

CARING

Who Cares?

A caring person is a bright spot in a sometimes grim world where crime, anger, fear, hunger and loneliness have pushed even well-meaning people into isolation. We've moved, as a society, from the front porch to the back yard. We've gone from social visits to video games and the VCR. It's as if we're so overwhelmed by the needs around us that we've built invisible walls, blocked our vision of other people's problems, and focused on ourselves.

It's different with ethical people. They care. Caring is at the heart of an ethical person's character. It's a guideline for how an ethical person relates to the world and its people.

A caring person is considerate, kind, compassionate and generous. A caring person always takes into account how decisions, words and actions are likely to affect other people.

Why Care?

Why do people show consideration, kindness, compassion and generosity to others? Some help others because it makes them feel good. Some show concern because everybody else seems to. Some show kindness to avoid embarrassment, to earn recognition, to relieve guilt, or because it hurts them to see other people hurting.

Genuine, selfless concern for others is a sign of ethical maturity. A big part of maturity is the ability to think and care about someone besides oneself. Selfish motives and selfish actions are childish motives and childish actions.

Self-centered people tend to treat others simply as instruments of their own ends and rarely feel an obligation to be honest, loyal, fair or respectful.

Caring people, on the other hand, have progressed from selfish to selfless, from inward-focused to outward-focused, from me-minded to we-minded, and from a give-me approach to a give-you approach.

The Golden Rule

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" translates the general principle of caring and concern into an operational standard which encourages people to maximize the good and minimize the harm done to others.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are the people, groups, or institutions likely to be affected by a decision, word, or action. A person who wants to be ethical has a moral obligation to think seriously about every possible effect his or her decisions will have on all stakeholders.

The too-common, self-centered, "It's my life, and I'll do what I want with it!" fails to recognize that every person, group, or institution impacted by a decision has a moral claim on the decision-maker.

Caring vs. Duty

Caring requires us to be as considerate, kind, compassionate and generous as our duties and responsibilities permit. But sometimes even love has to be tough. Sometimes *really* caring requires difficult decisions that are unpleasant for a stakeholder initially, but best for him or her in the long run. Sometimes responsibility seems to conflict with caring.

Caring Do's

- ☺ Show you care about others through kindness, caring, generosity and compassion.
- ☺ Live by the Golden Rule . . . treating others the way you want them to treat you.
- ☺ Think how every decision, word or action will impact every stakeholder.

Caring Don'ts

A caring person lives with these reminders:

- ☹ Don't be selfish!
- ☹ Don't be mean!
- ☹ Don't be cruel!
- ☹ Don't be insensitive to the feelings of others!

Audience:
Up to 28 teenagers

Objective: Teenagers will experience and discuss exclusion, describe aspects of caring, and apply it to their lives. They will name factors making it harder to care for someone and practice looking for the good in others.

Time: 45 minutes

What the Instructor Needs to Provide: cassette recorder or radio and music of your choice; a colorful “hacky-sack” or another brightly colored ball; an old golf ball; a large sheet of newsprint (or posterboard or chalkboard); marker

What you say:	What you do or show:	What participants do:	Hints for trainers:
<p>① Caring! It’s a short word, but long on results. Before we talk about it, let’s move around the room a little. This activity is one way to show that I care about you. . . and a way to make a point.</p> <p>As I play this tape, walk around the room, in any direction. Suddenly, I’ll stop the tape and call out a number. Stop and grab hands with enough people to make a group of that number. Don’t let any extras break into your group. Hold hands to maintain your group until you hear the music start again.</p>	<p>Start the tape.</p>	<p>Participants move around the room.</p>	<p>This activity will show the effect of exclusion.</p>
<p>② Three! Form groups of three!</p>	<p>Stop the tape.</p>	<p>Participants stop, and grab hands to form groups of three people. Others sit out.</p>	<p>Teens may be hesitant at first.</p>
<p>③ Who’s left? Sit out. If there are any groups with more or less than three, sit out also.</p>	<p>Continue with the tape, numbers, groups, and extras. After three or four rounds, call a number that is over half the group size.</p>		<p>This should turn into a struggle with one side winning.</p>
<p>④ How did it feel to be left out — or even pushed away? How did you feel about the way you were treated?</p>	<p>Solicit responses.</p>		
<p>⑤ What words describe the way you were treated?</p>	<p>Solicit descriptive words, list them on newsprint.</p>	<p>Participants explain how it felt to be pushed away when they weren’t wanted.</p>	
<p>⑥ Do people at your school ever treat other students that way, in real life? What are some examples?</p>	<p>Solicit examples. Share your own experiences.</p>	<p>Participants share.</p>	<p>Be prepared for blunt expression of feelings.</p>

What you say:	What you do or show:	What participants do:	Hints for trainers:
<p>7 Even though the terms may change from year to year, like “nerd, dweeb, loser, scum,” etc., the message of exclusion is clearly the same. It says, “This person is not worth my time, interest, or compassion.” A big part of growing up is learning that feelings don’t <i>have</i> to control us. We can be honest to ourselves about why we react negatively to some people. Then we can choose to overrule those negative feelings and to act in a mature, ethical, caring way. What does it mean to be a caring person?</p>	<p>Solicit descriptions. List comments on newsprint. Compare this list of caring descriptions with the previous list of feelings resulting from exclusion.</p>	<p>Teenagers share examples of uncaring words or behavior among students. They describe a caring person.</p>	<p>A caring person considers how a decision, word or action will affect others.</p>
<p>8 Every time you interact with another person ask yourself, “Will I behave in a caring way?” Make a once-and-for-all decision to be an ethical, mature, caring person, regardless of who crosses your path. It’s easier to care for some people than for others. Let’s represent people who are hard to like with this hard old golf ball. Form a circle on the floor. When the golf ball is tossed to you, name something that makes people hard to like. (Be gentle when you toss it around.)</p>	<p>Pass the golf ball. Take notes of the descriptions participants give for people who are hard to like.</p>	<p>Teenagers pass the ball around.</p>	
<p>9 Does a person’s neighborhood, size, or color give us the right to drop our standards?</p>	<p>Refer again to the caring person list and the exclusionary list. Solicit responses.</p>	<p>They reply.</p>	
<p>10 Ethical people, good people, are caring people! Let’s go around the circle again, throwing this brightly colored ball to one another and hear one <u>bright</u> idea from each of you. Tell one thing you are going to do to show consideration, kindness, compassion, or generosity to others. Your idea should be something specific you will do at school, at home or at work.</p>	<p>On newsprint, list key words for the caring actions they will take as they toss the brightly colored ball to one another.</p>	<p>Participants toss the brightly colored ball or “hacky-sack” and talk of the caring behavior they will exhibit at school, home, and/or work.</p>	<p>If there are specific problems at school or in the community, tailor this activity to have students tell how they can be caring people in that specific challenge.</p>
<p>11 As a closing activity, stand and form groups of only 4 or 5 people. An important part of caring is helping people see their strengths. Without speaking, think of a good quality you’ve noticed in each of the other people in your group. Start with the person who lives nearest where we are. Look him or her in the eyes, touch his or her arm or shoulder, and tell what good you’ve observed in him or her. That person will look you in the eyes and say “Thank you,” then receive and accept compliments from the other two or three people. Repeat for everyone.</p>	<p>Help participants form groups of four or five and get started with the activity.</p>	<p>Teenagers form small groups and take turns praising one person, then another.</p>	

Other Ways to Help Teenagers Be Caring

- Reinforce the concept of caring by making caring an action word. Develop, as a group, a list of ways your group can show active concern for others. Think of ways your group can collect items for the hungry or homeless. Think of ways to help people who are alone, confined, sad, or overworked. Think of ways to help children. Think of ways to help older adults, single parents and disheartened unemployed people. Then, most importantly, actually do something to help them!

- Ask parents to reinforce caring behavior with special privileges. Ask teenagers to reward younger brothers and sisters for caring behavior by spending some time with them.

- Write a skit about caring "do's and don'ts." Create a series of skits and present them to adult groups and children's classes. Add music and make a production!

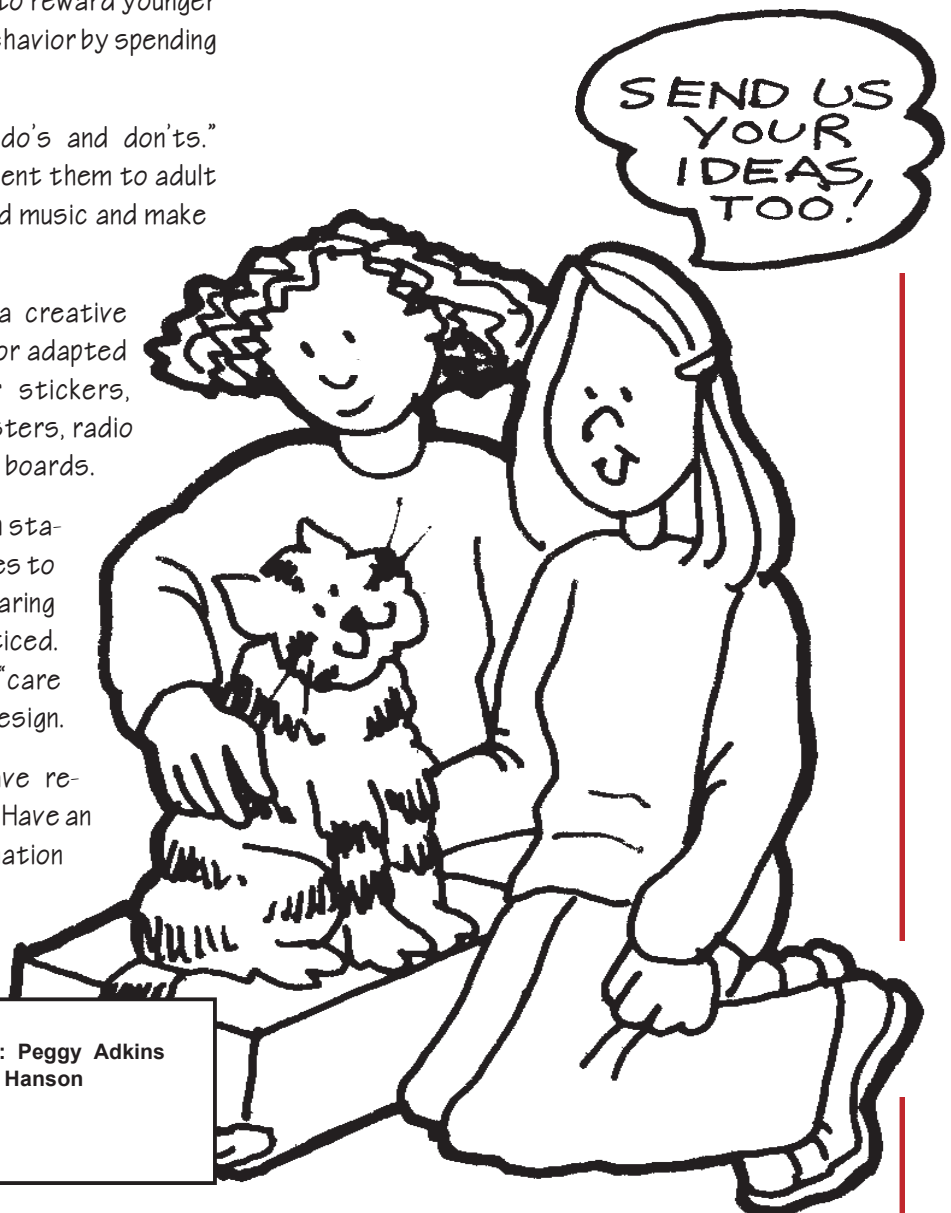
- Promote caring behavior in a creative way with essays, poems, original or adapted songs, T-shirt designs, bumper stickers, school paper ads, hall banners, posters, radio spots, magazine ads, and bulletin boards.

- Assemble a work session with stationery and note cards. Write notes to young children, praising them for caring behavior the teenagers have noticed. Better yet, design and make "care cards" with the group's special design.

- Focus on teenagers who have recently moved into the community. Have an activity for them. Think of information

they'll need and prepare "care kits" to welcome them to the community, school or club.

- Have teenagers interview people who seem to be caring people. Find out what motivates them. Ask who inspired them. Ask who their heroes are now, and who their heroes were as children. Share results at a group session and discuss the role models. Draw conclusions on how the teenagers can apply this information in their own lives.



Exercising Character

Concept, Lesson Plans & Activities: Peggy Adkins

- editing, design, typesetting: Wes Hanson
- business affairs: Rosa Maulini
- drawings: Caroline Benfield
- printing: Pace Publication Arts