



Community of Character

Integrity

March Integrity

Character Qualities

- Responsibility
- Respect
- Thankfulness
- Caring
- Perseverance
- Unity
- Integrity
- Service
- Moral Courage
- Citizenship
- Fairness
- Self Control

Character is doing the right thing even when it costs more than you want to pay.

Michael Josephson

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Integrity is the cornerstone of good character, and encompasses all 12 of our character traits. It is the quality of being honest, trustworthy, fair, responsible, caring, and having the moral courage to do the right thing. Without *integrity*, an individual will fall short of realizing his or her full potential.

“Integrity” comes from the word “integer,” which means “one” or “wholeness.” To have *integrity* is to be a complete person, with no divisions or differences in how decisions are made from situation to situation, in any setting.

Every day our character is challenged by the situations we face. Our actions or our decisions in handling these circumstances reveal our *integrity*. Stephen Covey’s book, *First Things First*, refers to a “moment of choice,” and how *integrity* has to fit quickly between a stimulus and a response. In this pause, an individual has to think about the position he will take. With a good character base, we increase our ability to act quickly with *integrity* and courage. It takes courage to make choices that may not be popular or understood by others but that keep your *integrity* whole. It takes courage to stand strong against peer pressure. It takes courage to live with *integrity* and to be honest even if you will suffer a consequence. The challenge is to develop the character necessary to act with *integrity* and courage in this moment of choice!

In his book, *Life’s Greatest Lessons*, Dr. Hal Urban identifies honesty as the most essential ingredient of success in life. He states, “People who have *integrity* experience life at a different level. It’s richer, more meaningful and more rewarding.”

Teaching children to have *integrity* is challenging but provides great rewards. Parents are the primary moral educators

of children, but character education in school is also important. Research has proven character education to be a positive force in reducing disruptive behavior, alcohol and drug abuse, and teen pregnancy. It contributes to parental and community involvement, safe and orderly schools, reduced discipline problems, greater academic achievement, and higher student and staff morale.

The Cherry Tree

Excerpt adapted from *The Life of Washington* by M. L. Weems

When George Washington was about six years old, he was given a hatchet of which, like most little boys, he was extremely fond. He went about chopping everything that came his way. One day, as he wandered about the garden amusing himself by chopping sticks, he found a beautiful, young English cherry tree, of which his father was most proud. He tried the edge of his hatchet on the trunk of the tree, and chopped it right down. Sometime after this, his father discovered what had happened to his favorite tree. He came into the house in great anger and demanded to know who the mischievous person was who had cut the tree. Nobody could tell him anything about it. Just then George, with his little hatchet, came into the room. "George," said his father, "do you know who has killed my beautiful little cherry tree?" This was a hard question to answer, and for a moment George was staggered by it, but quickly recovering himself he cried: "I cannot tell a lie, father, you know I cannot tell a lie! I did cut it with my little hatchet." The anger died out of his father's face, and taking the boy tenderly in his arms, he said, "My son, I am glad that you were brave enough to tell me the truth. I would rather have you truthful and brave than a thousand trees! Never forget that, my son!"

Books and Movies of Character

Fiction Books

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe by C. S. Lewis (3rd to 6th grade)

Little Croc’s Purse by Lizzie Finlay (Preschool and up)

I Smell Like Ham by Betty Hicks (5th to 8th grade)

Nothing But the Truth by Avi (7th Grade and up)

Horton Hatches the Egg by Dr. Suess (Preschool and up)

The Berenstain Bears and the Truth by Stan Berenstain (Preschool and up)

The Boy Who Cried Wolf by Aesop (Preschool and up)

Nonfiction Books

Learning About Honesty From the Life of Abraham Lincoln by Kiki Mosher

Washington, A Life by Ron Chernow

Kids of Character by Russell Williams

Raising Children With Character: Parents, Trust, and the Development of Personal Integrity by Elizabeth Berger

The Book of Virtues by William Bennett

Movies

Pinocchio
Chariots of Fire

What is Integrity?

- Being honest, loyal, fair, trustworthy, and respectful.
- Having high moral standards.
- Doing “the right thing” even if there is a cost.
- Having a good conscience, and listening to it.
- Being dependable; doing what you say you will do.
- Having empathy (experiencing the feelings of another person).
- Not compromising your beliefs or standards.

Quotes

“Character is how you act when no one is watching.” *Michael Josephson*

“Real integrity stays in place whether the test is adversity or prosperity.” *Charles Swindoll*

“Rather fail with honor than succeed by fraud.” *Sophocles*

“In looking for people to hire, look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence and energy. If they don't have the first, the other two will kill you.” *Warren Buffet*

“To make your children capable of honesty is the beginning of education.” *John Ruskin*

“Real integrity is not what we talk about having, but how we respond honestly to our daily decisions, 100% of the time.” *Anonymous*

“If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything.” *Mark Twain*

“The time is always right to do what is right.” *Martin Luther King Jr.*

“Honesty is the cornerstone of all success, without which confidence and ability to perform shall cease to exist.” *Mary Kay Ash*

“I meant what I said and I said what I meant. An elephant’s faithful one hundred percent.” *Dr. Seuss*

Practicing Integrity

- Always do what is right even if it is costly and difficult.
- Don’t compromise good morals by giving in to temptations or peer pressure.
- Tell the truth even if you will get into trouble.
- Practice and role model good character.
- Refuse to listen to negative talk or gossip about others.
- Don’t say or do things that could hurt others.
- Tell the truth and be trustworthy.
- When you make a commitment, follow through with it.
- Admit it when you make mistakes and learn from them.

Applying Integrity

- Follow the rules of your house.
- Be honest with everyone.
- Play fairly.
- Speak kindly about others.
- Parents should role model honesty and “doing the right thing” to their children. They are watching us!

- “Live so that when your children think of fairness and integrity, they think of you.” H. Jackson Brown
- Teach each child to have a good conscience, to be able to tell right from wrong. This is as important as teaching spelling or math!

Personal commitments to Integrity:

- I will pause during that “moment of choice” and try to make the right decision.
- I will look at situations carefully before making judgements.
- I will make commitments and keep those commitments.
- I will not profit at the expense of others.
- I will not cheat in order to receive a higher grade.
- I will not lie or be deceitful.
- I will be honest, sincere, caring, trustworthy and respectful.
- I will not hurt others.
- I will not let the world change me.
- I will have courage to do the right thing, even if there is a cost!