

# Life Skills

## Preserving the innocence and innate wisdom of the child

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This multicultural elementary school curriculum supports the positive development of young children. At the elementary-school age, children are young enough to be highly impressionable yet old enough to feel stress and anxiety about whether their world is safe. The curriculum's "life skills" are foundational attributes for positive growth. If taught early in peer-group settings and developed with adult encouragement and guidance, these life skills strengthen a child's *resilience, self-differentiation, and psychological well-being*.

This curriculum is centered around six "life skills" with child-oriented definitions:

**Honesty:** Tell the truth.

**Kindness:** Be nice.

**Gratitude:** Be thankful for the good things.

**Acceptance:** Make everyone feel welcome.

**Forgiveness:** Keep an open heart; everybody gets to try again.

**Compassion:** Help people who are struggling.

Each life skill has both an other-oriented aspect and a self-oriented aspect. For example, just as it's important to learn to forgive others, it's important to learn to forgive ourselves. It's good to be compassionate to others who are struggling, it's necessary to be compassionate toward ourselves and our own struggles. This inner-and-outer practice helps children better understand the behavior of others while at the same time encouraging a self-image that promotes positive growth.

For each life skill, the curriculum offers three stories (from a diversity of cultural traditions) that can be shared with children. The curriculum also has a set of

quotations and sayings for each life skill. The quotations offer multiple starting-points for conversation, group discussion, poetry-writing or story-writing exercises, improvisational skits, and written or oral journaling. For each life skill, the “dark-side” opposite is listed, inviting children into conversation about the conduct of heroes and villains from books, movies, games, and comics.

For children at the elementary-school age, villains and monsters have a powerful allure. Compared to adults, children are physically weaker as well as typically without control over a family’s situation or life decisions. The life skills curriculum helps children find power through positive attitudes and behaviors. A fundamental lesson embedded in the curriculum is that while we may not be able to control what happens to us, we are in charge of our response. Using the power of story to “practice” positive responses to challenging situations helps children gain confidence that they can be the heroes of their own life-stories.

It is especially helpful for this curriculum to be taught to children and their peers as a group effort. The discussion of life skills and their practice through role-playing and other creative activities creates a common understanding of best behavior. Within a peer group, this common understanding leads to a shared expectation of positive attitudes and behavior, further supporting each child’s practice of the six life skills. The peer-group bonding around positive attitudes and behavior helps to reduce bullying and violence.

As children bring life skills practice home, they are better prepared to cope with the challenges some encounter in family life.

***A Note on Teacher Preparation.*** To prepare to teach the life skills curriculum, teachers can benefit from small-group discussion of the adult counterpart to the elementary curriculum. The 13 week adult curriculum is outlined on our website, [www.nantucketpeaceworks.com](http://www.nantucketpeaceworks.com). On the home page, click the invitation tab and then scroll down to the end of the page and click “circle of trust curriculum”. This will take you to the Peaceworks Curriculum pdf file.

## **Honesty: Tell the truth.**

*Tell the truth to others and to yourself about yourself.*

### **Stories**

- 1.
- 2.
3. Jakata tale about the rabbit speaking truth to power

### **Quotations**

- Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom. —Thomas Jefferson
- There is no pillow so soft as a clear conscience. —French Proverb
- Three things cannot long be hidden: the sun, the moon, and the truth. —Confucius
- If you want to ruin the truth, stretch it. —Unknown Author
- Truth fears no questions. —Unknown Author
- If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything. —Mark Twain
- A half-truth is a whole lie. —Yiddish Proverb
- Honesty is the best policy. —Benjamin Franklin
- No legacy is so rich as honesty. —William Shakespeare
- Honesty is not something that you can wear out. —Waylon Jennings
- If you don't tell the truth about yourself, you cannot tell it about other people. —Virginia Woolf

### **Examples of Truth-Telling in Popular Culture**

[Movies and video games, comic books, wildly popular books; choose examples where the honest person succeeds because of the honesty.]

## Learning Activities & Projects

1. Conversation (2-3 kids)
2. Discussion (larger group)
3. Writing
4. Skit
5. Art

## Opposites of Honesty

*Lying*: saying something you know isn't true

*Pretending something is true when it isn't* (so you sort of believe it yourself)

*Half-Truth*: Telling a part of the truth but leaving out something important

## Examples of Dishonesty in Popular Culture

[Movies and video games, wildly popular books; choose examples where the dishonest person comes to a bad end.]

## Exceptions

- Sometimes, out of compassion, it's best NOT to say everything we know or think. If you think someone is fat or ugly or unskilled, honesty does not require that you announce it. Silence is fine. ("If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all.")
- Sometimes people find themselves in life-threatening situations. It's OK to do whatever you need to do to save yourself. Afterwards, tell a caring adult what happened.

## Kindness: Be nice.

*Be nice to other people and be nice to yourself.*

### Stories

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Quotations

- No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted. —Aesop
- One kind word can warm three winter months. —Japanese Proverb
- Never look down on anybody unless you're helping him up. —Jesse Jackson
- Treat everyone with politeness, even those who are rude to you - not because they are nice, but because you are. —Unknown Author
- Don't wait for people to be friendly, show them how. —Unknown Author
- Kindness, like a boomerang, always returns. —Unknown Author
- The kindest word in all the world is the unkind word, unsaid. —Unknown Author
- The only people with whom you should try to get even are those who have helped you. —John E. Southard
- Carry out a random act of kindness, with no expectation of reward, safe in the knowledge that one day someone might do the same for you. —Princess Diana
- Kindness is the language that the deaf can hear and the blind can see. —Mark Twain
- A warm smile is the universal language of kindness. —William Arthur Ward

### Examples of Kindness in Popular Culture

[Movies and video games, wildly popular books; choose examples where the kind person succeeds because of the kindness.]

### **Learning Activities & Projects**

1. Conversation (2-3 kids)
2. Discussion (larger group)
3. Writing
4. Skit
5. Art

### **Opposites of Kindness**

Rudeness

Selfishness

Greediness

Meanness

### **Examples of Unkindness in Popular Culture**

[Movies and video games, wildly popular books; choose examples where the unkind person comes to a bad end.]

### **Exceptions**

**Gratitude:** Be thankful for the good things.

*Say thanks to others; appreciate the good things you do.*

## Stories

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## Quotations

- Silent gratitude isn't very much use to anyone. —G.B. Stern
- When eating bamboo sprouts, remember the man who planted them. — Chinese Proverb
- Gratitude is the best attitude. —Unknown Author
- Always say thank you for everything, with no exceptions. —Unknown Author
- Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it. —William Arthur Ward
- Gratitude unlocks the fullness in life. It turns what we have into enough and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. —Melody Beattie
- When it comes to life, the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude. —Gilbert K. Chesterton
- Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace to today and creates a vision for tomorrow. —Melody Beattie
- Thankfulness is the beginning of gratitude. Gratitude is the completion of thankfulness. Thankfulness may consist merely of words. Gratitude is shown in acts. —Henri Frederic Amiel
- Gratitude helps you to grow and expand; gratitude brings joy and laughter into your life and into the lives of those around you. —Eileen Caddy
- Gratitude is the most exquisite form of courtesy. —Jacques Maritain

## **Examples of Gratitude in Popular Culture**

[Movies and video games, comic books, wildly popular books; choose examples where the grateful person succeeds because of the attitude of gratitude.]

## **Learning Activities & Projects**

1. Conversation (2-3 kids)
2. Discussion (larger group)
3. Writing
4. Skit
5. Art

## **Opposites of Gratitude**

Ingratitude

Arrogance

## **Examples of Ingratitude in Popular Culture**

[Movies and video games, comic books, wildly popular books; choose examples where the ungrateful person comes to a bad end.]

## **Exceptions**



## **Acceptance: Make everyone feel welcome.**

*Greet and welcome everyone, especially if different;  
welcome your own differences.*

### **Stories**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **Quotations**

- We may have different religions, different languages, different colored skin, but we all belong to one human race. —Kofi Annan
- How far you go in life depends on you being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because someday in life, you will have been all of these. —George Washington Carver
- Friendship with oneself is all important, because without it one cannot be friends with anyone else. —Eleanor Roosevelt
- You are perfect and complete, just as you are! —Unknown Author
- A person cannot be comfortable without first having their own approval...  
Mark Twain
- What you think about yourself is much more important than what others think of you. —Marcus Annaeus Seneca
- The greatest gift that you can give others is the gift of unconditional love and acceptance. —Brian Tracy
- Happiness can exist only in acceptance. —George Orwell
- A friend is someone who understand your past, believes in your future and accepts you just the way you are. —Unknown Author

## **Examples of Acceptance in Popular Culture**

[Movies and video games, comic books wildly popular books; choose examples where the accepting person succeeds because of the attitude of acceptance.]

### **Learning Activities & Projects**

1. Conversation (2-3 kids)
2. Discussion (larger group)
3. Writing
4. Skit
5. Art

## **Opposites of Acceptance**

Rejection

Prejudice

Intolerance

## **Examples of Intolerance in Popular Culture**

[Movies and video games, comic books, wildly popular books; choose examples where the intolerant person comes to a bad end.]

## **Exceptions**

**Forgiveness:** Keep an open heart; let everybody try again.

*Forgive others and begin again; forgive yourself and try again.*

## Stories

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## Quotations

- To forgive is the highest, most beautiful form of love. In return, you will receive untold peace and happiness. —Robert Muller
- Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future. —Paul Boese
- By forgiving others, we feel better. —Unknown Author
- Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. —Martin Luther King Jr.
- The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is an attribute of the strong. —Mahatma Gandhi
- Mistakes are always forgivable, if one has the courage to admit them. —Bruce Lee
- Always forgive your enemies; nothing annoys them so much. —Oscar Wilde
- Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that crushed it. —Mark Twain
- Forgiveness is a virtue of the brave. —Indira Gandhi
- To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you. —Lewis B. Smedes
- Forgiveness means letting go of the past. —Gerald Jamplosky

- Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself. —Suzanne Somers
- Forgiveness is a funny thing. It warms the heart and cools the sting. —William Arthur Ward
- There is no love without forgiveness and there is no forgiveness without love. —Bryant H. McGill
- It is easier to forgive an enemy than to forgive a friend. —William Blake
- The practice of forgiveness is our most important contribution to healing the world. —Marianne Williamson
- Without forgiveness, there is no future. —Desmond Tutu
- There is no revenge so complete as forgiveness. —Josh Billings
- How unhappy is he that cannot forgive himself. —Publilius

### **Examples of Forgiveness in Popular Culture**

[Movies and video games, comic books, wildly popular books; choose examples where the forgiving person succeeds because of a forgiving attitude.]

### **Learning Activities & Projects**

1. Conversation (2-3 kids)
2. Discussion (larger group)
3. Writing
4. Skit
5. Art

### **Opposites of Forgiveness**

Blame

Resentment

Holding a grudge

## **Examples of Unforgiving Behavior in Popular Culture**

[Movies and video games, comic books, wildly popular books; choose examples where the unforgiving person comes to a bad end.]

### **Exceptions**

## **Compassion: Help people who are struggling.**

*Imagine how someone who is struggling may feel, and then help; recognize when you are struggling, and ask for help.*

### **Stories**

- 1.
- 2.
3. Jakata tale about the little parrot

### **Quotations**

- The purpose of human life is to serve and to show compassion and the will to help others. —Albert Schweitzer
- Greatness lies not in trying to be somebody but in trying to help somebody. —Unknown Author
- A candle loses nothing of its light by lighting another candle. —Father James Kelly
- No one has ever become poor by giving. —Anne Frank
- The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all living beings, which are part of one another and all involved in another. —Thomas Merton
- Until one extends their circle of compassion to include all living things, one will not find themselves peace. —Albert Schweitzer
- We have two hands; one for helping ourselves and one for helping others. —Unknown Author
- There is no exercise better for the heart than leaning down and lifting people up. —John Holmes

### **Examples of Compassion in Popular Culture**

[Movies and video games, comic books, wildly popular books; choose examples where the compassionate person succeeds because of the compassion.]

### **Learning Activities & Projects**

1. Conversation (2-3 kids)
2. Discussion (larger group)
3. Writing
4. Skit
5. Art

### **Opposites of Compassion**

Cruelty

Indifference

### **Examples of Uncompassionate Behavior in Popular Culture**

[Movies and video games, comic books, wildly popular books; choose examples where the person who lacks compassion comes to a bad end.]

### **Exceptions**