

CHARACTER

Published by the ASCD Character Education Network and

Boston University's Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character

Summer 2000

Volume VIII, No. 2

Patience

by Rosemary Jordano

Be patient enough to seek first to understand others and then to be understood.

Patience always reminds me of a story from my travels. I was at Chicago O'Hare airport. Not surprisingly, I was rushing. Having used the restroom, I was attempting to wash my hands with an automatic faucet. I slipped them under the first faucet – no water. I moved to the next....again, no water! I was beginning to wonder what was wrong with the bathroom sinks until finally at the third sink, a very kind-looking grandmotherly lady (who reminded me of my mom) tapped me on the shoulder and said, "You have to stop moving and just stand still for a moment. Be patient." Every time I think of how quickly this woman understood me and my struggles with patience, I both laugh at myself and marvel at her wisdom.

It is the human condition to want to feel understood. The paradox is that if each of us were to put the other first, we would mutually arrive at a feeling of "I am understood." But it takes patience to put ourselves on hold while listening to someone else. Patience means waiting calmly to hear what another person is saying, taking time to reflect on his/her thought, and then replying while first acknowledging what her or she has said with a question or observation. Then, and only then, can we begin with our own requests, our own thoughts, and our own solutions.

My mother was one of the most patient people I knew. She was patient enough to take the time to reflect first on what others were thinking and feeling

before she made her requests or spoke her own thoughts. She taught, through her example, that it takes patience to "seek first to understand others before you ask them to understand you."

Patience seemed to come so naturally for my mother. As with any skill or quality, it was probably cultivated over many years. I have had to struggle daily with being patient with myself as I work on being patient with others. My mother's example of patience gives me a touchstone, a light at which to direct my actions.

People learn by doing, but also by watching. As children, we look to our parents, older relatives, siblings, and teachers to learn how to act. They are our models. I remember so vividly how my mother used to iron as part of her daily routine. It would take hours, but she would exhibit such patience. I can still

In forming habits of patience...we offer a gift to others, the gift of our time to understand them.

see the starch spray bottle and smell the sweet aroma of the hot iron against my dad's white cotton shirt. Each day I would stand right next to my mom with my own child-sized ironing board and iron in my "playhouse." My mother knew that her every action had an impact on me. The pile of shirts would take hours, but she used this daily chore - ironing - to help me practice patience.

As we grow older, we still measure our conduct by those we admire. We seek to improve ourselves by reaching up to the example set by those we believe to be further along the path to completeness. Then, the key to following their example is simply to try to

(Continued on pg 4)

Patience: A Selected Bibliography

Little Women, Louisa May Alcott
Through Grandpa's Eyes, Patricia MacLachlan
The Ugly Duckling, Hans Christian Anderson
A Gathering of Days, Joan W. Blos
Hatchet, Gary Paulsen
The Tortoise and the Hare, Aesop
The Golden Key, George MacDonald
The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks, Katherine Paterson
Horton Hatches the Egg, Dr. Seuss
Baseball for Breakfast: The Story of a Boy Who Hated to Wait, Bill Myers and Frank Riccio
The Magic of Patience, Rosalyn White
Owl Moon, Jane Yolen
The Microscope, Maxine Kumin
The Lady of Guadalupe, Tomie dePaola
Carry On, Mr. Bowditch, Jean Lee Latham
Louis Braille, Margaret Davidson

Movie Moments: Patience

Film is a wonderful tool for helping students see virtue-in-action. If you have film suggestions or tips on using film effectively to teach character, let us hear from you!

Lorenzo's Oil

~Based on a true story, this movie depicts the fight that Lorenzo Odone and his family wage against the disease adrenoleukodystrophy (ALD). The virtues of patience, courage, and compassion may all be taught using this wonderful film.

October Sky

~Based on the autobiography *The Rocket Boys*, this film chronicles the efforts of a high school student and his outsider friends who are determined to launch their own rockets.

Beethoven Lives Upstairs

~This movie portrays the relationship between a ten-year-old boy mourning his father's death and the new tenant in his father's study, Ludwig van Beethoven. Their relationship helps the boy to survive his father's death and Beethoven to triumph over his deafness, culminating in his composition of the Ninth Symphony.

To Our Readers:

We want to hear from you!

The strength of this newsletter depends on the active contribution of its readers. Our readers need to hear what's happening in *your* school or community. (That's what our "From the Trenches" section is all about.)

We welcome submissions of any kind: letters, articles, anecdotes. What has worked in your classroom, home, or school? What has inspired your dedication to character education? We also encourage recommendations for our "Selected Bibliography" and "Character Quotes."

The Fall issue will spotlight *Integrity*. The deadline for the next issue is September 30. Please address all such correspondence to:

Associate Newsletter Editor
Center for the Advancement
of Ethics and Character
605 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02215

****Visit our NEW website!****

<http://www.bu.edu/education/caec>

CHARACTER is published four times a year by the Character Education Network and the Boston University Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character. The Newsletter is sponsored in part by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), but is not an official publication of ASCD.

Editor: Karen E. Bohlin
Managing Editor: Megan Black
Associate Editor: Kara Taylor

FROM THE TRENCHES

Patience...a special quality for middle school students!

Patience, is often not considered a part of a middle school student's vocabulary. They are bundles of energy, always moving quickly, anxious for the next thing in their lives to happen. But, in fact, students at middle level do exercise patience and caring attitudes, when these values are taught and modeled by the adults in their buildings.

At Kennedy Middle School two weeks before the end of the school year, when most middle schools students are hyper, students quietly walk into the cafeteria to view a student play. The counselor stands in front of the students, holds up her hand, and smiles. Within ten seconds the students have stopped talking and wait attentively. The counselor introduces the play and students watch the performance, all in a very respectful manner. Only once during the performance does a teacher have to signal, by placing a finger next to his lips for a student to stop a side conversation. This scene is common at Kennedy where students have the patience to watch a performance, by being respectful of the performers and the other students around them. This happens because the staff at Kennedy has made a commitment to teach character education.

It takes patience to be a teacher. Middle school students at Kennedy have developed a game, similar to Monopoly, which teaches elementary students how to be more respectful, caring and responsible. The game provides situations they have to solve before moving on the game board. The students have taken this game into the elementary classrooms and taught the elementary students themselves. The older students love teaching the concepts to elementary students in this fun, easy-to-understand manner.

As students hustle down the breezeways going from one class to another, a student accidentally drops his notebook and papers fall all over. Several students immediately stop, bend down, quickly pick up the papers and hand them to the student. Within a minute the student is on his way with all his papers in hand ready to put them back into his notebook as soon as he arrives in class. Students help each other, having the patience to stop and help rather than ignoring and hurrying by a student in need. This is common in a caring school climate.

Waiting in line in the cafeteria is often a scene of pushing and crowding. Who has patience when they are hungry? Middle school students who care about others have the patience to stand in line and talk quietly to friends even during lunchtime. If a student does crowd the line, others students will say, "That is not how we behave here." Students monitor themselves in a school where students, not just the adult supervisors, have patience.

Middle school students are full of wonderful energy. It is possible for this force to be directed in a positive manner that allows students to have the patience to help others, listen to others quietly when appropriate, respect many points of view, and wait for their turn. Middle school students have patience because they have been taught through character education initiatives. This helps them understand that patience is a quality that makes the world a better place for all.

Kay Mehas is the principal at Kennedy Middle School in Eugene, OR, a winner of the 2000 National Schools of Character Award.

(Continued from page 1)

be patient, and to be intentional in the practice.

The patient person is not born patient; she looks to others of virtue and then follows their example. She pushes herself to be the person she wishes to be and, over time, she will become that person. But it takes many small steps along the way. We need to repeat certain practices so many times that they become habits, like brushing one's teeth. By creating tangible and visible little habits of patience, we move ourselves in a real way towards becoming more patient. These habits can be little things that come up in our work or our interactions with family. For example, if someone asks the same question twice, instead of replying, "I told you that yesterday," we can answer without pointing out the other's forgetfulness.

Aristotle wrote that we are what we habitually do. He believed that habit was the most important constituent of human virtue. If we are not naturally patient, then we are normal. Very few people, if any, are born saints. All that is required is a desire to possess the qualities we admire in others and the will to adopt those qualities as our own. The patient-hearted person is she who has learned how to act patiently when her instincts tell her otherwise.

In forming habits of patience that are woven into

our everyday life, we continually work to improve ourselves. And by thinking outside of ourselves, we decrease our anxiety about our own problems. We offer a gift to others, the gift of our time to understand them.

The mission of the teacher is most successful when we seek to provide an example of the human qualities at the heart of education. In doing so, we will not only teach others, but also ourselves. Education literally means, "to lead out." There is no better way to lead than by example. This was so true with my mother, who was my primary teacher. I still iron. It calms me. It brings me back to my childhood and the patience of my mother.

Rosemary Jordano is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of ChildrenFirst Inc. ChildrenFirst Inc., in Boston MA, is the national leader in the design, development, and operation of corporate-sponsored backup child care centers.

Upcoming Events in Character Education

Oct 19 - Oct 21 : *Character Education: The Heart of School Reform*

Philadelphia, PA

Contact: Character Education Partnership

1600 K St. NW, Suite 501; Washington, DC 20006

E-Mail: ceforum@character.org

Telephone: (800) 988-8081

FAX: (202) 296-7779

November 4: *CAEC Internalizing Virtue Institute*
Boston, MA

Contact: Erika Schubert, Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character

605 Commonwealth Avenue; Boston, MA 02215

E-mail: eschuber@bu.edu

Telephone: (617) 353-3262

FAX: (617) 353-4351

Feb 8 - Feb 10 : *11th Annual Institute on College Student Values*

Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL

Contact: Anne Kaiser, Center for the Study of

Values in College Student Development and the

Institute on College Student Values

E-Mail: akaiser@admin.fsu.edu

* Entering its fourth year, the National Schools of Character Awards program aims to highlight schools and districts from across the country, which exemplify the goals of effective character education. *Applications for the 2001 awards are available now and are due in December 2000.* Please visit the Character Education Partnership at <http://www.character.org> to obtain an application!

CAEC INTERNALIZING VIRTUE INSTITUTE

Working from the CAEC's guiding text, *Building Character in Schools*, our intensive one-day Institute offers lead teachers and administrators practical strategies and principles for effectively integrating virtue-centered character education into school curricula and culture.

We require individual applicants or teams to append a statement of purpose to the application form, no more than one page, indicating why you or your team have chosen to apply to the CAEC Institute and what you seek to gain from participation. Statement of purpose should be signed by your principal or other administrator. Applicants will be notified of acceptance in a timely fashion.

We prefer that schools or districts send teams of teachers and/or administrators responsible for character education initiatives and/or staff training and development (e.g., lead teachers, curriculum coordinator, principal, superintendent).

November 4, 2000 April 7, 2001
Boston University, 9 am to 3 pm
\$200 first participant, \$175 each additional participant

CAEC INSTITUTE APPLICATION FORM

Fall Institute Spring Institute

Name(s) & positions of participants(indicate contact person): 1) _____

2) _____ 3) _____

School/District: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ FAX: _____ Email: _____

Please mail this form and statement of purpose to: The Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, Boston University, 605 Commonwealth Ave, Boston, MA 02215

For more information, call (617) 353-3262.

A Character Kick-off for a Successful School Season

A successful kickoff to character education in your classroom can be as fun and as stimulating as the first kickoff of the season to the most avid football fans. Just as a football coach strategically prepares his team for the season, you should prepare your own game plan to get your classroom character education initiative launched this fall.

Many winning strategies should be implemented before the actual school season. It is imperative that all your team members feel welcome, respected, and part of a cooperative class family. One to two weeks prior to the first day of school, each student in your class or homeroom should receive a warm and welcoming letter from you. This will demonstrate care and respect. By modeling these qualities in a natural way, you have already indicated the style of relationships you wish to establish in your classroom.

If your school has not established monthly themes, gather a character team composed of students, staff, teachers, parents, and community members in order to select appropriate themes and definitions. These will set your goals for the rest of the school year. Consider naming your halls for these character traits, such as Cooperative Court, and display street signs. Put signs on mailboxes outside each teacher's room with their address for use during language arts letter-writing activities. For example, my address is:

Mrs. Richard's Class
#5 Responsibility Row
St. Louis, MO 63128

Now that your equipment and field are ready, it's time to plan for player training.

When you meet with your team for the first time, make sure that you take time for necessary warm-up exercises. A class character climate must be established. Have students work in cooperative groups to come up with team guidelines to help their class team form positive relationships during the year. A representative from each group shares their guidelines and a Team Guidelines poster is created and posted. This is another way of outlining your goals for building a team of character.

Lead activities to make sure that respectful discussions between all the members of the class take place throughout the year. One such activity asks that students write down a hurtful comment that they received from someone at school in the past that was disrespectful. Next, they trace one of their feet and cut out the outline of the foot. On this foot-shaped paper, they write down a compliment that made them feel respected by a classmate. Then they take turns sharing the hurtful words that they want never to hear again. Then they tape their positive foot comment over the hurtful words to "stomp" those type of comments out of the classroom forever.

Another beneficial activity to help establish your classroom as a "peace place" or "no-ridicule zone" (as discussed in Peter Yarrow's "Don't Laugh at Me" curriculum) is to have one class member trace the outline of another classmate on a piece of butcher paper. The class should recognize this drawing as a representation of any individual in their class. Then, members of the class will take turns writing comments to explain what is appropriate for a discussion and what should stay outside of that line. For instance, a compliment would be written inside the outline as something that a classmate would appreciate having within his/her zone; dissing or disrespect would be written outside of the outline as something that should stay outside the zone.

With these kinds of activities, your students will remember what types of comments are appropriate to make to classmates, particularly during classroom discussions and activities like Show and Tell, and will understand the importance of patience, respect, and kindness. Now your team is warmed up and ready for play.

To ensure a successful season, however, continual communication and practice between the players and the coaches are needed to reinforce this positive class climate. A school season demonstrating positive character traits are a result of intentional and strategic planning by all members of the team, coaching staff, and community fans.

Amy B. Richards is an elementary school teacher at the Kennerly Elementary School in St. Louis, MO, a 2000 National Schools of Character awardwinner.

ACADEMY UPDATE

In an effort to help educators bring character education to life, the CAEC, in partnership with the SC State Department of Education, has directed three Teachers Academies this summer at Wofford College, USC-Salkehatchie, and Coker College in South Carolina. All three Academies were extremely well-received, creating an intensive and stimulating intellectual retreat for these teachers and inviting them to consider how best to shape a curricular and schoolwide character education initiative.

The CAEC will direct one more Academy in August in collaboration with the Bourne Public Schools with a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Education. For more information on CAEC Academies and Professional Development Institutes, see our new web page at <http://www.bu.edu/education/caec>.

SONYA TOLSTOYA: A MODEL OF PATIENCE

In the first year of her marriage to Count Leo Tolstoy, young Sonya realized that her husband was not given to the details of managing their estate. Thus she entered the one word "patience" and underlined it in her journal. She accepted the full responsibility of managing their household. She reportedly made seven handwritten copies of the entire manuscript of *War and Peace*. She also bore children to the great Russian writer. During 48 years of marriage to an often eccentric man, it became evident that she diagnosed her greatest challenge early on.

This anecdote was taken from the "Character" calendar produced by Avalanche Publishing 1999, Huntington Beach, CA.

**Please use this form to initiate, renew, or update your membership. Send to:
Associate Newsletter Editor, CAEC, 605 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215**

Name

Occupation, Title, or Position

Mailing Address [] work [] home

Telephone [] work [] home

Friend of the CAEC (\$50): *Quarterly newsletter; occasional mailings.*

- [] New membership
[] Renewal

ASCD Character Education Network (\$20):
Quarterly newsletter; occasional mailings.

- [] New membership (if eligible as an ASCD member)
[] Renewal

[] Additional contribution \$ _____

Please make checks payable to CAEC

Note: \$40 of each Friend of the CAEC membership is tax-deductible. We are a non-profit organization, which relies on grants and the generosity of its members. Any additional tax-deductible contribution you make to the CAEC is both needed and greatly appreciated.

Character Quotes: Patience

Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish.

~John Quincy Adams

The strongest of all warriors are these two—
Time and Patience.

~Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy

Rome was not built in a day. Achievements of great pith and moment are not accomplished without patient perseverance and a considerable interval of time.

~E. Cobham Brewer

Use disappointments as material for patience.

~Unknown

Patience is the art of hoping.

~Marquis de Vauvenargues

'Tis all men's office to speak patience
To those that wring under the load of sorrow,
But no man's virtue nor sufficiency
To be so moral when he shall endure
The like himself.

~William Shakespeare

Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved.

~Helen Keller

Patience is the best remedy for every trouble.

~Titus Maccius Plautus

Patience is the best of dispositions: he who possesses patience, possesses all things.

~African proverb

Boston University
Center for the Advancement
of Ethics and Character
605 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02215

33-0110-914-01383-9