

Discovering the Real Me

Teacher's Manual #9

A Companion for Student Textbook #9

Character Education

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Section I: Introduction

Dear Educator:

As our world becomes smaller through globalization and advancing technology, parents and educators the world over share concerns about raising the younger generation. Family breakdown, sexual immorality, substance abuse, media influences, and youth's challenging of authority and tradition are just a few of the widespread concerns. Teachers in the U.S. report that students of today are less respectful toward their elders, one another, and themselves than they were just a few years ago. This makes them harder to discipline and teach.¹ As traditional religious, civic, and family values come into question in our rapidly changing world, adults sometimes feel they are swimming upstream in a culture saturated with images of violence, sexual license, and material ease.

An alliance between educators and parents for the moral good of the young is essential to combat these negative trends. Many societies have considered moral education to be part of education's mission in partnership with and in continuation of the parents' moral instruction of their children. Plato of ancient Greece said, "As soon as the child can understand what is said, mother and father exert themselves to make the child as good as possible, at each word and action teaching and showing that this is right and that wrong, this honorable and that dishonorable... At a later stage they send him to teachers and tell them to attend to his conduct far more than to his reading and writing."

In China, learning was tied to the great moral philosophy of the sage, Confucius. Students were to memorize and learn writing skills from the Confucian classics by copying such phrases as "Idleness when young regrets before long," and "Where there is a will, there is a way."

The founders of major universities in the United States—Harvard College, for example—wanted to train leaders for a more civilized and virtuous society. Two founding fathers of America, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, believed that education was supposed to contribute to the moral character of society—to raise up people of virtue so that freedom would always be tempered by responsibility. They thought the schools had a large part to play in the raising of good citizens.²

It is time for educators to become involved once again in the moral development of the young. It is no longer a question of teaching relativistic "values." Relativistic here means that values are simply what a person values—what one cherishes as one's personal beliefs and which may differ from person to person. It is now a question of teaching virtues—character strengths recognized and admired the world over.

No society honors liars, cowards, cheats, or killers. Every society admires the sacrificial, the noble, the brave, the strong, the honest, the true. Likewise, no parent would object to his or her child being taught honesty, bravery, integrity and respect in school.

1. Alcestis Oberg, "Values Education Wins Supporters," USA Today, April 19, 2000, p. 27A.

2. *Cultivating Heart and Character: Educating for Life's Most Essential Goals*, eds. Devine, Seuk, and Wilson, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Character Development Publishing, 2000) p. 14.

This book is designed to help the teacher educate for character by providing lesson plans accompanying the chapters of *Discovering the Real Me*, a character education curriculum based upon universally admired moral principles. *Discovering the Real Me* is a dynamic curriculum for which international feedback is sought and welcomed. It is hoped that each culture in which *Discovering the Real Me* is used will make its own unique contributions in knowledge, methods, story and legend.

In countries around the world, Western culture and media have had a strong influence on youth, and that is one of the reasons why young people are turning away from traditional morals and ethics in their cultures. It is with this in mind that the IIFWP educational texts have been developed. One of the goals of *Discovering the Real Me: A Student Textbook in Character Education* is to support traditional morals and ethics in different cultures while acknowledging that we live in a plural world and need to be part of that world.

The students are not the only ones who go on a journey of discovery. Teachers themselves often feel edified by teaching for character. Those who educate for character find their teaching experience more pleasant and fruitful, with fewer discipline problems. It lends their teaching new life and new purpose and helps them feel fulfilled in their teaching mission. Educating the young in how to be good human beings, in addition to teaching them academic knowledge, helps re-ignite teachers’ original enthusiasm for going into the field of education. It helps them in their own moral lives, giving them inner rewards and satisfaction.

We hope this book makes your teaching task easier, more enjoyable and more meaningful. We hope that it will enable you to touch the hearts and lives of the young people you serve with messages that will enhance and improve their chances for successful and meaningful lives.

1. A Balanced Education

A museum exhibit in London displays piles of salt, potassium, carbon, etcetera, alongside a container of water. Underneath there is a caption that reads, “THIS IS A HUMAN BEING.” Yes, materially speaking, these are the components of a human being. Yet most people would argue that there is something more than that to a human being.

The human mind aspires to truth, beauty, goodness, virtue and love. Finding or realizing these things gives us a deep sense of fulfillment as well as happiness and joy. Without these things, life is ashen indeed.

At the same time, we have material desires and needs coming from our physical selves—the part of us that is indeed salt, potassium, carbon, water, etcetera. We like to eat tasty food. We want to be physically healthy. We seek shelter to protect us from the elements and provide us with a comfortable place to live. We value money and the things that it can buy. We seek a mate. Fulfilling these physically-based desires brings us physical happiness.

Throughout human history people have pursued both the physical and spiritual aspects of happiness. Through science we have come to understand the nature of our physical universe more and more, leading to technological advances that have enhanced the quality of our material life. Religion and philosophy have given us a deeper understanding of the internal or spiritual aspect of life, addressing fundamental questions such as the meaning of life, the way of goodness, the existence and nature of God, human relationships, etcetera. They have helped to improve the quality of our inner lives. Science on the one hand and religion and philosophy on the other have both been involved in the pursuit of human knowledge.

Although both paths to knowledge are important, the internal or spiritual aspect is more important. It is helpful to compare the relationship between these two aspects of knowledge to the relationship between the mind and body. The inner, or spiritual, aspect of life resembles the mind, and scientific, practical knowledge is analogous to the body. Just as the mind should guide and govern the body, so too morality and ethics need to guide and control the proper use of the knowledge and skills we gain from education.

In the 20th century, education throughout the world came to take on more of a scientific and technical character. In the process, the more traditional conception of education, which stressed the development of a person’s character in preparation for life, became more and more marginalized. Daniel Goleman, researcher and author of the ground-breaking book *Emotional Intelligence*, wrote, “Our schools and our culture fixate on academic abilities, ignoring emotional intelligence, a set of traits—some might call it character—that also matters immensely for our personal destiny.”³

Our tendency has been to focus on developing our populations’ knowledge, skills and creative talents while neglecting the more fundamental dimensions of educating people to become good people. The result of this overemphasis has been the education of people with high levels of professional abilities who do not possess moral standards commensurate with their influence and responsibility. Thus, we have computer specialists using their knowledge to create viruses whose sole purpose is to destroy the workings of thousands of computers, or creative artists who use their talents to propagate sex and violence.

3. Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam, 1995) p. 36.

The challenge for education in the 21st century is to correct the current imbalance. To neglect doing so is actually dangerous. As our power to control and manipulate our physical universe grows, the need to channel that power through morality grows too. Historian Arnold Toynbee put it like this: “The greater our material power, the greater our need for spiritual insight and virtue to use our power for good and not for evil... We have never been adequate spiritually for handling our material power; and today the morality gap is... greater than it has ever been in any previous age.”⁴

It is not a far stretch to realize that technical knowledge, without the guidance of morality, is dangerous. Knowledge of how to make nuclear weapons in the hands of immoral killers would be a disaster for humanity. Medical expertise in the hands of torturers refines their methods to a horrific degree.

One headmaster, having experienced the Nazi concentration camps during the Second World War, summed up this point in a letter he wrote to his new teachers each year:

My eyes saw what no man should witness: gas chambers built by learned engineers, children poisoned by learned physicians, infants killed by trained nurses, women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates. So, I am suspicious of education. ... My request is: help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human.

Whether the knowledge and skills imparted by conventional education are used for the benefit or the detriment of society depends primarily on the heart and character of the educated person. Therefore, character education is not only desirable; it is absolutely necessary.

HEART—THE CORE OF CHARACTER

When we say that someone has a good character, we are saying the person has a good heart, because the heart is at the core of human character. The deepest motivation for all moral striving arises from the heart. In particular, the heart is the source of the fundamental impulse for relatedness. It is what motivates a person to yearn for the joy of loving and being loved, the satisfaction of valuing and being valued. Love and relatedness describe a human need no less strong than the need for food or shelter. Indeed, people often are willing to give up both of these for the sake of love.

Love in its true sense is inherently moral. It requires altruistic action: giving, serving, and sacrificing one’s self for the sake of one’s beloved. Love is also inherently ethical because it can be realized only in a relationship with another human being.

As a plant must be cultivated with love and care in order to become a healthy and beautiful plant, so too a child’s heart must be cultivated with love and care if he is to grow to a healthy maturity. The beginning point of education lies with the cultivation of the child’s heart by providing him with lots of experiences of love. This enhances the child’s feeling of security and worth, making a solid foundation for subsequent growth and development. Because the heart is the core of human

4. Arnold Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948).

character, the ability to give and receive love is the ultimate manifestation of true maturity, over and above knowledge.

Along with heart, the development of a strong conscience is also an important aspect of building good character. Whereas the heart is the source of love, we may view the conscience as an internal compass guiding one's love in the direction of goodness. The moral example of others stimulates both the heart and conscience to live up to the highest standards of behavior. Parents, teachers, and other mentors serve as important role models for the developing child to follow.

Cultivation of heart takes place primarily in the family, but the school can support this type of education as well when the teacher creates a family atmosphere conducive to the cultivation of the hearts of the children in the class. The teacher also stands as a moral example and mentor, a figure trusted by his or her students, who can support the development of their hearts and consciences.

The school can provide a supportive atmosphere for this type of education by creating a moral community where students, teachers and school administrators are working together in harmony and with mutual respect. By employing cooperative learning techniques in the classroom, teachers can help their students learn how to cooperate and work together to solve common problems. The school also should seek to instill in each student a sense of shared responsibility for creating a moral culture. They should understand that each person's actions and attitudes influence others for either good or bad.

THE THREE BASIC GOALS OF LIFE AND EDUCATION

This curriculum is developed around the idea that there are Three Basic Goals of Life and Education that systems of education need to be aware of and address if they are to educate responsibly. Bearing these goals in mind shapes education to fulfill its deepest purpose: to produce well-rounded, capable, and benevolent people who are a boon to society and to themselves.

We would say that developing a mature heart and character is the first basic goal of life and of education. Yet it is not an end in itself. Ultimately the goal of developing heart and character is to become a person capable of altruistically loving others. True love cannot be separated from virtues such as respect, responsibility, fairness, honesty, loyalty, unselfishness and others, as these are concerned with the way to properly relate with others. We may say that virtues facilitate the flow of love in human relationships. Thus a person of virtue is a mature person capable of beneficial and loving relationships, which are further contexts for fostering human development and growth. To develop loving relationships, especially in the context of a family, then, is the second basic goal of life and education.

As people develop their knowledge, skills, and technical expertise, they have the potential to be of enormous benefit to the larger society. With their maturity and sense of social responsibility, such people can balance their natural desire for personal success with the larger purpose of serving their society. A strong conscience and a well-developed capacity to love make for a more ennobling contribution to the human community. We consider making a contribution to society to be the third basic goal of life and education.

The pursuit and fulfillment of these three life goals: 1) **Becoming a person of mature character** 2) **Establishing loving relationships and family**, and 3) **Making a contribution to society** point the way to valuable and productive lives. By designing our educational system with these three life

goals in mind, we can help our young people to find true satisfaction and fulfillment in life while realizing their full potential as human beings.

The *Discovering the Real Me* curriculum and teaching manuals emphasize the development of heart and conscience within the context of attaining the three basic life goals. Educating children to be better and happier human beings is the essential goal of education, even as they learn the technical expertise needed to serve our world to the best of their abilities. *Discovering the Real Me* seeks to correct the imbalance in current education by devoting special attention to the development of the inner human being, the core of which is heart.

2. Teaching Methods

This section includes a number of recommendations of the types of methodologies for teaching the *Discovering the Real Me* material. We recognize that each teacher has his or her own teaching style and may not feel comfortable using all of our suggestions. We provide this information in order to help the teacher get started, whatever the classroom situation may be. The teacher is encouraged to use and adapt these recommendations as he or she sees fit.

INTERACTIVE METHODOLOGY

The general approach recommended for teaching the course *Discovering the Real Me* is one that encourages the maximum degree of interaction between teacher and students. Because the focus of the course is on developing the students' character, the teacher must work to draw them out so that they may become agents in their own learning and development. The teacher must avoid the temptation to do all the talking while the class just listens passively. Students should be encouraged to speak up, to express their ideas, emotions and opinions. The desirable outcome is that students think and discuss in such a way that any moral conclusions they come to about right and wrong are their "own".

In guiding students to make these conclusions on their own, the teacher should keep the position of authority. To be effective, the teacher must guide students according to a clear moral framework. Otherwise, he or she runs the risk of the class coming to believe that not only does every person have the right to express his or her viewpoint (true) but that every moral viewpoint is equally valid (not true).

GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

The teacher should assign both group and individual projects. It is suggested that the teacher continually recreate the groups throughout the course (even on a daily or weekly basis) so that cliques do not form, which are detrimental to class unity. While group projects are a good way to teach students to work together, individual projects encourage personal creativity and interest in a topic. In assigning projects, the teacher should take student interest into consideration. The teacher may even want to allow the students to choose or design some projects themselves. This way they will be much more creative and enthusiastic about their work.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Over the past one or two decades a new learning approach known as "**cooperative learning**" has become very popular in many Western school systems. It has come to have its own society—the International Association for the Study of Cooperation in Education. It has its own practitioner-

oriented magazine—*Cooperative Learning*. Hundreds of studies have been conducted that demonstrate the effectiveness and applicability of cooperative learning on all levels.

What is cooperative learning? Essentially it is a **team approach to learning**, involving students working together to accomplish a shared task. Through this method students can learn social as well as scholastic skills. It is an approach that is oriented towards the student’s interests and teaches them responsibility for the results of the study process.

The traditional method of education emphasizes the subject content. In cooperative learning, the study process is primary. It says to the teacher: “Take what you would normally teach, teach it through cooperative learning for at least part of the day or period, and you’ll be teaching virtues and academics at the same time.” Cooperative learning can be utilized in teaching almost any kind of subject, whether it is ethics, literature, math, science or sports.

Here are some of the specific benefits of cooperative learning:

1. *It teaches the value of cooperation*

It teaches students that it’s a good thing to help each other. Studies show that the opportunity to be a contributing member of a benevolent peer group promotes caring about fellow group members, developing more altruistic attitudes, and engaging in pro-social behavior.

2. *It builds a sense of community in the classroom*

By promoting interaction, it helps students get to know and understand each other better. One effect of this is to reduce interpersonal conflicts. Cooperative learning has been found to foster greater acceptance of classmates who are handicapped or from different ethnic or racial backgrounds.

3. *It tempers the negative aspects of competition that often pervade classrooms*

Oftentimes the spirit of competition, rather than cooperation, dominates the school or classroom atmosphere.

4. *It improves academic achievement, self-esteem, and attitude towards school*

By encouraging student participation and interaction, cooperative learning has been shown to dramatically improve academic achievement, self-esteem and overall attitude towards school among all students, but especially for chronic underachievers.

5. *It teaches life skills*

Cooperative learning teaches students some of life’s most important skills, including learning to listen, taking the viewpoint of others, respecting others, patience, tolerance, communicating effectively, solving conflicts, and working together to achieve a common goal.

SOME TYPES OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING

1. *Learning partners.* This is the easiest and least threatening way to begin cooperative learning. It is a building block for other more complex forms of cooperation.
2. *Small group projects.* In this form students work together in small groups of 4 to 6 on a single project. Here the emphasis is on cooperative processes such as group problem solving, creativity and team research.
3. *Whole-class projects.* At times the entire class can work together on a single project. Here the project can be divided into several sub-projects, for example, dividing the research into the life of an historical figure into different categories (childhood, adult life, contribution to culture, influence on others, etc.), then combining reports.

It is important that the behavior expected of the students be made clear. Here are some suggestions that the teacher could post on the wall concerning classroom expectations:

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

1. Cooperate with each other
2. Do not speak when someone else is talking
3. Do not distract each other
4. Say what you think honestly without putting others down
5. Do not leave others out
6. Support each other
7. Do not make sarcastic comments

The following describes the basic procedure for conducting cooperative learning in the classroom:

1. Place students in groups (groups will vary in size—4 to 7 is optimal)
2. Assign each member of the group a specific role. Examples of roles:
 - a. Organizer: Organizes all the information that the group comes up with in a presentable manner.
 - b. Secretary: Takes notes for the group.
 - c. Team Captain: Makes sure that all the group members are fulfilling their responsibilities.
 - d. Spokesperson: Presents the group's work to the class and responds to any questions from the class.
 - e. Noise Keeper: Makes sure the volume level does not become excessive.
 - f. Timer: Makes sure the group's assignment is completed on time and that the group is using its time wisely.
3. Depending on the size of the group the roles can be combined.
4. Clarify the task to be worked on and the time allotted for its completion.

5. Review rules (should be posted on the wall in such a way that they are visible and readable).
For example:
 - Get into your group quickly and quietly.
 - Bring necessary materials with you.
 - Stay in your group unless asked to do otherwise.
 - Wait to begin until you know your role and the roles of others in your group, and have received all instructions.
 - Speak quietly.
 - Listen to your partner or teammates.
 - Address your partner or teammates by name.
 - Raise your hand if you have a question for the teacher.
6. Give each group feedback concerning their work and accomplishment, including any signs of improvement.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Group Circle

When discussing a subject with the entire class, the use of a circle formation has proven effective in helping students to open up and share their ideas.

GUIDELINES FOR GROUP DISCUSSIONS

1. Set a non-relativistic context for discussion

Adolescents, at this stage in their life, may tend to adopt the attitude that everyone is entitled to their own opinion and asking ‘Who’s to say what’s right?’ This may lead them to adopt a relativistic attitude toward morality as they go through life. Group discussion provides students with the opportunity to both affirm students’ right to their own viewpoints while challenging them to consider the existence of a clear sense of ethics and morality that applies to everyone.

Challenging students’ relativistic thinking requires teaching them the following general criteria that apply to any moral issue:

- Does a given action respect the rights of those it affects?
- Would I want to be treated in such a way? (test of reversibility)
- What if everyone acted that way? (test of universalizability)
- Does the action bring objective benefit to individuals and society?

2. Challenge students’ thinking, concepts and assumptions

The teacher can challenge students’ thinking through the questions he or she asks. Even young children can be helped to grasp objective ethical criteria if the teacher’s questions are formulated correctly. The teacher should also consider, “What questions will I pose if students take such-and-

such a position?” For example, if the teacher is discussing with the class whether it is unethical to steal or shoplift, here are some questions he or she could formulate prior to the actual discussion:

- Imagine that you were the owner of a shop, how would you feel if someone stole from you?
- How does stealing affect people who don't steal?
- Is stealing wrong for someone who has enough money to buy what he or she wants and not wrong for someone who does not have enough money? If so, does that mean that stealing is only wrong depending on the person's situation?
- What would happen if every person in society stole whatever they wanted?
- If you think stealing is all right when you don't like the owner of a shop or if you think the shop is too expensive, does that mean that people have the individual right to decide when it is okay to steal?
- Is the kind of person you are affected in any way when you steal?
- What problems does stealing create for a society?

Some of these questions could be raised in an initial discussion; others could be made part of a writing assignment; still others could be posed as part of a subsequent discussion of the issue.

3. Require sincerity and careful thinking

There is nothing more frustrating for the teacher than when students do not treat an issue seriously. Discussing moral issues may challenge some students' own personal behavior, and they may “act out” because of this. The teacher must make clear before any discussion that students are expected to keep a serious attitude.

Also, the teacher should choose a format for moral reflection and discussion that helps students to think carefully and critically. There is a big difference, for example, between a loose, open-ended approach that simply invites students to voice their opinions and an approach that requires them to engage in research and/or systematic ethical analysis before taking up a position. To encourage continuing thought, the teacher can also give students some thought-provoking reading on the topic and ask them to write an essay in response.

4. Anchor discussions in a curriculum-based approach

Finally, it is best not to treat difficult issues such as cheating, stealing, sex, drinking, etc., with off-the-cuff discussions or a one-time activity. A superficial teaching approach almost always assures a superficial student response. Serious moral reflection is much more likely if a classroom discussion is anchored in a planned, intellectually rigorous, curriculum-based approach. Such an approach can take different forms, in particular:

- *Ethical discussions integrated into the general curriculum*, such as social studies (e.g., what have been the effects of prejudice and discrimination in history?), science (e.g., how does scientific fraud—scientists faking their data—undermine the enterprise of science?), or literature (e.g., what moral choices do the characters in a particular story have? How would

the story change if they made one choice over another?).

- *A special curriculum unit*, spanning several weeks or months and centered on particular virtues such as respect, honesty, compassion, courage, etc.

A curriculum-based approach gives a teacher much more quality control over discussion. Students are required to investigate, reflect, formulate, write, and discuss their positions as an outgrowth of an extended, serious inquiry.

ADDITIONAL POINTS IN SUPPORT OF MORAL REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Use examples from literature to teach virtues.
2. Discuss hypothetical moral dilemmas as a way of diagnosing and developing students’ moral reasoning.
3. Draw out dilemmas that students themselves may be facing.
4. Design decision-making activities that encourage conscientious reflection.
5. Use role-playing to help students take and understand a point of view different from their own.
6. Help students develop moral self-knowledge through personal ethics journals and character improvement activities.

We will discuss points 5 and 6 in the final three sections.

ROLE-PLAYING

During role-playing, students assume the roles of various characters and act out a brief episode resembling real life that usually involves a problem. Those assuming a role use their own words, attitude, thoughts, and feelings in the role play. The role-playing process involves the following four basic steps:

1. A specific problem is identified. It could be, for example, a conflict between a student and his/her parents, or between two students.
2. After the problem is described, roles must be established and assigned to various students. It is recommended that the teacher seek out volunteers to play the roles.
3. The actual role-playing takes place and should be brief. The same situation may be repeated several times with different students in order to demonstrate that there are often several solutions to a single problem.
4. A de-briefing and discussion follows, focusing on the behavior itself or the actions taken, rather than on the student who played the role, emphasizing how they addressed or solved the problem that was the focus of the role play.

Role-playing allows the student, in a safe context, to come to understand and learn ways of coping with various types of difficult situations. It encourages seeing situations from different points of view and applying innovative solutions.

This technique demonstrates to students that very often conflicts are the result of misunderstandings between different parties. It shows the importance of listening carefully, of controlling one's emotions and of recognizing prejudices and biases that one might have. By the student experiencing what it is like to be in another person's shoes, it can help to foster greater empathy and mutual understanding. Role-playing has the effect of muting ridicule and put-downs which are so often a part of the school environment.

JOURNAL WRITING

Journal writing (and drawing) is a tool for encouraging the student's personal growth. The exercises at the end of many of the chapters in the student textbook are designed to take students to places inside themselves that they may have rarely visited. The exercises can help them to:

- express their feelings and thoughts
- sort out the seemingly random experiences in their lives
- make more conscious choices and decisions
- define and implement desired changes
- get a clearer picture of their creative potential and how to use it
- change negative thought and behavior patterns
- discover new and different parts of themselves and learn how these parts can relate to each other harmoniously
- investigate their life purpose and find deeper meaning in their lives
- envision a better future and discover what their particular contribution to that future might be

The journal is a place where they can let their inner selves out. The pages become a mirror for seeing themselves more clearly. Starting with self-communication in private, they can then develop their ability to communicate with others. Being clear with themselves opens the way for being clearer with others.

The teacher should help students understand that, as with life, the more they put into their journal, the more they will get out of it. The teacher should encourage them not to restrict themselves to the assigned exercises but to feel free to explore and experiment on their own.

Some students may be hesitant because they think they have no talent for writing or drawing. The teacher must emphasize that no special talent or training is needed to do these exercises. The goal is not to make art or literature but to explore their inner world. They are not drawing or writing to please anyone else or to get anyone's approval. Their journal is by them and for them. While writing assignments will be checked by the teacher to make sure they have been done, sharing the contents of writing assignments will be voluntary.

To help students feel more comfortable and confident with journal writing, the teacher may want to do a sample journal exercise together with them at the beginning of the course.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

This is a concept with a long history in educational theory but which has been given new impetus in recent times in reaction to the excessive emphasis on cognitive learning during the course of the 20th century. Most theories of education, even in character education, have stressed the development of a person’s reasoning faculties and intellect. We, too, acknowledge the importance of learning to think logically, rationally, analytically and critically. However, as we have already stated, the development of one’s heart and conscience is more important in order to deeply internalize moral and ethical values. This requires the active engagement of the student in relationships with other people and the surrounding environment, where both the mind and body can be involved.

We can understand the value of experiential learning if we consider the way a person learns to drive a car. One aspect, of course, involves studying and memorizing a driver’s manual. However, this by itself is not sufficient to qualify to receive a driver’s license. What is ultimately necessary is real driving experience. Only through actual experience behind the wheel of a car does a person come to really comprehend the contents of the manual.

As Kathy Winings states in her book *Building Character through Service Learning*, “When the ‘experience’ outside the classroom was structured meaningfully and carefully integrated with the classroom, it could become an excellent teaching tool. Learning involves more than absorbing data and information. For profound learning to take place, the student needs to not only understand the academic aspects of the question, but also to see how this knowledge is relevant to his/her life.”⁵

Experiential learning seeks to integrate the cognitive with the active and thus lend greater meaning to both. For character education to be effective, it must take virtues out of the realm of the abstract and show what they mean in practice. Through experiencing virtues in action, the student naturally absorbs them into his or her character. Educator David Kolb states that constructive experiential learning requires four basic steps: 1) the experience itself; 2) reflection on the experience; 3) synthesis and abstract conceptualization; and 4) testing the learned concepts in other situations.⁶

What kind of experiences? The best are those which are structured to serve others. In the U.S. such programs have come to be known as “service learning” and can take any number of forms, such as:

- Big brother/big sister programs
- Tutoring younger children
- Visiting or working in a nursing home, hospital, homeless shelter or orphanage
- Doing jobs for elderly people living alone
- Providing meals for homebound senior citizens
- Food or clothing drive
- Clean-up activity: park, streets, graffiti
- Planting trees, flowers, vegetable garden

5. Kathy Winings. *Building Character through Service Learning*. Chapel Hill, NC: Character Development Publishing, 2002, p. 16.

6. David Kolb. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984.

- Painting murals to beautify the neighborhood
- Letter-writing or petition campaign on some public issue
- Serving a religious, civic or service organization
- Fundraising for a worthy cause: playground equipment, computers for the school, etc.

Such activities afford students the opportunity to step beyond the boundaries of their previous experience. They experience the joy of living for the sake of others.

The reflection step is important to the student internalizing the experience. This helps to keep service from becoming simply a passing phenomenon. To stimulate reflection the teacher may encourage students to ask themselves the following questions:

- How did I feel before the activity compared to how I feel now?
- How did it help me to become a better person?
- What did I learn from the experience?
- What obstacles did I have to overcome?
- How did the activity benefit others?
- How do I feel about helping others now?

Overcoming obstacles, both internally and externally, in one's heart, mind and body, has been shown to be essential to achieving lasting personal growth. The student needs also to experience the substantial beneficial effect of his or her action on the recipient of the service. This gives a profound stimulus to offer oneself for other altruistic activities in the future.

Through reflection the student can begin to comprehend the internal value of the experience and synthesize this with previous experiences that have shaped his or her attitudes and character. New conceptualizations of living can take form in the student's mind and heart, which then can be tested in other areas of life. If the experience of planting trees and flowers in a neighborhood park has sensitized the student to the value of creating a beautiful environment, s/he may be stimulated to plant flowers in his own backyard or take better care of his own room at home. By experiencing the effect of caring for or feeding the elderly, the student can be naturally stimulated to show greater care and concern for those in need in general.

Through experiential programs such as service learning, students will be encouraged and challenged to adopt a lifestyle at variance with the self-centered and consumer-oriented one advocated by much of modern culture. Hopefully, the experiences gained through such programs will stimulate the natural goodness residing within each person and become precious memories that will feed the development of their overall character.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude this section, we would like to offer the teacher some general recommendations for teaching character education:

1. Act as caregiver, model, and mentor treating students with love and respect, setting a good example, supporting pro-social behavior, and correcting hurtful actions.

2. Create a moral community in the classroom, helping students know each other, respect and care about each other, and feel that they are valued members in the group.
3. Practice moral discipline, using the creation and enforcement of rules as opportunities to foster moral reasoning, self-control, and a generalized respect for others.
4. Create a democratic classroom environment, involving students in decision-making and shared responsibility for making the classroom a good place to be and to learn.
5. Teach values through the curriculum, using academic subjects as a vehicle for examining ethical issues. (This is simultaneously a school-wide strategy when the curriculum addresses cross-grade concerns such as substance abuse prevention or sex education.)
6. Encourage moral reflection through reading, writing, discussion, decision-making exercises, and debate.
7. Teach conflict resolution so that students have the capacity and commitment to solve conflicts in fair, nonviolent ways.
8. Foster caring beyond the classroom, using inspiring role models and opportunities for school and community service to help students learn to care by giving care.
9. Create a positive moral culture in the school, developing a total school environment (through the leadership of the principal and administrative staff) that supports and amplifies the values taught in classrooms.
10. Recruit parents and the community as partners in character education, supporting parents as the child's first moral teachers; encouraging parents to support the school in its efforts to foster good values; and seeking the help of the community (e.g., churches, business, and the media) in reinforcing the values the school is trying to teach.

3. Course Requirements and Expectations

The best way to get what you want from your students is to inform them clearly about your expectations. In the beginning lesson, the teacher may want to say to the students something along the following lines:

This course is designed and intended for you. This means that your participation and involvement in classroom and group activities related to the class are extremely important. This class will be what you, as students, make it. The course is designed in an interactive manner, which means that many times you will be asked to work together with your classmates in order to complete an assignment. The aim is for you to learn to work effectively with other people, as well as learning to respect the opinions of others (which may not be the same as yours). The skills that you will learn in getting along with others by working with your friends and classmates will prepare you in your relations with all kinds of people in the future. The most successful people in the world are those who know how to listen and respect others from all walks of life.

GRADING

The issue of giving grades in such a course as *Discovering the Real Me* needs to be addressed by the school, keeping in mind the ultimate goal—the character development of students. The traditional form of grading students according to their cognitive knowledge can lead to the situation where students invest themselves simply for the sake of getting good grades. Obviously, such an approach would distort the very meaning of the course. It would be better if the course accepts only those students who want to participate for the sake of their own character development, without such external stimuli as formal grading. In the majority of cases, however, this will be unrealistic. Also, students—and parents—usually want some measure to know how well they have done. One possibility is to use an intermediate method—such as self-grading—either individually or by group.

Students need to know how they will be evaluated. For this kind of course, written examinations alone are not sufficient. In some cases the teacher may decide that students do not need to take written tests at all. Students should also be evaluated according to their class participation and general behavior, as well as insights and personal character changes noted. A lot of this will be self-reported.

The problem of unsatisfactory grades needs to be discussed separately. Experience indicates that grades given in moral/ethical courses should only be positive. For those students who don't study hard enough, it is recommended not to give any grade at all. Instead, they should be encouraged to invest more in the course so that in the future they can receive some positive grade.

4. Helping Students to Get to Know Each Other

Helping students to get to know each other is the first step in building a moral community. One way to do that is to give students a non-threatening task to do with one other person or a small group, such as the following:

PARTNERS

Teachers pair their students with someone they don't already know and give them about 10 minutes to complete a sheet titled "Partners" (see the box below). After the children have completed their sheets, they are invited to come together in a circle and share their lists with the group.

This activity accomplishes several things: Partners learn about each other; each class member learns about the others through the whole-group sharing; and the activity shows that people are both similar and different, laying the groundwork for a classroom community that values individuality and diversity as well as unity.

PARTNERS: Name <i>Ways We Are Alike</i>	Name <i>Ways We Are Different</i>

Some questions partners can ask each other:

1. What is your favorite food?
2. What are two things you like to do?
3. What's your favorite color?
4. Do you have any brothers or sisters?
5. What is your favorite subject or activity in school?
6. What is something you learned to do during the last year?

CLASS DIRECTORY

Often teachers have found that many students don't know the names of all their classmates even by the end of the school year. Learning names and developing friendships can both be facilitated by a making a class directory.

On the first day of school individual photos are taken of all the students in the class. When developed, they are mounted on the bulletin board or in a class book. Beneath each portrait are three sentences, which the child completes:

“My name is _____”
“I like to _____ and _____”
“My phone number is _____”

Students then can contact each other based on common interests.

Teachers of older grades have adapted the class directory idea by having students interview each other, take notes, and then write biographical sketches, which the teacher then duplicates to make a directory.

THE TREASURE BAG

One community-building activity is the “treasure bag.” Here, each student brings in a bag which contains five things that tells something about themselves. Together the whole class tries to guess which bag belongs to which student.

THE SEAT LOTTERY

Teachers of adolescents know that they tend to form exclusive cliques, which meet the need for social membership of those who are “in” but at the expense of those who are “out.” Such cliques can spell death for an overall sense of community in the classroom.

One way to deal with this problem is through a “seat lottery.” Every desk in the class is arranged and given a number. Each Friday afternoon before leaving each student goes to the front of the room and pulls a number from a bowl that will designate his or her seat for the next week.

The seat lottery can come to be eagerly anticipated. A new desk almost always means two new neighbors. This way there can be more friendships in the class than before, and the social groups that do form will be more open and less antagonistic.

GOOD FEELING/BAD FEELING

One way a teacher can lay the groundwork for good participation in discussions is to start the year with an exercise that helps students become comfortable with each other and gets them thinking about their responsibilities as class members. Students are asked to write “Two things that people do in a group discussion that give me a good feeling” and “Two things that people do in a group discussion that give me a bad feeling.”

Gathered in groups of three, students then share their lists with each other. Next, the entire class forms a circle. Going around the circle, each person shares one of the things from their “good feeling” list. The next time around the circle, each student then shares one of the things from their “bad feeling” list. Everyone keeps a running list of what is mentioned. At the end, each student chooses one thing that they will work on to improve as a member of a group discussion.

This procedure will not eliminate all problems—follow-up is needed—but it is a good consciousness-raiser as to what makes for productive discussion. Typically, students will say it

makes them feel good when someone really listens to them, and nearly always they will mention that they don't like it when somebody monopolizes a discussion while others say nothing at all.

PEOPLE HUNT

Another first day activity that works well with students of different ages is the “people hunt.” The teacher gives the students a list of 20 items and instructs them to fill in people's names for as many items as they can by going around and talking to classmates. Sample items:

1. Is able to whistle
2. Likes doughnuts
3. Enjoys reading
4. Likes to fish
5. Is new in the school
6. Has a living great-grandmother
7. Can ride a horse
8. Is good at sports
9. Plays a musical instrument
10. Parents were born in another country

All of these “ice-breaking” activities will help students realize that the course *Discovering the Real Me* is different from their other courses and hopefully will be providing them with growth-promoting and exciting experiences for their inner development.

Section II: Lesson Plans

Introductory Lesson

As you begin this journey through *Discovering the Real Me* it is helpful for you, as the teacher, to take some time in the introductory class to inform the class of *course requirements and expectations* (please see Section I). Students should receive a list of any quiz or test dates, as well as a list explaining all *projects* to be completed during the course at this time. Review all of the *basic class rules* and post them on the wall.

The first day of class should be used primarily for introducing students to the idea of a course in character education or virtue-building and the requirements and expectations during the course. It might be a good time to do the “Getting to Know You” exercises from Section 1.

It would be good at some point to define “moral” too. From Webster’s, “moral” means: “of or relating to principles of right and wrong.” Explain to your students that envisioning a good and satisfying life always takes moral issues into account.

Important Note: Each chapter will take two class sessions.

At the beginning of the first class students should be asked to read the Introduction in the student text. Ask students what they think of the idea “You are the artist of your own life”? Mention that *Discovering the Real Me* is designed to help them develop a good, creative vision for their life and to show them how to make that vision come true.

You might write on the blackboard: “If you can dream it, you can become it.”

Ask students what “virtues” are. Once students have given their ideas, write on the board:

Virtue:

A particular moral excellence

A commendable quality or trait

(From Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary)

Point out that when we say that Mary, for instance, is honest, we are saying that Mary has the virtue (or character strength) of honesty.

Mention that a virtuous person has many virtues or character strengths. Have students name virtues they can think of. Write them on the board, sorting out which are virtues and which are not. (The examples of virtues listed in the text are responsibility, honesty, trustworthiness, gratitude, perseverance, integrity, the ability to make and keep commitments, compassion, empathy, and good citizenship.)

Have students reflect upon or even describe (calling on volunteers) the most virtuous persons they know.

Do they agree with the statement in the book, “The happiest people are people of virtue”?

From the array of virtues presented on the board, have students make an entry in a journal or notebook listing which of the virtues they would like to have and for which they would like to be known. Mention that this is the beginning of forming a vision of what kind of person they would like to become.

Explain that modeling ourselves after people we look up to or admire is a way of forming a vision for our lives and for forming our character. Asking ourselves, “What would my hero (or heroine) do in this situation?” sometimes gives us the insights and the strength to handle a challenging situation well.

Have students imagine as a heroine, an Olympic figure skater who was in third place and very down-hearted, but who then gave a stunning performance that won the gold medal. What virtues did she have to have to achieve something like that? (Hope, determination, courage, perseverance, etcetera.) How about a hero basketball player who is known for not only scoring spectacular points himself but also for helping teammates to do their best too? What virtues does he have? (Generosity, cooperation, selflessness, self-discipline, etcetera.)

If possible, video clips of such great moments in sports would be good to show at this time—or clips from a movie. A good one is one of the early scenes in *Chariots of Fire*. Olympic hopeful Eric Liddell falls down in the beginning of the race, picks himself up and wins the race by making a superhuman effort.

Chapter 1

What Kind of Person Will I Be?

OBJECTIVES

Cognitive

Students will clarify their personal ideas and beliefs about life.

Affective

Students will understand how beliefs affect the choices they make.

Behavioral

Students will begin to construct a vision of what kind of person they want to become.

Class Session 1:

Explain that getting a vision of who they would like to be is aided by understanding who they are and what they believe now. Therefore, the exercises they will do related to Chapter 1 will involve a lot of self-reflection—thinking about what they believe and what they are like at this point in their lives. Assure them that none of the self-reflection exercises will be graded or shown to anyone else, but they will be marked as to whether they do them or not. It is for their own self-understanding; nothing more.

Have students read Chapter 1. Explain that the main point of this chapter is that the choices we make now will affect our future. Life is full of choices. A strong sense of right and wrong helps us to make the right choices that will build our characters into good ones.

Have students do the Questions for Reflection in their student books:

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What kind of person are you?

2. What kind of person do you want to become?

3. What do you need to do to become that kind of person?

4. Why should you be good?

5. What are the values and principles by which you live?

6. Do you think that people are basically good, or not?

7. What do you want to be doing ten years from now?

8. What are the qualities of a good person?

9. What aspects of yourself would you like to change or develop?

Assign the exercise “My Tree of Life” as homework to be turned in at the next character education class. It is recommended that you as the teacher also do this exercise at home to familiarize yourself with it and to gain insights as to what you would like to teach the students through it.

Class Session 2:

Have students bring out their completed homework assignments. Although you need not read them in detail, it is good to check to make sure they have filled in all the blanks and written something after each question.

EXERCISE: “MY TREE OF LIFE”

1. The soil represents your cultural and socio-economic environment. Concentrate on the areas that concern you most.

I was brought up to believe that:

work is...

money is...

religion is...

my nationality is...

my race is...

man is...

woman is...

sex is...

marriage is...

the family is...

freedom is...

the law is...

learning is...

success is...

a friend is...

2. The roots of the tree represent your insights into the fundamental questions of your existence.

I believe that:

There is a higher power that directs our existence

I will exist after death

evil does exist

I can know the truth

I am free

I am basically good

human beings are loving and caring

school is a joy

There is no higher power directing our existence

death ends all

evil does not exist

I cannot know the truth

I am not free

I am basically evil

human beings are selfish and hostile

school is a burden

I believe that my life comes from...

Truth for me is...

I am living for...

Each day I am moving towards...

3. The trunk of the tree represents your beliefs about the nature of a human being. Check the statement that you believe and give the reason.

a. I am basically good because...

I am basically evil because...

b. I am free and responsible for my actions because...

I am not free and not responsible for my actions because...

c. I am basically selfish because...

I am basically caring and kind toward others because...

d. My beliefs shape my personality because...

My personality shapes my beliefs because...

4. The branches of the tree represent your values. List the things that are important to you and why (for example: people, activities, character traits).

5. The tree's flowers symbolize the emotions you experience in your life. List the dominant ones that you experience towards the following:

desirable

undesirable

myself

friends

family

school

6. The fruits of the tree represent your actions. List your characteristic ways of behaving in the following roles and activities:

desirable

undesirable

son/daughter

brother/sister

friend

student

neighbor

athlete

work

religious faith

leisure time

Ask the students to look at their Tree of Life. Mention to them that a tree grows out of its soil. It depends on the strength of its roots. It is supported by its trunk. Its fruits and flowers grow out of its branches. Therefore, the “fruits” and “flowers” of their tree of life—their actions and emotions—spring out of their beliefs about the nature of a human being (tree trunk), their insights as to the fundamental questions of their existence (tree roots), and their beliefs (soil).

Ask them to look at the flowers and fruits of their tree. The students should consider if they would like to rid themselves of any negative feelings, behaviors or emotions they have listed. Explain that to change their flowers and fruits, they have to change their branches, trunks, roots, and soil.

The following is an example that you can use to help your students think: A young boy named John has written that, as the fruits of his tree, he has gotten in trouble for throwing candy wrappers and soda cans on his neighbor’s lawn and leaving them there. That is one of his undesirable ways of behaving as a neighbor.

Under the “flowers” of his tree, John has written that he feels the undesirable feelings of embarrassment and shame toward himself as well as anger at the neighbor for being so “picky.”

On the “trunk” of John’s tree, he has written that he is not free and not responsible for his actions because “Other people make me act the way I do. If they were nicer to me, I’d be nicer too.”

Through this example, students can see that John’s belief gets him in trouble. Students can learn that “other people” don’t make him throw trash on his neighbor’s lawn. John chooses to do that himself. They should see that John has a responsibility to be good, no matter how other people act. Lots of people do bad things. That doesn’t mean John should.

John’s roots are: he does not believe that he is free and that he believes human beings are selfish and hostile. John’s soil: John thinks that freedom is doing whatever he wants, when he wants.

With these kinds of beliefs, it is no wonder that John gets in trouble sometimes. He needs to go back and correct his beliefs so that he will make better choices, not get in so much trouble anymore, and also feel better about himself.

Students should learn that John is free to make choices. He is free not to throw the trash if he chooses not to; and other human beings are not selfish and hostile. Some are, and others are at times, but most people try to be nice. Freedom isn’t doing what John wants whenever he wants. There is an old saying, “Your freedom ends where mine begins.” John’s actions have intruded on his neighbor’s freedom not to have to pick up other people’s trash, his right to have a nice lawn, and his right to have his property respected.

Have the students examine their Tree of Life and see if they can identify how their branches, trunks, roots, and soil contribute to the negative or undesirable emotions and behaviors they feel they have. Offer your help if they need it in this analysis process.

