people are concerned with being treated with respect.

At the same time, it is amazing how disrespectful people often are towards one another. We live in a world that tends to teach us disrespect rather than respect for others. In many TV shows, for example, characters routinely treat each other disrespectfully as if it were normal, making each other the butt of jokes. On these shows, children show disrespect towards their parents, spouses disrespect each other, and so do so-called friends. Sometimes, it seems that we treat strangers better than we do those whom we know and supposedly love. There is the saying that "familiarity breeds contempt". In other words, the better we know someone, the more we think it gives us permission to treat him or her disrespectfully.



It should be that the more we know someone, the more we would value and respect him or her. In reality, however, sometimes the more we get to know someone, the less we respect and value them because we come to see their faults. If, however, we use knowing their faults as an excuse to show disrespect, it only leads to a downward spiral in human behavior, from disrespect to hostility and perhaps violence.

We should never use other people's behavior as an excuse for our own bad behavior. No matter how others act, we should always treat others with respect.

Respectful behavior follows the Golden Rule: "Treat others as you want to be treated." Next time you feel like calling someone a name, making fun of someone, or hurting someone in some way, ask yourself, "Would I want to be treated that way?" If we let the Golden Rule be the guide for our behavior, we will find ourselves naturally treating others with more respect. They will most likely respond by treating us more respectfully, too.



How about when we disagree with someone? After all, we can't all think or feel the same way, can we? Disagreements turn into arguments, which can then turn into hostile conflicts. What can we do to avoid these kinds of situations?

There is a way to disagree respectfully. We can listen to, respect, and value another person's opinion without necessarily agreeing with him or her. The problem is not with the difference of opinion; the problem lies with our basic attitudes towards one another. Rather than trying to understand the other person's viewpoint, we often get caught up in defending our own viewpoint. We think we are right, they are wrong, and that's all there is to it. Then there can be no real discussion and no resolution. This is why disagreements often get "resolved" through fighting. However, the resolution is not real because of the bad feeling that remains. True resolution comes only when both sides come to respect each other.

Respect is the basis of a free, democratic society, which works on the premise, "We agree to disagree. Let's work out our differences peacefully." Democracy can only thrive when there is basic mutual respect among people. Each person has a right to his or her opinion, whether we agree with it or not: "one person, one vote." Each person's voice counts equally, no matter what his or her station in life, position, social class, or wealth. Democracy supports the idea that every person has equal value and thus has the right to vote. What is more, when the majority of people votes one way, the rest must accept and respect that majority vote, without resorting to violence to get their way instead.

Sometimes, because of the way a person acts, it may be difficult to respect him or her. To show respect does not mean to approve of or accept someone's bad behavior. It simply means that we have decided not to allow someone else's behavior to cause us to engage in bad behavior ourselves. It shows that we have too much self-respect to do wrong even to those who wrong us.

Questions

1. What does it mean to show respect?

2. What does the saying “familiarity breeds contempt” mean?

3. What is the Golden Rule? Why do you think it is called that?

4. Is it possible to disagree respectfully? Give an example.

5. Do you consider yourself a respectful person? Why, or why not? In what ways do you show respect to others?

6. What are the benefits of people treating each other with respect?

7. How do you feel if you treat someone with respect, and that person responds with rudeness? What should you do?

8. If someone treats you badly, do you have the right to treat him or her badly in return?

9. What can you do to make this a more respectful world?

Exercise: “Do’s and Don’ts”

Make a list of do’s and don’ts for being a respectful person. What happens when people live in accordance with these guidelines? What happens when they don’t? In what ways does respectful and disrespectful behavior affect our community and society?

Do's _____

Don't's _____

Reflection Exercise: “Respectful Me”

A. Think about a time when you were disrespectful to someone. Why did it happen? Was it the right thing to do? What were the consequences? How did it make the other person feel? What did you learn from the experience?

B. Think of three things you could do to be a more respectful person. How would that affect your relationships with others? How does it benefit you to be a respectful person?

CHAPTER 10: Finding Your Way Home

Joe had gone into the forest for a few minutes peace away from his many brothers and sisters. The sunlight streaming onto the forest floor, the soft crack of branches swaying in the summer breeze, the sounds of birdsong and rippling creeks, calmed him down. He took a deep breath, swung around a slender tree trunk as if it were a partner in a dance, and smiled.

Then his smile faded. Which direction was his house in? He started off one way, thinking it was right. Nothing looked familiar. Had he passed that tree on the way in? What about that rock? He didn't remember seeing that. Within a half hour, he was hopelessly lost in a forest that went on for miles—a forest that was populated with bears, deer—and hunters.

Joe slumped against a giant oak tree, trying to think what to do. As he sat there, he noticed the bulge in his front pants pocket. It was a compass his dad had given him on his birthday last week. He'd stuffed it in his pocket and forgotten about it. Now it was just the thing he needed. Joe knew that the needle of a compass always points north, and he knew there was a Speedy Chek grocery store just north of the forest. If he could get to that, he could find his way home.

With renewed energy, Joe set off. Whistling, he ran down hills, climbed rocks, and fought his way through some thick brush, always keeping an eye on the compass. Finally, through the trees, he could see the bright red-and-green neon sign of the Speedy Chek. He was almost home.

Have you ever had an experience like Joe's? It can be very frightening. Luckily for Joe, he had a compass!



As we pass through life, sometimes we will find ourselves in situations where we may not be sure of the right thing to do or the right path to take. During those times, we may feel lost and unsure, just like Joe did in the forest.

Fortunately, we have a built-in compass for just such situations. It's called our conscience, and it works to point us in the right direction.

Probably when you were younger you saw the Disney movie *Pinocchio*. Do you remember Jiminy Cricket? He plays the role of Pinocchio's conscience, sitting on his shoulder and whispering into his ear what is right to do. Unfortunately, Pinocchio doesn't always listen to Jiminy, and then he gets himself into trouble.

This is an important point to remember. We all have a conscience, but we don't necessarily listen to it. That's when we make mistakes, do bad things, and get into trouble. Can you hear your conscience talking to you sometimes? How does it make you feel? Does it "bother" you? Do you have a Jiminy Cricket in your life, who reminds you what's right and wrong?

For children, their parents play the role of the conscience: "Time to stop watching TV and study for your test," "Please clean up your room before you go out," and "I have to go to a meeting—I need you to take care of your baby brother tonight." Your parents are trying to get you to do the right thing, aren't they? Sometimes you might feel they do it too much, and you may wish they would get "off your back." Yet inside, we know they are right, and that they say these things to us because they care. They want us to grow up to be good and responsible people, so we can be happy as adults.

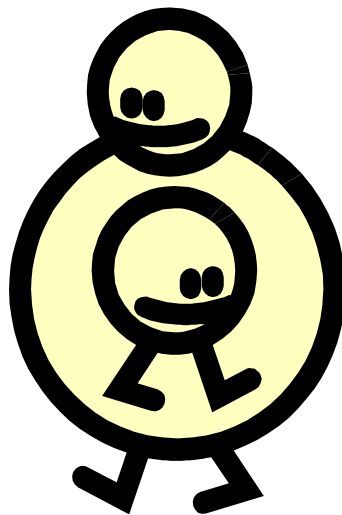
Eventually, our parents' words become part of our thinking. When we start hearing these words inside ourselves, we know that our consciences are alive and well.

Right and wrong

The conscience is that part of ourselves that tells us the difference between right and wrong. Although sometimes it's not easy to listen to our conscience, we should be very grateful that we have one.

Just think if people did not have consciences—in other words, no sense of right and wrong. In such a society we would be governed by the "law of the jungle" or "might makes right." There would be no justice or fairness. People would do whatever they could get away with.

What really protects you when you walk down the street alone is that most people listen to their consciences and do not rob or attack but try to live in peace with others. The police cannot be everywhere. Without the power of the human conscience, society would be in complete chaos. The conscience is like a law within, urging people to do right and not wrong.



Some people say, "How can we know what is right and what is wrong? What's right to one person is wrong to another." Even so, there is a lot of agreement about right and wrong. There is a generally accepted standard that acting unselfishly is good, while acting selfishly is bad. For example, everyone praises a person who leaps into a street full of traffic to rescue a child, risking himself for the child's safety. No one would praise someone who shrugged and said, "Too bad for the kid. Let her get run over as long as I'm safe." If you listen to your conscience, you will find that it encourages you to be unselfish, to act for the benefit of others, to share and to help, even at a sacrifice to yourself.

Guilt

Do you sometimes feel guilty when you've done something wrong? It's a painful feeling, isn't it? Nobody likes to feel guilty, because it hurts. At the same time, it is a good thing that we have the capability of feeling guilt, as it is a sign of an active conscience.

Think of it this way: What if you had no nerve endings in your fingers, so you had no sense of pain? If you put your hand over a stove burner, you wouldn't feel anything. The same if you put your hand in icy water, pricked it with a pin, or even cut it with a knife. No pain. It sounds nice, doesn't it? But it would be very dangerous. Feeling pain protects us from further hurting ourselves. It warns us of danger. Without it, we could seriously damage ourselves—even die.

Guilt performs a similar function. It is a warning to us that we have done something wrong, which is injurious to us and to others. If we never felt guilty about anything, we would end up doing all kinds of bad things. Although we may not like the feeling, guilt alerts us to what we have done wrong, so that we can take steps to make it right.

Developing our conscience

We can be thankful we have a conscience. But we have to take care of it to help it to develop properly. We have to be careful not to allow it to be corrupted, which can happen if we associate with people who do bad things, or if our minds are full of bad ideas. In the past, many people justified slavery in America by saying that black people were meant to be slaves. In Nazi Germany, normally decent people engaged in horrible acts of torture and killing of Jews under the belief they were doing good for society. These people's consciences were corrupted by bad ideas. People with more highly developed consciences had to fight against these wrongs and end the injustices.

We can come to believe that smoking, drinking, doing drugs, and having casual sexual relationships are all okay, especially if we associate with people who think and say they are. These things may not seem selfish or harmful, or else we might think we are only hurting ourselves by doing them. Yet that is not true. All these things affect and involve other people in a negative way: Second-hand smoke is more dangerous to other people than the smoke you take in yourself. Drunken drivers kill many innocent people, including children, and almost all crime involves alcohol in some way. Drugs are connected to murderous crime networks, which you support when you use them. Casual sexual relationships always involve another person and their mental, emotional, and physical well-being—as well as having the potential to affect a child born of the relationship. These things are selfish and harmful, even if some people say they aren't.

Our consciences need to be educated in order to work well as guides. In the end the conscience is as strong as the ideas we listen to and believe in, and the virtues we practice. If we feed our minds with high ideals and act according to those ideals, our consciences will become stronger and stronger, serving as better and more accurate guides in the forest of life.

Questions

1. Have you ever had an experience like Joe's in the story? If so, what did it feel like?

2. What is conscience?

3. Can you hear your conscience talking to you sometimes?

4. How does it make you feel? Does it “bother” you?

5. Do you have a Jiminy Cricket in your life who reminds you of what's right and wrong?

6. When are you aware of your conscience?

7. In what ways do your parents act as your conscience?

8. What would your life be like if you had no conscience?

9. What is guilt? Is it good or bad? Explain.

10. What is the best way to take care of your conscience?

Exercise: “Conscience and Consequences”

Think of a time when you followed your conscience and another time when you did not. What were the differences in results in these two occasions—both externally and internally? How did you feel afterward? What was a better experience?

When I followed:

When I didn't follow:

Reflection Exercise: “Imagine Yourself”

Imagine yourself in a situation where you are faced with a difficult choice. For example:

- Your best friend asks you to tell her the answers on a science test
- You promise your friend you will help him after school with his homework, but then suddenly you are invited out for some ice cream with someone else
- You overhear some of your classmates speaking badly about one of your friends behind her back

Knowing yourself, what would you do in these situations? Describe the process by which you arrive at your decision. Is there a real, internal struggle, or is it pretty clear from the beginning what you would do? How do you think you would feel after putting your decisions, whatever they are, into practice?

CHAPTER 11: Billy Blows It

“So I’ll see you on Monday, then,” said Billy.

“Sure thing. I’ll give you a call Sunday night just to check with you about the project,” Robert replied.

“All right. Talk to you then.”

Billy sped off on his bike towards home, while Robert boarded the bus that would take him to his house across town. Although they did not know each other very well, their teacher had paired Robert and Billy up for a science experiment they were to perform in front of the class on Monday. The two had agreed that Robert would get all the materials necessary for the experiment, while Billy would do the background research. That would require going on the Internet and probably making a trip to the local library. Billy figured he could do both on Saturday and have Sunday free to play with his friends.

During breakfast the next morning, Billy got a call from his best friend, Fred.

“Hey, Billy, my dad’s going to take me and some friends on an overnight camping trip. You want to come?”

Billy loved camping. This would be the first chance to go this year. He really didn’t want to miss it. But then there was this science project to do.

“Well?” said Fred impatiently.

“I don’t know, Fred. I have a science project...” Billy said hesitantly. He so much wanted to go.

“You can do it when you get back Sunday afternoon,” Fred assured him.

That was all Billy needed to hear. “When are you leaving?”



Not knowing about the project, Billy’s parents gave their permission. As expected, Billy had a great time camping, hiking, and fishing with the other boys. Billy caught three fish—more than he ever had before. He couldn’t wait to get home and show them to his parents. He finally got back home about five o’clock Sunday afternoon. His parents were really proud of his catching three fish and decided to cook them for dinner. Billy helped his mom cook the fish. After dinner, the whole family sat up to watch a movie on TV.

In all the excitement, however, Billy had completely forgotten about the science project. After the movie was over, Billy went upstairs to get ready for bed. After getting his pajamas on, he was in the bathroom brushing his teeth when a phone call came for him. With sleep the only thing on his mind after such an active weekend, he picked up the receiver.

“Hi, Billy. It’s Robert. I got everything we need to do the experiment tomorrow morning. Just checking to see how things went on your end.”

Billy froze. The science project! He had not even thought about it since Saturday morning. Now what? What was he going to say to Robert? Seconds went by as Billy’s mind raced from one thought to another in confusion.

“Billy? Are you still there? Billy! What’s the matter?”

Billy said, “Nothing. Everything’s fine. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Billy went downstairs with leaden feet to tell his parents about the project. When he told them, Billy’s parents were furious. They wanted to know why he had not told them he had a science project due on Monday when he had asked to go on the camping trip. They said they couldn’t take him to the library now, even if they wanted to—it was closed.

“How could you be so irresponsible?” his mother wanted to know.

Billy’s mom and dad stayed up late with him that night, searching the Internet for the materials he needed. Because they were all tired and mad at one another, they only got a little information before they all collapsed in bed.

Billy was miserable, dreading tomorrow when he would give the presentation in class, almost completely unprepared. All the joy of the camping trip was eaten away by the knowledge that his parents were mad at him, Robert would be mad at him, and he would get a low grade, which would make his parents even madder. Plus, he wondered if all the kids would laugh at him as he stumbled through a presentation on an experiment he didn’t understand.



How would you like to be in Billy’s shoes? (Have you ever been?) Billy’s responsibility was to take care of his part of the science project, and he didn’t do it. There were unpleasant consequences.

We often think of responsibility as a burden, as something to be avoided. As the story above demonstrates, life offers many opportunities for us to avoid responsibility. We can very easily—and often do—fail in fulfilling our responsibilities. A part of us wants to take the easy way, the fun way.

In other cases, we may not really intend to avoid a responsibility, but because we do not give it the proper priority in our life, that’s what we end up doing. We do the things we want to do first and put off our responsibility until later. But, as we saw in the story, sometimes “later” never comes, either because we forget, or time just runs out. Then we have to pay the price of not having done our responsibility—just like Billy did.

A person who is living this way is not really in control of his or her life. It may seem to be a more exciting and fun way to live, but actually, a person who does so is allowing himself or herself to be controlled by circumstances. Such a person is living for some immediate but short-term enjoyment, not considering long-term happiness. Living for the moment results in, as they say, joy that is “here today, gone tomorrow.” After the event that brought the enjoyment is over, there is nothing left. One is left with a feeling of emptiness—or worse. Everyone around the person may be angry and upset because of the unfulfilled responsibility.

Billy enjoyed the camping trip, the cooking of the fish, and the evening movie with his family. He did not enjoy his parents' anger, having to stay up late to do work, and the idea of getting up in front of the class and talking without knowing what he was talking about.

In an irresponsible way of life, there is no investing of oneself in something significant. There is no taking control of one's life and guiding it in a purposeful direction. We are just living for the next thrill, moment-to-moment. There is no commitment to anything.

A person who lives irresponsibly is not dependable and cannot be trusted. Do you think Robert will trust Billy as a partner in the future? In general, no one will want to be Billy's partner if he acquires a reputation for irresponsibility. Opportunities will not come his way. Rather, Billy will find himself stuck at a certain level from which he cannot free himself unless he changes his ways.

Responsible people do what needs to be done; they fulfill their obligations, are accountable for their actions, use good judgment, and don't let people down. Of course, they enjoy some recreational and relaxing times too. They balance their lives between work and play. Such people feel empowered and energized. Accepting and fulfilling a responsibility gives a person a great feeling of accomplishment and value and makes the enjoyable times even more enjoyable. We feel good about ourselves and feel in control of our lives when we live responsibly.

Living responsibly is the secret to overcoming difficult circumstances, as many have done in history. There are countless examples of people who, by taking responsibility, changed even very negative circumstances around them. They did this by developing their hidden talents and abilities to become people who could contribute something of value to the world around them. Society, in return, gave back to them.

This is the way responsibility works. By behaving responsibly, we come to be trusted, valued, and respected. In a sense, responsibility generates a force that works to elevate us in many ways—spiritually, socially, financially, and politically. When we behave irresponsibly, just the opposite happens. We may gain some temporary benefit, but in the long run, we stay at the same level or go down to a lower level. Responsibility buoys up our lives.

Questions

1. In this chapter's story, in what way did Billy act irresponsibly?

2. If you were Billy, what would you say to Robert on the phone Sunday night?

3. What does responsibility mean to you?

4. In what way is a responsible person more in control of his or her life than an irresponsible person?

5. The text implies that irresponsibility leads to bad results. Do you agree?

6. What does it mean to let someone down? Give an example.

7. How do you think a responsible person feels about him- or herself? How does an irresponsible person feel?

8. Why would more opportunities come to a responsible person than an irresponsible one?

9. What are some of the benefits of being a responsible person?

10. Think of a time when you fulfilled some important responsibility. How did you feel afterwards?

Exercise: “Responsibility and Consequences”

Make a list of character traits for a responsible person. Now do the same for an irresponsible one. Imagine each one's lifestyle, assuming they are classmates. Now imagine the kind of persons they will be ten years from now. What are they doing with their lives? What kind of impact are they making on those around them and on society in general?

[illegible]

Reflection Exercise: “Age and Responsibility”

Think about the relationship between your age and the level of your responsibility. How do responsibilities differ for people your age, five years younger than you, and for adults? How has your sense of responsibility changed as you've grown older? At what age do you think you can be totally responsible and accountable for your actions?

[illegible]

CHAPTER 12: The Best Policy

Angie sat at her back corner desk, toiling over the math test. She had been dreading this day. Every evening for the past week she had prepared for the test with her dad's help, struggling to understand the problems. Now the day had come. The test was just as difficult as she had expected. Math definitely was not her strong point.

She sat back to take a deep breath. As she was gazing nowhere in particular, she suddenly noticed something out of the corner of her eye. Her friend, Debbie, who sat in the next row over from her, was peering at a scrap of paper in the shelf under her desktop. She could clearly see some numbers written on the paper. As Angie sat staring, suddenly her friend noticed her, and shoved the paper into the shelf.

Debbie looked over at her and put her finger to her lips as if she was afraid Angie might say something to the teacher. Without showing any emotions on her face, Angie looked back at her own test and started working again.

Twenty-five minutes later, the bell rang to signal the end of the period. The teacher collected all the tests, and the students poured into the corridor. Debbie hurried out of the room without looking back at Angie, who scurried to try to catch up with her. She finally met up with her at Debbie's locker. Debbie was clearly embarrassed.



“What were you doing back there, Deb?” asked Angie, although she already knew the answer.

“Please don’t say anything to Miss Jensen,” Debbie pleaded. “I can’t stand math. I just wanted to pass the test.”

“Deb,” retorted Angie. “I don’t like math any more than you do, but I don’t think it’s right to cheat.”

“Please, don’t tell,” was all her friend could say. She looked at Angie with beseeching eyes. As her eyes met Debbie’s, Angie looked down. To hold her friend’s gaze meant she would have to either agree to, or reject, her friend’s plea right then and there. She needed time to think. Debbie rushed off.

It was lunch period. Angie shuffled slowly down to the cafeteria. An inner conflict raged within her. If she told Miss Jensen, she would be betraying her friend. If she didn’t, she would be breaking school rules and going against her own beliefs. What to do?

As she descended the stairs to the cafeteria, Angie noticed her math teacher, Miss Jensen, standing at the bottom, talking to one of her classmates. As she approached the bottom step, they finished their conversation, and the student walked off. Miss Jensen turned to Angie.

“Well, Angie, how was the test?” Miss Jensen knew how much Angie struggled with math. Angie responded, “All right, I guess.” Should she tell her about Debbie?

“I know you worked hard to prepare for this test,” her teacher said. “I’m sure you did just fine.”

Miss Jensen began to walk away.

“Miss Jensen?” Angie found herself saying. “There is one thing I have to tell you.”

The teacher turned back around to face Angie. “Yes?”

“It’s about Debbie Hunter. I saw her cheating during the test.”

“It doesn’t surprise me,” Miss Jensen replied. “She cheats on practically every test.”

“Really?” Angie said wide-eyed. “Have you seen her do it?”

“No, but she doesn’t make much effort in class and often doesn’t turn in her homework.

Then, when she does well on a test, I know something’s up. I guess I’ll have to have a conference with her and her mother again.” Miss Jensen shook her head and sighed. “She thinks she’s getting away with something, but all she is doing is hurting herself.”

She looked again at Angie. “Thanks for being honest, Angie. Don’t worry. You’re not betraying your friend; you’re helping her.”



Honesty is one of the most basic values in life. It influences every aspect of our character and is related to many other virtues that we have spoken of, like respect, responsibility, and courage. Whether we choose to be honest or dishonest does something to our character. If we lie, we become liars. If we cheat, we become cheaters. The tragic thing is that when we do these things, we are not only lying to and cheating others: we are also lying to and cheating ourselves. In the end, we are causing ourselves to grow more and more distant from our true selves. We are entrapping ourselves in an identity that is not really us. We are creating a false self that speaks and acts in such a way that harms both others and ourselves.

On the other hand, being honest frees us to be real. Being honest means, first of all, being honest with ourselves, as well as with others. Honest people speak the truth. Because of this, they can be trusted. They can also trust themselves. Speaking the truth grounds us in reality, while those who lie are creating a false reality around them. When lying becomes a habit, the person gets to the point where he no longer knows what is real and what is not, what is true and what is not true, and what is right and what is wrong. Everything becomes cloudy.

In the story above, Debbie ends up running away from her friend. Her behavior has affected her relationship with her friend, Angie. She is afraid to face Angie because part of her knows that what she did was wrong. However, she is unable to stop herself, because lying and cheating have become such habits with her.

That day, Angie learned something about Debbie that she had not known before. The result is likely to be that Angie will trust and respect her friend less from now on. Their relationship will weaken, and they may even drift completely apart. However, if Debbie takes responsibility for her bad behavior and sincerely tries to change herself, their friendship can be saved and strengthened.

On her part, Angie must deal with her own struggle between loyalty to her friend and telling the truth. It is a real dilemma between two conflicting values. Loyalty is also a good character trait to have, but we see here that it must be weighed against other, perhaps more important, values.

In the end, Angie follows her conscience and tells her teacher what she saw Debbie doing. We see, however, that Miss Jenkins is already well aware of such behavior on Debbie's part. From this, we can understand that dishonest people sometimes end up just fooling themselves. Their dishonesty creates for them a certain reputation that others can clearly see.

Although it was difficult to do, Angie made the right choice in telling her teacher about her friend. Debbie may feel that Angie has betrayed her, but a real friend does not allow their friends to do things that are wrong. To do so would only convince the offender that it's okay to keep doing wrong. By standing by her beliefs, Angie makes Debbie face herself. It gives Debbie a chance to admit her mistake to someone and to try to change. The decision, of course, will finally be Debbie's to make—if she has the courage to do so.

In this chapter, we learn that honest people have stronger, better relationships with others. Their honesty makes them better people and it makes our world a better place. Truly, honesty is the best policy.

Questions

1. Do you consider yourself an honest person?

2. What is your definition of an honest person?

3. How does it feel to be lied to?

4. How does it feel to be cheated?

5. Is cheating just another form of lying? In what way?

6. What would you do if you saw someone drop a hundred dollar bill without realizing it?

7. People often justify their dishonesty by saying that many people cheat and lie. What do you think of this kind of reasoning?

8. If you thought that eventually all of your actions would be written about in the newspapers and shown on TV, would that keep you honest?

9. Does lying destroy relationships?

10. Does being honest make life easier?

Exercise: “Honesty and Dishonesty”

Keep a list of all the examples of honesty and dishonesty that you encounter during the course of one week, including your own behavior. Observe also the entertainment media, and the way the news is reported. What are some of the excuses people give for lying and cheating? Are they valid? Try to explain what’s wrong with each of them. What did you learn about yourself through this exercise?

Reflection Exercise: “True Confessions”

Think about a time when you were dishonest; that is, when you lied or cheated. How did it happen? Did you try to justify your behavior? How did you feel about what you did afterwards? Did the situation affect any of your relationships? Did it cause any problems for you? How do you feel about it now? What did you learn from it?

CHAPTER 13: Mike and the Model Airplane

Mike was a seventh-grader who was always enthusiastic about everything he did. Sometimes, however, he was a little too enthusiastic, and he did not take the time to think things out. Instead, he just bulldozed ahead. Take the example of the model airplane he bought with his birthday money...

"Look at this, Pete!" Mike said, practically shouting at his friend two feet away. "Isn't she a beauty!"

Pete looked at the picture of the airplane on the box. "Looks nice, Mike. But do you have the patience for this? It looks awfully complicated."

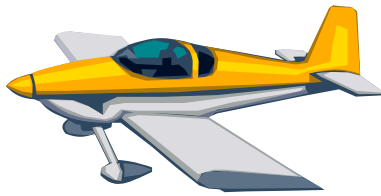
"My dad said the same thing, but I know what I'm doing. No problem. I'll have this whipped up in no time. Just watch me."

With that, Mike ripped open the box, sending pieces flying everywhere, including a few under his bed. There were all kinds of items under Mike's bed—some of which he hadn't seen for months.

"Darn it. Well, I'll look for those later when I need them. Okay, here's the instruction booklet."

The booklet was ten pages long. Mike started reading it slowly.

"It says here to start with the fuselage. Where's that?"



"Wasn't that one of the pieces that went under the bed?" Pete asked helpfully.

Mike dove under the bed and started pulling things out, left and right. He found other pieces of the plane, but no fuselage.

"Anyway, who says we have to start with that? Who needs these instructions anyway? I can figure it out myself. Everything's pretty obvious: the wings go on the side, the pilot in the front, the tail in the back, the wheels underneath..."

Mike began gluing everything together the way he thought it should go. Meanwhile, Pete found the fuselage for him. Things went pretty smooth at the beginning, since Mike started with the obvious things—wings, tail, pilot, wheels, etc. After a while, he came upon the less obvious ones and just stuck them on somewhere the best he could by following the picture on the box. In the end, he just threw away the ones that didn't seem to matter, so he could finish the plane.

"There!" he exclaimed, holding up the plane for Pete to admire. It didn't look exactly like the plane on the box, but Mike thought it was close enough.

"Mike," Pete said, looking at the instruction booklet. "It says here to wait a couple of hours for the glue to dry before playing with it."

"A couple of hours? Mike cried incredulously. "I can't wait that long. Thirty minutes should be long enough. Let's go downstairs and get a bite to eat while we're waiting."

Twenty-five minutes later, the boys came back up to Mike's room.

“So, let’s try her out,” Mike said, rushing over to pick up the plane. After one swoop through the air, both the wings fell off.

“Shoot!” he cried.

As he set the plane on his desk, both wheels fell off.

“What kind of a model is this?” Mike shouted. “I’m taking this back!”

We have all heard the saying "haste makes waste". It means that when we act too quickly, we are more likely to make mistakes and end up with poor results. We certainly see that happening in the story above. Mike's plane ended up a waste of time and money because he didn't have the patience to put it together right.

The same applies in many aspects of life. Most of us have experienced that if you go too fast and don’t check your work properly, you are more likely to make mistakes, whether in math, spelling, or taking a test. The results that we end up with when we do things carelessly are often useless and sometimes costly.

Doing things well and carefully has to do with patience. Yet, in today’s world, patience seems to be in short supply. We live in an age of instant gratification, where we expect immediate results. We have busy schedules and don’t feel that we have the time to wait for things. We run from one thing to another, trying to pack into our schedules as much as we can. Patience gets left by the wayside.

We can learn a lot about patience from nature. While our man-made world is busy, busy, busy, the natural world is a study in patience. Take a spider’s life, for instance. Have you ever watched a spider spin a web? It spins a strand of silk around some objects to anchor the web, then makes spokes to the center. Then, painstakingly, it goes around in circles until the web is complete. The same is true of birds building their nests. They go about their task with great patience and focus, collecting hundreds of twigs and grass, cementing them together with mud until they are finished.



Nature also teaches us about patience in the way predators hunt their prey. The spider waits for its victim to get caught in its web, then moves in for the kill. An alligator or a snake will wait for long periods of time for the right moment to move in on prey. A tiger will carefully stalk its prey, circling in as closely as possible, and then suddenly charge the target from behind.

In human society, we also can find many examples of patience in the lives of people of accomplishment. We find it in the American inventor Thomas Edison, who persevered through a thousand failures until he found the proper filament to create the first light bulb. We see it in Nelson Mandela of South Africa, who endured twenty-nine years in prison before he emerged as a leading advocate for justice in his country.

These examples teach us that to accomplish something, we must be patient. Patience requires self-control and the ability not to be distracted by things that are more attractive in the moment.

We may never become an Edison or a Mandela, but there are many ways we can practice patience in our own daily lives: as we wait in a line in a store, wait for the bathroom, telephone, or dinner to be served at home, or by not interrupting two people who are talking together. We need to practice patience when we are in pursuit of a goal. If we can keep a positive attitude and never give up, we can fulfill our dreams.

When you are finding it hard to be patient, here are some things you can do:

- Practice self-control, especially of your emotions. Name the emotions to yourself, accept that you are having them, but do not allow them to control you
- Take a deep breath
- Remind yourself that things take time
- Have faith in yourself
- Find something constructive to do

Finally, realize that impatience is often a natural characteristic of being young. Learning patience itself takes time and is part of the whole maturing process. Remember another popular saying: “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.”

Questions

1. What is patience?

2. What does it mean to persevere?

3. What were the poor choices that Mike made in the story above?

4. Who in your life is a good example of someone who is patient? How are they patient?

5. Are patient people easy to get along with?

6. Are you a patient person? Why or why not?

7. What or who makes you lose your patience?

8. How could you develop more patience?

9. Do you agree with the statement, “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again”?

10. Can you think of other examples in nature of patience?

Exercise: “Impatience”

Make a list of things that make you impatient. Why do they make you that way? What can you do to be more patient when these things happen?

Reflection Exercise: “Patience”

Think of a time when you showed a lot of patience. What were the circumstances? Why were you able to do it? What thoughts and methods did you employ to have patience?

CHAPTER 14: No Fair!

“Hey, that’s not fair! You got all the best players!” Jeff cried out after the teams were chosen.

“What do you mean, ‘not fair’?” George shot back. “We picked them fair and square.”

“All right, boys, that’s enough,” Mr. Wilson interjected. It was gym class, just before lunch, and the seventeen boys had just chosen sides for a soccer game. Since there was an odd number of players, Mr. Wilson, the gym teacher, asked Rodney from Jeff’s team, which had nine players, to be referee.

“Oh, that’s great!” whispered Jeff under his breath. “Now we’ve lost one of our best players. Well, at least he’ll be on our side.”

As Rodney ran off to the center of the field to start the game, Jeff shouted to him, “Hey, Rod!”

Rodney turned around.

“You’re going to be ‘fair’, right?” Jeff said, with a wink of an eye. What he really meant was that he was expecting some special treatment from his buddy.

“Yeah, sure, Jeff,” was all Rodney said, as he resumed running to midfield. Most of his friends were on Jeff’s team.

Rodney was fair. Too fair, for Jeff’s taste. He called the plays as he saw them. If a player committed a foul, he called it as such, no matter what team the player was on. Unfortunately for Jeff’s team, its players were committing a lot more fouls than George’s team—and Rodney called them on it.



At one point, Rodney took back a goal that Jeff’s team had scored because one of the players had deliberately tripped an opposing player to give the boy who scored a clear path to the goal. Then he allowed George’s team a penalty kick when one of Jeff’s players fouled one of George’s as he was about to strike the ball in the goalkeeper’s zone.

“Hey, Rod, lighten up! Give us a break!” Jeff was starting to get really angry as his team fell further and further behind. He had been counting on his friend to help his team. Finally, the period came to an end. George’s team had won, 6-3.

“Thanks a lot, Rod,” Jeff shouted at him as they ran off the field. “Some friend you are.”

Mr. Wilson came into the locker room as they were changing clothes.

“I just wanted to commend Rodney for doing such a fine job today as referee,” he said. “I know it must not have been easy. Most of your friends were on Jeff’s team, but you were fair to both sides. I just wanted to say that.”

The room was silent. Everyone knew that what Mr. Wilson had said was true. Jeff grumbled as he pulled on his jacket and left the locker room. Some of Rodney's other friends, who had been on Jeff's team, came up to him and said that he had been a good referee.

"Thanks for being fair, Rod," said one.

"It was a good game—fair and square," another said.

"Hey, Rodney," said another. Let's go get some lunch."

"No fair!" and "That's not fair" are common refrains heard in neighborhoods and schools around the world. Such statements show that we expect people to be fair, and we get upset when they're not. Of course, as we can see from the story above, sometimes the people making such statements are not necessarily interested in being fair but in getting their way. So we have to ask the question: what does it mean to be fair?

Fairness is usually associated with obeying or following the rules. Competitive sports like soccer are a good place to measure fairness and unfairness because there are very clear rules governing them. When a game is judged fairly, violations of the rules are penalized, and teams that play unfairly usually (although not always) end up losing.

There are all kinds of rules in life, although sometimes they are not clearly observed or understood. Families, schools, and clubs all have rules. On a public level, rules are called laws, such as in cities, states, provinces, and nations. People are expected to obey the laws. A law-abiding public is necessary to a stable and well-functioning society.

But what if the laws themselves are unfair? This has sometimes been the case, such as laws protecting slavery or prohibiting women from voting. In such cases, people often engage in acts of "civil disobedience". In other words, they deliberately break the law in order to bring pressure upon the government to change the law. This was the tactic used by Mohandas K. Gandhi to win India's independence from Great Britain. It was also used by Martin Luther King and others to win equal rights for African-Americans in the United States.

Most laws and rules are in place to insure fairness for all. No one should be cheated, discriminated against, or given favoritism. Each person should be given a fair chance.



If someone is caught violating the rules or laws, there is usually a system in place to determine in a fair manner the person's guilt or innocence. In many countries, there is a rule that a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty. The burden is upon the prosecutor of the case to prove the guilt of the accused before a jury and an impartial judge. This is what is known as a "fair trial".

In a perfect world, bad behavior (breaking the rules or the law) would always be punished, while good behavior (abiding by them) would always be rewarded. In other words, people would receive what they deserve. Unfortunately, we live in a world where unfair behavior is sometimes rewarded. Bullies get their way; lawbreakers escape; cheaters go undetected. We know that the world is in many ways unfair: millions of people are born into and die in poverty; children,

through no fault of their own, are infected with the AIDS virus or are orphaned because their parents die of AIDS; innocent people are murdered on our city streets.

Nevertheless, in our heart-of-hearts, we know the difference between right and wrong, fair and unfair behavior. Someone else's bad behavior never justifies our own bad behavior. As the saying goes: "Two wrongs do not make a right." No matter how other people act, we should always do the right thing. We should always treat other people fairly. This is what everyone deserves.

Once again, we come back to the Golden Rule: "Treat others the way you want to be treated." As we said before, if we abide by this one rule, we can never go wrong. We should never forget that our actions matter. By acting fairly, we can help to influence others to do the same.

Questions

1. What does it mean to "be fair"?

2. Is it more important to be fair, or to win? Why?

3. Do you think it possible to treat everyone fairly?

4. What does it mean to be impartial?

5. What does it mean to treat people equally? Give examples of equal and unequal treatment.

6. Can you think of a situation in which it might be right to give someone a special advantage?

7. How should you treat people who are not fair with you?

8. If you saw someone being treated unfairly, what would you do?

9. Do you agree with the statement “Two wrongs do not make a right”? What does it mean?

10. What does the Golden Rule have to do with fairness?

Exercise: “Fair and Unfair”

Make two lists. One is a list of things you sometimes do in your personal life that are unfair. The second is a list of things society does that are unfair. What can you do to change your behavior so you can cross off the items on the first list? What about the items on the second list? Whose responsibility is it to correct the injustices of society? Is there anything you can do to contribute to that effort? Think about some unfair situation in your own neighborhood or school. What do you think should be done about it? Who should do it?

Reflection Exercise: “Unfair Advantage”

Think of a time when you took unfair advantage of a person or a situation, or when someone took unfair advantage of you. What happened? What was unfair about it? How did it make you feel? What did you learn from the experience?

CHAPTER 15: A Loyal Friend?

“We’re friends, right?”

“Yeah, but I don’t like this.”

“Oh, come on, it’s no big deal. They’ve got so much stuff, they’ll never miss it.”

“All right, but just this one time.”

Tim and Ryan were having their conversation in the back of a store. Tim had known Ryan only a couple of months, since the beginning of the new school year. They were both on the school football team and liked each other pretty well. After practices, they would usually walk home together, stopping at the store for a soda and snack. This time, they discovered, neither of them had any money. Now Ryan was asking Tim to stuff a bag of chips under his jacket and walk casually out of the store. He was asking Tim to shoplift.

Ryan walked out of the store first, followed by Tim. As Tim was walking out, the store manager appeared by the door.

“What have you got there, sonny? Let me see.”

Tim was caught red-handed. Meanwhile, Ryan had sneaked away and was nowhere to be seen. Embarrassed and afraid, Tim waited for the police to come and take him down to the station. There an officer filled out some papers and then called Tim’s parents to come to the station to pick him up. Since he had never done anything like this before, his parents were shocked. Fortunately, the store manager decided not to press charges.

“Tim, what could make you do such a thing?” his father asked as they rode home.

Tim explained about the situation with Ryan in the store.

“We’re friends. As a friend, he was asking me to do this for him. So I did,” Tim explained. “I didn’t want to be disloyal.”

“Disloyal!?” Tim’s father exclaimed in amazement. “And how loyal was Ryan to you when you got caught?”

“Not very, I guess.”

“Not at all,” corrected his father. “He betrayed you, Tim. He was using you.”

“Yeah, you’re right.” Tim said sullenly.



When they got home, Tim’s father called Ryan’s father. Ryan had not told him anything about what had happened. After Tim’s father told him the whole story, Ryan’s father thanked him and hung up. Some time later, Ryan called back and wanted to talk to Tim.

“I’m real sorry for what happened, Tim.” Ryan sounded embarrassed. “It was wrong of me to do that.”

“That’s all right, Ryan.” Tim didn’t know what else to say.

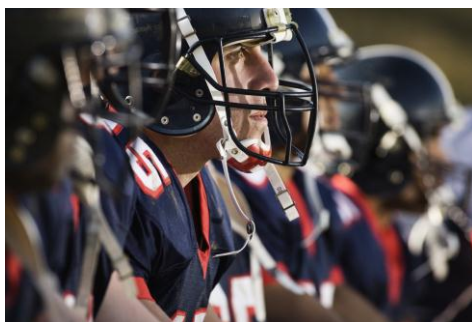
“I really do want us to be friends. You were loyal to me, but I wasn’t very loyal to you. I hope the time will come when I can stand up for you and make up for what I did today.”

“Forget it, Ryan. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

The next day, Ryan stood up in front of the whole team and confessed what he had done. Although it wasn’t easy for him, he got through it. When he was finished, their coach had something to say.

“I hope this serves as a lesson to all of you. Crime doesn’t pay, no matter how big or small. More than that, I hope you learn from this what true loyalty and commitment are. I want all of you to make a commitment here and now never to betray one another. If you cannot trust each other, we can never build the unity and teamwork we need to win football games. You might as well all go home right now. Understood?”

“We understand, Coach,” said Tim and Ryan in unison.



Loyalty and commitment are values that often seem in short supply in today’s world. Oftentimes, people’s primary loyalty is to themselves and their own interests. In their relationships, such people end up using others for their own benefit, betraying their trust. Betrayal is the very opposite of loyalty.

What is the relationship between loyalty and commitment? We can think of commitment as making a promise to do something. It may be as small as taking out the garbage at home when we said we would, or as large as standing up and defending one’s country should it come under attack. Loyalty signifies the act of sticking to our commitments. We do not forget about them when things get difficult or simply because something else comes up that we would rather do.

In life, we come across many different examples of commitment. An elected official usually takes an oath of office—a promise to fulfill his responsibilities as long as he remains in that position. In the United States, students in schools throughout the country begin their day by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance—an expression of loyalty to the country. Before they begin their practice, doctors take the Hippocratic Oath—a promise to practice medicine in a way such as to help and not hurt people. Men and women in wedding ceremonies throughout the world take some sort of marriage vow—a commitment to be faithful to and to love one another in the course of their married life.

Every contract or agreement is an expression of commitment—to fulfill employment obligations, to make payments on time, or to complete a task over a certain period of time.

Beyond formal declarations as expressed in contracts, agreements, pledges, oaths and vows, loyalty and commitment mean sticking by our family members, friends, organization, country,

cause, or ideal. Loyalty and commitment are, most of all, expressions of our hearts when we care deeply about or believe strongly in something or someone. It is an act of selflessness in which we give of ourselves for something or someone beyond ourselves.

People have been known to risk or give their lives out of such loyalty and commitment. There have been people like Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat, who saved the lives of 100,000 Hungarian Jews at the height of the Holocaust. There was Nathan Hale, the American patriot, who, when captured by the British during the American Revolution and sentenced to hang, said: "I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country."

At the same time, we must be aware of the possibility of misguided loyalty, as when people commit wrongful acts out of their commitment to an unjust cause or an unrighteous person. Thus, while Wallenberg was engaged in saving the lives of thousands of Jews, there were countless German soldiers who gave their lives loyally for the Nazi cause and who participated in the rounding up of Jews out of commitment to their national cause. In the Soviet Union, millions of people offered their personal loyalty to Josef Stalin, who sent an estimated 20 million people to Siberian concentration camps for political reasons.

Closer to home, we must be on guard against the misuse of our loyalty to our friends. Some may use our loyalty to convince us to allow them to copy our answers to test questions or to take money from our parents' wallets.

Our loyalty to others should be grounded in a higher loyalty to moral principles and our own consciences. Real friends would never ask us to violate these principles or our consciences. We have the right—and obligation—to resist the pressure from others to do what we feel is wrong.

If we understand this, we will never allow our loyalty to our friends to stand in the way of doing what is right. As we enter our teenage years, when peer pressure can be very strong, it is important to determine where our loyalties and commitments really lie.

Questions

1. What do loyalty and commitment mean?

2. What is the relationship between the two?

3. How is betrayal the opposite of loyalty?

4. Can you think of any other pledges of commitment that people make, other than the ones mentioned in the text?

5. Can you think of other examples of people who acted out of loyalty and commitment in their lives?

6. What is “misguided loyalty”?

7. What is meant by a “higher loyalty”?

8. Who or what are you loyal to?

9. What kind of commitments have you made? Have you fulfilled them? If so, how did you feel?

Exercise: “Practicing Loyalty”

How would you practice loyalty in the following situations?

1. A friend wants you to disobey one of your parents’ rules.

2. One of your friends turns against another friend and starts saying bad things about him or her.

3. You see a classmate cheating on a test.

4. A friend of yours in your neighborhood hurts the feelings of your younger brother.

5. Someone teases you while you are singing a patriotic song.

Reflection Exercise: “Personal Commitments”

Think of what kinds of personal commitments you have made in your life. Have you been able to fulfill these commitments? Are there any you forgot about? Have you betrayed anyone to whom you have made a commitment? Upon reflection, are there any new commitments that you feel you should make?

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CHAPTER 16: A New Friend

Cindy and Josette were good friends. They had been together since first grade. They did everything together, from skipping rope on the playground to going to the movies to doing their homework. It seems like nothing could separate them. Then one day...

"Who's that new girl over there?" Cindy asked Josette, as they looked for a place to sit at lunch.

"Oh, her name is Ginger. She never talks to anybody," Josette responded, finding a place for them to sit together.

Cindy stared at the new girl. She was sitting alone in the corner, nibbling on a sandwich and reading a book. "She looks awfully lonely."

Over the next few days, Cindy made an effort to get to know Ginger. She found the best time was after Josette caught her bus after school. She had about fifteen minutes before she had to catch her own bus. She would find Ginger, always sitting by herself.



Cindy discovered that Ginger was a very nice girl, although awfully shy. And she was lonely. Her family had just moved into town a couple of weeks ago, and she didn't really know anybody. It wasn't long before Cindy and Ginger found out they had a common interest in horses. Soon, Cindy was inviting her to a horse ranch she and her family went to often.

"You what?!" raged Josette, when she heard the news. Josette had no interest in horses and had always declined any invitations to go with Cindy's family to the ranch. Still, she couldn't help but feel intensely jealous when she heard that Cindy had invited Ginger.

"Josette," Cindy tried to assure her. "We're still friends. We'll always be friends. But Ginger has no friends and, besides, she really likes horses."

"I don't care," Josette retorted. "I don't like it. Besides, she's such an idiot."

"She is not!" Cindy shot back. "Don't call her that. She's really a nice person."

"Fine, go ahead and be her friend, if you want to. But that's it for us!"

With that, Josette turned on her heels and rushed off. She walked home that day instead of taking the bus, crying most of the way. When she arrived home, she went straight to her room and flung herself on the bed. She remained there through dinner, telling her mother she wasn't hungry, sprawled across the bed, alternately crying and silently feeling sorry for herself. She felt so alone in the world, abandoned by her best friend.

There was a knock on the door.

"I said I'm not hungry," Josette said, her muffled voice seeping through the pillow that her face was pressed against.

"It's Cindy, Josette. Let me in."

"Go away. Leave me alone."

“Josette, give me a chance,” Cindy said softly.

After a few seconds, the door opened. Josette stood before her, hair disheveled and her face full of red splotches from crying.

“What do you want?” she said in a cold voice.

“Josette, just because I make a new friend doesn’t mean we are any less friends,” Cindy began.

“Nothing could replace our friendship. We’ve been through so much together.”

Josette stood silently, looking at the floor.

“So I just came by to say that I hope you still consider me your friend because your friendship means a lot to me.”

With that, Josette stepped forward, and the two friends embraced each other tightly.



In Chapter 2, we touched on the issue of friendship in the context of changing social relationships. Here, we want to delve into the topic of friendship a little more deeply and try to understand its value in our lives. Relationships in general and friendships in particular are important to the growth and development of our character. For example, think about the emotions that we can experience in a friendship:

- Worry—when your friend is going through some struggle.
- Jealousy—when your friend makes a new friend and starts spending more time with him/her.
- Loneliness—when your friend goes away, either temporarily or permanently.
- Sadness—when your friend has lost a loved one in his/her family.
- Anger—when your friend does something that hurts you.
- Happiness—when you and your friend are just spending time as friends.
- Embarrassment—when you accuse your friend wrongly for an act she/he did not do.
- Excitement—at the anticipation of doing something together with your friend.

These emotions and others all contribute to the development of our character. Some emotions challenge our hearts to overcome something, while others leave us with positive experiences that give us a sense of confidence and hope in life. As we said previously, the essence of life lies in relationships, but it is through our friendships that we really learn to care, trust, and depend on others. Through friendships, we feel connected with other human beings. Without close friendships, we can end up feeling isolated and alone.

Some people who have been hurt by friends may conclude it is better not to get too close to anyone. Unfortunately, we live in a world where, because of selfishness, people do hurt one another. But to close our hearts off as a result can make the situation even worse. Of course, it is not easy to open our hearts and trust again after we've been hurt. However, not to do so will only lead to more unhappiness. This is because we are "social animals", and to close ourselves off from others is unnatural.

If we accept that hurts and betrayals are an unfortunate part of life, we can have the energy to pick ourselves up again and to keep trying to give, love, and care. Human beings are not all "bad apples", and we are bound to find some good ones with whom we will develop a close bond.

If we keep a curiosity about people and look for their uniqueness and good qualities, we can make friends with many different kinds of people. By learning to love a wide variety of people, our hearts and characters grow all the more. In this way, we make ourselves into people who truly care about others—people others can rely upon.

We then become people who are of value to our community. We have developed ourselves to the degree where we know how to be a trusted friend to others. Let us always remember the words of the American poet and essayist, Ralph Waldo Emerson: "The only way to have a friend is to be one."

Questions

1. What does it mean to be a friend?

2. What's the difference between a true friend and a false friend?

3. What is a "best friend"? Is it possible to have more than one best friend at a time?

4. In what ways do friendships change as you get older?

5. Are friendships more important to you now than a few years ago? Why or why not?

6. What is a clique? Are friendships in a clique real?

7. Have you ever been without friends? How did it feel?

8. Did you ever lose a friend? How did it feel?

9. Are there kids at your school who seem to be always by themselves? How do you think that makes them feel? Is there anything you could do about it?

Exercise: “Sticky Situations”

How would you handle the following sticky situations that can happen in friendships according to these criteria?

- How would the situation make you feel?
- What would be a positive way to deal with it?
- What would be a harmful way to deal with it?

a. Your friend starts acting in ways that you think are wrong (cheating, stealing, being rude, etc.).

b. You find out your friend has been telling stories about you that aren't true.

c. Your friend invites you to go swimming, but calls back an hour later to cancel. You find out your friend went swimming with someone else.

d. Your friend wants to spend more time with you than you want to spend with him or her. You like this person, but you want more freedom to see other people, too.

e. Your friend is on the brink of failing a class and begs you to help him/her cheat on the final exam.

Reflection Exercise: “Jealousy and Friendship”

Have you ever been jealous of a friend? What happened? How did you handle it? How could you have handled it better? Has a friend of yours ever been jealous of you? What happened? What have you learned from either of these experiences?

CHAPTER 17: My Purpose in Life

“Why, why, why? What’s the point? Why do I have to do this?” Gordon cried out in anguish as he read through Hamlet for the third time, trying to understand the strange English. “Why can’t these people speak in plain English?”

He threw down the book and lay on the floor, hands behind his head. A thousand thoughts were running through his mind all at the same time. For the past three months, Gordon had been struggling with a basic lack of desire, motivation, and energy. Suddenly, everything seemed to be pointless and meaningless.

Gordon lay there for a long time thinking about anything and nothing in particular. He traced the pattern on the wall opposite him with his forefinger over and over again. He listened to the sounds of birds outside his window and the occasional car that drove down their quiet street.

What’s it all about? he wondered. What are we here for? There must be some purpose to it all. Looking at the book on the floor next to him, Gordon was certain that it did not include Hamlet—that guy couldn’t seem to make up his mind about anything. And besides, in that play everybody was dead by the end of it. How pointless.

Gordon thought, “We all end up dead too, just like in that play. We all live our lives only to die in the end—for what?”



Gordon sat up. What was it that Hamlet said? “To be or not to be, that is the question...” Blah, blah, blah. Well, it seems that Hamlet was just as confused as he was. At least he wasn’t alone. Gordon wondered whether any of his friends or classmates ever wondered about such things. He never talked to them about it.

Gordon looked out his bedroom window. Right across the yard, there was an elm tree, which seemed to be the scene of a lot of activity. The bird sounds he had heard earlier were coming mostly from that tree. There seemed to be dozens of birds in there chirping away.

Why are they so happy? Gordon thought. All they do is fly around all day. All the same, he found himself feeling envious of them. What would it be like to fly like a bird? To soar high above everything—now that would be something!

Gordon looked at the model airplanes on the shelf above his desk. He had always been interested in planes. Then, an idea struck him. Maybe that’s what he should do—be an airplane pilot! It suddenly seemed to him that was what he was meant to do.

Let Hamlet continue his ramblings, Gordon thought. He was going to pursue his dream to be a pilot. Someday, he would fly people all over the world and let them see the world the way the birds do. He could make a lot of people happy that way.

He felt full of energy and hope. Life was not so pointless after all!

Have you ever noticed that everything around us seems to have a purpose? This is certainly true of anything that has been made by human beings. Otherwise, we would not have bothered to make it. Everything we make or manufacture has its use and purpose.

Take a look around the room you are sitting in right now. Chances are, there is at least one chair in the room, perhaps a table or desk, a rug, pictures on the walls, bookshelves and a lot of other things. Now think about the purpose each one of them serves: a chair is for someone to sit on; a table or desk is for writing, typing on a computer, or perhaps eating; a rug may be there to protect the floor and give the room some softness; a picture on the wall adds a little flavor or atmosphere to the room according to the owner's taste; and a bookshelf obviously is there to hold books.

Now, it may be that you are reading this outdoors. It's a warm sunny day, and you decided to get out into nature, far away from the hustle and bustle of human society. Although sometimes it may not be so easy to see, everything in nature also serves some sort of purpose. The presence of the sun allows our planet to support life. The trees around you are "breathing" just as you are, except they are exhaling the oxygen that we need and inhaling the carbon dioxide that we breathe out. Some provide us with fruit to eat. Many of them offer us beautiful blossoms in the spring and change into a variety of glorious colors in the fall.

What about those lowly insects like ants, spiders, mosquitoes, and cockroaches? What purpose could they possibly have? They are the food for other creatures like birds, frogs, anteaters, etc. In addition, ants can teach us a lot about diligence and hard work. Birds teach us the importance of building a home and caring for the young. In one way or another, every living thing has a purpose.



In view of all this, isn't it funny that we human beings so often struggle to understand our purpose in life? After all, we too must have a purpose. Everything else does. But what is it? Some people spend their whole lives trying to figure this out.

We don't usually deal with this kind of question until we approach adolescence. Until then, we don't question much and are content with playing games, doing the work given to us—whether at home or school—and generally going about our day-to-day lives. We look to our parents and teachers to give us direction.

Around the age of twelve or thirteen, however, our consciousness has developed to the point where we may start asking questions that never occurred to us before. We may start seriously wondering why we need to do certain school assignments, especially subjects we have little interest in. We may question the value of school itself. Questions arise like: "What's the point of this?" or "Why should I do this, anyway?" or "What's the use?"

We may start thinking, "Everything is so stupid and pointless" and find ourselves wallowing in depression. We seem to have no energy or motivation to do anything. We have no desire to get involved in any kind of activity.

Most teenagers experience such feelings and thoughts at one time or another. For the first time, we are confronting real questions about life, and the answers are not so readily apparent. At such times, it is easy to get discouraged and depressed about life. Until we can understand our purpose, life doesn't seem to be worth living. Just as an item loses its value once it is no longer able to serve its purpose—if a chair breaks, we throw it away—so too we can feel an immense lack of value if we feel that our life has no purpose.

Yet, the fact that everything else seems to have a purpose can give us hope. No matter how we are feeling at the moment, we can be certain that our purpose is out there somewhere, waiting to be found.

For nature, everything is easy; their purpose has somehow been programmed into them. For us, it's different. Why? Because we have consciousness and free will. Whereas everything else fulfills its purpose automatically, we are required to search and try to understand what our purpose is. That must be because our purpose is so much greater than every other living or non-living thing.

It is obvious that human beings possess certain abilities greater than other creatures. We are certainly more creative—building all sorts of structures and cities, cultivating gardens and farms, inventing machines, developing written and spoken languages, and doing countless other things. At the same time, we possess a greater capacity to destroy than any other creature. Sadly, by studying history, we learn that many human accomplishments met with destructive ends at the hands of other human beings.



Our purpose must be related to all those things that contribute to human accomplishment, including many of the topics we have covered in this book, such as courage, personal integrity, self-discipline, humility, respecting others, being responsible, honesty, patience, being fair, loyalty, commitment, and friendship. These and many others are called virtues, and they help us to fulfill our purpose.

Why is this? It is all part of living for the sake of others, which is exactly how every other entity is fulfilling its purpose. The sun, trees, and insects are all fulfilling their purpose by giving of themselves for some purpose greater than their own existence. While they do so unconsciously, we are meant to do it consciously—in other words, by choice.

By living for others, we can develop our own individual characters; we can become good spouses and parents and create loving families; and we can make a positive contribution to

human society and take care of the natural world as well. These last three points are known as the three basic life goals. By fulfilling these goals, we will have fulfilled our purpose in life and will experience happiness and satisfaction. In future courses, we will explore these life goals in more detail.

Questions

1. Why do you think in the story above Gordon was feeling that life was pointless and meaningless?

2. Have you ever felt that way?

3. Why do you think it is important to go to school and study?

4. Do you agree that everything seems to have a purpose? Why or why not?

5. Do you know people who seem to have discovered their purpose in life?

6. Do you know people who are still trying to understand their purpose?

[illegible]

Reflection Exercise: “My Character

Below is a list of virtues that we have covered in this course. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the degree to which you feel you have been able to practice each virtue in your life so far. Which ones seem to be well-developed in you? Which ones still need some work? In view of these ratings, how would you rate your overall character? Try to be as fair and objective with yourself as possible. You might also ask one of your parents to rate you on each of these as well and compare the results.

- courage
- personal integrity
- self-discipline
- humility
- respecting others
- being responsible
- honesty
- patience
- being fair
- loyalty
- commitment
- friendship