

Practicing Integrity

“To know oneself, one should assert oneself.”

- Albert Camus, Nobel Prize winning French novelist (1913 - 1960)

Overview: Students discuss the meaning of integrity, why it is important and how to practice it in specific circumstances.

Preparation/Materials:

- none

Procedure:

Ask: *What do you think of when you hear the word “integrity”? What does integrity mean?* (“Holding yourself to a code of moral values,” “walking your talk,” or “standing up for what you believe is right” are some good answers.)

Talk to the students about what integrity means in the world today, and why it is important. Then offer examples for discussion.

Say: *Now let’s look at some real-life examples of integrity. What would you do if a friend offered you a beer and you felt like accepting the offer, but you had told your parents that you would never do this behind their backs? Solicit comments, then ask: Why did you answer the way you did? What would be the answer that shows the most integrity? Why?* (You might note that integrity alone is inadequate since it simply means “walking your talk.” This is important, but the kind of “talk” that is being “walked” is critical!)

Tell them that people often get hurt in one way or another when we fail to live with integrity. Read the following example:

A child sits alone in the corner of the playground. He feels uncomfortable joining the other children because he has a speech problem — he stutters. This boy is teased because of it and, to avoid further torment, the child withdraws from the group.

Another child feels sorry for the kid, knowing that it’s wrong to pick on people just because they’re different. However, she is afraid to speak to the child, fearing that the other kids will tease her too. So she doesn’t say anything, and the stuttering child remains withdrawn, feeling sad and alone. Isn’t it sad that the girl didn’t stand up for what’s right and show integrity? What would you have done? Solicit comments.

Say: *Here’s another example: Let’s say you feel strongly that you should never help someone cheat on a test. Your parents have taught you this since you were very small and you have always thought to yourself, “If someone ever asked me for an answer to a test question, I would say no.” But one day your very best friend tells you they were unable to study for an exam. Your friend is doing very poorly in class, and will flunk if the next test isn’t passed. During the test they ask you for a few answers. What do you do?*

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Solicit responses, asking what would be the best way to show integrity here. Ask: *Why did you answer the way you did? Has this ever happened to you?*

To summarize the lesson, say: *No one is born with integrity. We all have to learn how to stand up for what's right. The more you act with integrity, the better you will feel about yourself and what you've done. The more you do it, the easier it becomes. The more integrity you have, the more respect you'll get from your friends and family.*

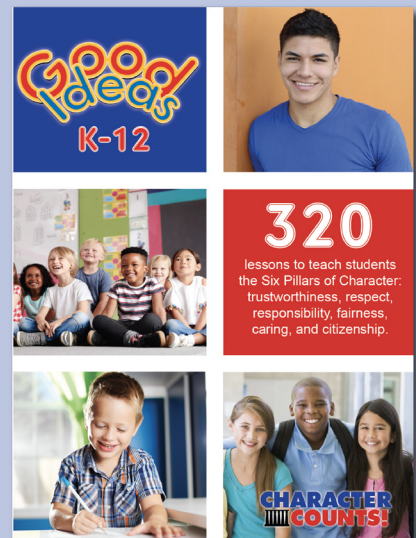
Adapted from the American Youth Soccer Organization's "Take Five" activities.

Good Ideas

This lesson is published in our [Good Ideas lesson plan book](#).

It is written for grades 4-5 but can be adapted to fit your elementary school grade level needs.

[See a sample of other Good Ideas lessons.](#)



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