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# Life Skills/Pressing Issues

## Secondary

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### Respect of Self and Others

**Attitude of Gratitude** \* — Most of us have many more present blessings than past misfortunes, but unfortunately, we don't often stop to consider all the blessings for which we can be grateful. People with an attitude of gratitude live happier lives because they are more focused on what is good and right in their lives.

**Key Ideas:** Making the choice to focus on one's blessings - Gratitude as an antidote to stress - Media literacy

**Character Traits:** Gratitude - Self-awareness - Self-control

**Note:** This message and lesson plan also work well at Thanksgiving.

**Beauty Secrets** — We live in a world that celebrates outer beauty and too often neglects the inner beauty that radiates from a friendly, respectful, and caring attitude. With this plan students explore the difference between inner beauty and outer beauty, and consider that a genuine smile makes any face beautiful.

**Key Ideas:** A genuine smile will make any face beautiful - Beauty in diversity - Inner versus outer beauty

**Character Traits:** Respect - Caring - Friendliness - Positive attitude

**Big House Little House** — If we tie our happiness to the size of our home or brand of our car, we can set ourselves up for disappointment. But when we tie our happiness to the love we give and receive and to the simple pleasures of life, we tie our happiness to things that last and that really are beyond price.

**Key Idea:** A small house will hold as much happiness as a big one - Some media literacy

**Character Traits:** Caring - Love - Respect

**Books Take You Places** \* — Reading can take students to places they may never experience firsthand and introduce them to all types of people and characters that they may never encounter in real life. Students are encouraged to discover the pure joy of recreational reading by turning off the television and the video games and picking up a good book.

**Key Ideas:** Enriching one's life with recreational reading - Reading as a way to experience new places and people

**Character Trait:** Self-respect - Responsibility

**Note:** This message and lesson plan also work well for Read Across America Day which is usually observed on the first Monday in March. Check the Internet.

**Civil Discourse** — Our democracy depends on responsible citizens who have the courage to discuss difficult issues in respectful ways. As unpleasant as a debate may become, without respectful debates about important issues there would be no progress in the affairs of government. Students will explore the notion that disrespectful discourse

blocks resolution to common challenges, while civil discourse encourages it.

**Key Ideas:** Democracy depends upon civil discourse - Respectful disagreement drives improvements and progress in a civil society

**Character Traits:** Respect - Civility

**Clean and Bright** — We view the world through many windows, one of which is our conscience. When we make caring, honest, and responsible choices, our conscience is clear and we are better able to navigate our way to a more successful life. Students explore the meaning of the word "conscience" and the benefits of a clear conscience.

**Key Idea:** A clear conscience allows us to see things more clearly and to make wiser choices.

**Character Traits:** Caring - Honesty - Responsibility

**Cloud Watching** \* — Reflection is a key component of character development. Students are encouraged to spend some time this summer watching the clouds go by and reflecting on the kind of person they are and the kind of person they want to become.

**Key Idea:** The importance of reflection for character development

**Character Traits:** Self-respect - Responsibility

**Note:** This message and lesson plan also work well at the end of the school year before summer break.

**Did You Do That on Purpose?** \* — Life can be so random at times. It can be confusing and challenging. For life to make sense, it has to have meaning. It has to have purpose, and having purpose in our lives is something we choose because when we do anything on purpose, we do it deliberately. Students explore the importance of choosing a worthy purpose in their lives.

**Key Ideas:** Deliberately choosing positive actions - Goal setting - Self-absorption

**Character Traits:** Respect - Responsibility

**Note:** This message and lesson plan also work well for National Be On Purpose Month: January.

**Etiquette Netiquette** — Etiquette on the Internet is called Netiquette. These rules are especially important for young people as their lives and their world become more connected through technology. When they treat themselves and others with mutual respect, they avoid the negative consequences that inevitably come with disrespectful online behaviors, and avoid a negative and permanent digital record they may otherwise leave behind.

**Key Ideas:** Etiquette online - Netiquette - Golden Rule - 21st century skills

**Character Traits:** Respect of self and others - Responsibility - Civility

**Everyone Has a Gift** — Each of us has a gift to give the world, a special talent, ability, or skill. It's important that young people consider what their gift is and how they can use that gift to make the world a better place. Students explore the idea that they each have unique qualities and talents and the external support systems to develop them.

**Key Ideas:** Each of us is gifted for something - Discovering one's special qualities and gifts

**Character Traits:** Perseverance - Confidence - Self-respect - Self-responsibility

**Exploring Our Character** \* — Exploration is one of the oldest of all human activities. Since the beginning of time mankind has explored for land, water, food, and treasure.

Today people explore outer space and the deep sea. The wisest and most successful human beings continually explore their character through inner reflection. Students will consider the notion that reflection builds character and fosters successful living.

**Key Ideas:** Self-examination - Reflection - Exploring our character - Successful living

**Character Traits:** Self-respect - Moral courage

**Note:** This broadcast message and lesson plan also work well for Columbus Day.

**Finding Answers** \* — It takes vision, curiosity, perseverance, and a strong work ethic to be a successful explorer. This message and corresponding lesson plan allow students the opportunity to examine these traits which are common among explorers from Christopher Columbus to Neil Armstrong. Students are encouraged to put their wonder into action!

**Key Ideas:** Exploring new ideas - Persevering until one finds the answer

**Character Traits:** Curiosity - Perseverance - Strong work ethic

**Note:** This broadcast message and lesson plan also work well for Columbus Day.

**The Importance of Love** \* — Mozart was a musical genius whose compositions have entertained, inspired, and moved generations of listeners. He believed that love, not just genius, was at the heart of his compositions. Students stop to consider how giving love and attention to the small things of life can help them succeed.

**Key Ideas:** The life and birthday of Mozart - The genius of love - Accomplishments driven by love

**Character Traits:** Caring - Respect - Enthusiasm - Dedication - Commitment

**Note:** This message and lesson plan also work well for Mozart's birthday: January 27.

**In Pursuit of Integrity** — Choosing to live a life of integrity means that we must be honest with ourselves and others. We must reflect on our choices and decide what ethical principles are most important to us and then make the effort to live by those principles. Students will consider the meaning of integrity and how it relates to being an honest and respectful person.

**Key Ideas:** Living a life of integrity - Being an honest and trustworthy person

**Character Traits:** Integrity - Honesty - Respect

**Keeping Resolutions** \* — Students explore the notion that it's important to put our whole heart into whatever promises we make to ourselves. They explore the idea of being a more active participant in all aspects of their lives.

**Key Idea:** Making resolutions as a way to reach goals and dreams

**Character Traits:** Determination - Commitment - Caring

**Note:** This message and lesson plan also work well for the New Year's holiday.

**Little Voice Within** — There are times when we need to shut out the noise, get quiet, and listen to the little voice within so we do the right thing for ourselves and others. Students consider the function of their conscience and that listening to their conscience will help them build self-respect, confidence and the respect of others.

**Key Idea:** The importance of listening to one's conscience

**Character Traits:** Conscience - Respect of self and others

**Look Who's Watching** — We may get by with some poor choices when we think nobody's looking, but there's one very important person who is *always* watching - ourself, and our opinion of ourself matters. Students explore the importance of self-awareness, realizing that they are always watching their own behavior and the choices

they make.

**Key Ideas:** Character is who you are when no one's looking - Right choices build self-esteem

**Character Traits:** Self-respect - Self-awareness - Integrity

**More than Personality** — Young people often get snared in the notion that what's important is having a cool personality. Our personalities are what make us special and unique, but our personalities will only take us so far. What really matters - and what will ultimately determine any true success in life - is the content of our character.

**Key Ideas:** Your personality will only take you so far - One's character can open doors

**Character Traits:** Integrity - Trustworthiness - Strong work ethic

**Noble Occupations** — Striving to be a noble human being should be a goal each of us sets for ourselves. That can be as simple as doing tasks and jobs that may not be the most pleasant or glamorous, but that help make lives better for others. Students will consider what it means to make a personal sacrifice in order to help another person live a more successful life.

**Key Ideas:** All honest work is noble. - Noble people put others before their own self-interests.

**Character Traits:** Nobility - Generosity of spirit - Caring - Respect

**One of a Kind** — Knowing one's special gifts adds tremendous meaning and success to one's life and helps one become more respectful of the uniqueness of others. Many young people don't like the very thing about themselves that makes them one of a kind. Students consider the idea that they can learn to appreciate their individuality and that of others, as well.

**Key Idea:** As we grow in our own uniqueness, we learn to respect the uniqueness of others.

**Character Traits:** Respect - Tolerance - Individuality

**Reaching For Greatness** \* —Every single one of us has the potential for greatness, no matter what circumstances we were born into, no matter what types of challenges we face. Students have the opportunity to consider that greatness can manifest in many ways.

**Key Ideas:** Personal potential - Striving to be one's best - Overcoming obstacles

**Character Traits:** Determination - Hard work - Encouragement

**Note:** This message and lesson plan also work well for National Reaching Your Potential Month in January.

**Real Nobility** — Nothing good ever comes from acting as if you are better than others. Real goodness (true nobility) comes from trying to be a better person today than the person you were yesterday. Students consider setting that as a goal for themselves knowing that each day provides an opportunity to be a better person than the day before.

**Key Ideas:** Acting superior to others - Being a better person today than you were yesterday

**Character Traits:** Respect - Integrity - Trustworthiness

**Rich Man - Poor Man** — It's been said that the best things in life aren't things at all. Students explore the concept that money and possessions do not buy happiness and that success cannot be measured by the things we own.

**Key Ideas:** Quality of life - Materialism - Priorities - Successful living

**Character Traits:** Self-respect - Love - Kindness

**Stuff, Stuff, More Stuff** — Even though many of us have more stuff than we need, we still shop for more. The old stuff might still be good but we think the newer stuff will be better. This message and lesson plan help students consider the time spent taking care of their stuff as well as exploring the possibilities of reusing old stuff, recycling, or donating it to others.

**Key Ideas:** The difference between needing and wanting things - Taking care of our things - Discarding things respectfully

**Character Traits:** Responsibility - Respect

**That's Not Fair** — We are all guilty of saying "That's not fair," but sometimes when we think we are being treated unfairly, the truth is, we are not. Before blaming others for treating us unfairly - and therefore being unfair to them - it's important to consider carefully what really happened. Students explore the costs and benefits of being fair-minded.

**Key Ideas:** Treating others with the same fairness we expect - Golden Rule

**Character Traits:** Respect - Fairness - Caring - Honesty - Personal responsibility

**What I Think of Me** — Being a person of character means that you worry less about fitting in and looking good in the eyes of others and worry more about doing what you know is right. Students consider the importance of having strong character and how that sometimes requires making difficult choices.

**Key Ideas:** Caring more about your character than what others think of you - One's reputation

**Character Traits:** Integrity - Moral courage

**What's It Worth?** — Conducting yourself in a dignified manner is a way to respect yourself. You value who you are when you are proud of the things you do. Posting things on the Internet that are undignified is a reflection of who you are. There can be lasting negative effects that may damage your reputation or your sense of self-worth.

**Key Ideas:** Valuing yourself - Making dignified choices - Posting inappropriate images online

**Character Trait:** Self-worth - Self-respect - Dignity

**What Were You Thinking?** — Students consider how easy it is to go through life never stopping to consider our thoughts and feelings and how those thoughts and feelings impact the choices we make.

**Key Ideas:** Self-awareness - The power of thoughts - Positive thinking

**Character Traits:** Self-respect - Responsibility

**Note:** This message and lesson plan also work well for What You Think Upon Grows Day: May 31st.

**The Words We Speak** — Students stop to consider that the words we choose to speak are a reflection of who we are. Either words earn the respect of others, or they can cost us respect when others hear our bad language.

**Key Ideas:** Bad Language - Cursing - Abusive language

**Character Traits:** Respect - Responsibility - Civility

\* Materials with an asterisk (\*) relate to Respect of Self and Others and are also related to a calendar event. These same materials can also be found under Calendar Events.

Exercises for Character understanding

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