

Honesty

Truthfulness, sincerity, honor,
fairness, trustworthiness, being genuine

"The naked truth is always better than
the best-dressed lie."

Ann Landers

Martin was sprawled in front of the TV, sort of doing his math, when the phone rang. "Answer it!" his sister hollered from upstairs. "And if it's Robert, tell him I'm not home."

"Why should I?" Martin asked, looking up as his sister rushed into the family room.

"You idiot! Just answer the phone! I don't want to hurt his feelings. He's going to ask me to go to the junior dance with him, and I want to go with Alex. So tell him I'm not here . . . if it's Robert."

Martin still hesitated as the phone rang for the fifth time.

"Look, if you're feeling guilty, I'll go stand on the front porch," his sister said. "Then I'm really *not* home." Martin's sister ran out the front door just as he answered the phone.

Would Martin be lying if it were Robert calling and Martin said his sister wasn't home? Have you ever manipulated the truth in this way? What might Martin have done to handle the problem with his sister better?

Suppose you have a brother who has had a really rotten day. A bad-hair, drop-your-lunch-tray, step-in-dog-doo-day. He comes home, throws his books on the kitchen table, and stomps off toward his bed-

room as your mother follows him, asking "What's wrong, dear?" He barks "Nothing!" and slams his door in her face. Is he being honest with your mom? With himself?

Dishonest thoughts can lead to dishonest actions. The truth is, your brother doesn't want to tell your mother what's wrong, because to do that he'd have to face what's wrong. Did he make a poor choice? A foolish mistake? Did he fight with a friend? Talk back to a teacher? Whatever it is, he'd rather not think about it. And he certainly doesn't want to tell your mom about it . . . too embarrassing. So he covers up the truth, lies to your mom, then tops it off by being rude. Now he has *three* problems instead of just one. And until he admits *to himself* what's wrong, he can't make any of them better.

It's okay to look stupid, make mistakes, and have bad days. Everyone does. If your brother had stopped to think about that, he might have told your mom "I had a rotten day, and now I want to be alone for a while." That would have left him with the *one* problem he had to begin with, plus quiet time to consider what to do about it.

In most cases, honesty isn't just the best policy. It's also a lot simpler than the alternative.

"Truth is the only safe ground
to stand upon."

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Eight Great Reasons to Tell the Truth

"Half the truth is often a great lie."

Benjamin Franklin

1. Telling the truth lets everyone know what really happened. There's less chance of misunderstanding, confusion, or conflict.
2. Telling the truth protects innocent people from being blamed or punished.
3. Telling the truth allows everyone to learn from what happened.
4. You usually get into less trouble for telling the truth than for lying (and getting caught).
5. Other people trust you more when you tell the truth.
6. You don't have to tell (and remember) more lies to keep your story straight.
7. You gain a reputation for being truthful—a trait most people value.
8. Telling the truth helps you to feel secure and peaceful inside.



You could probably come up your own list of great reasons for telling the truth. And you might want to do just that, if it helps you to stay on the truth track. Meanwhile, here are ten tips to keep in mind for times when you're tempted to go the other way.

Ten Tips for Being More Truthful

1. **Make a commitment to tell the truth.** Say to yourself "Starting today, I'm someone who tells the truth." Then honor your commitment.
2. **Tell someone about your commitment**—a close friend, a parent, a teacher, someone else you trust. Keep that person informed of your progress.
3. **Think before you give a dishonest answer, explanation, or reason.** Consider the consequences. You'll probably decide that it's easier to tell the truth.
4. **Be careful of when and how you use exaggeration, sarcasm, or irony.** Maybe you're trying to be funny, or maybe you want to discourage further questions or conversation. Either way, you don't want to give people the wrong information. *Example:* You missed three problems on your math test, and you're upset because that dropped you down a grade. Your dad asks, "How was your math test?" and you answer back, "I blew it!" He ends up thinking you did a lot worse than you really did—and worrying as a result.
5. **Be careful not to twist the truth or leave out part of it.** *Example:* Gloria says to Marcus, "Tell Hosea I don't know if my folks will let me go to the party with him." What Gloria means is that her parents might not let her go to the party, period. But Marcus says to Hosea, "Gloria's dad probably won't let her go to the party with *you*." Now Hosea thinks that Gloria's dad doesn't like him, doesn't think he's good enough for his daughter, doesn't trust him—or maybe Gloria doesn't want to go with him. Marcus's little twist could greatly change how Gloria and Hosea relate to each other in the future.

6. **Don't indulge in little white lies;** don't get caught up in cover-ups. *Example:* "My sister's not home" means she's not home. Standing outside on the porch doesn't count.

7. **Watch out for silent lies.** When you know about a lie and choose to keep quiet about it, you're allowing the lie to live on. Silence equals complicity.

8. **When you catch yourself lying, throw your mouth into reverse.** Do it then and there. *Example:* "What I meant to say is I missed three problems on my math test, which means I'm getting a B instead of an A."

9. **Talk to yourself.** (Not out loud, or people might think you're a little strange.) Ask yourself "How do I really feel about this? What's the best thing to do? How can I keep my commitment to myself?"

10. **Treat yourself when you tell the truth even when it's hard to do.** Pat yourself on the back. Indulge yourself. Take an evening off. Do whatever works for you.

"Truth, like surgery, may hurt,
but it cures."
Han Suyin

Being honest means more than telling the truth. When you're honest, you're *sincere*. You have a *sense of honor and fairness*. You're *trustworthy* and *genuine*. And you're not just honest on the outside; you're honest on the inside, too. You don't lie to anyone, including yourself.

This sounds hard, and sometimes it is. But you probably know someone who has these qualities. And if you're fortunate, that person is your friend.

CHECK IT OUT



Is It Still Cheating If I Don't Get Caught? by the Ethics Guy, Bruce Weinstein, Ph.D. (New York: Roaring Book Press, 2009). Based on five principles (do no harm, make things better, respect others, be fair, and be loving), this book by the Ethics Guy will help you through even the stickiest moral dilemmas. Ages 13 & up.

Sincerity

When you're sincere, you don't flatter people to try to make them like you or think well of you. *Example:* A friend comes to school wearing a new blue shirt. The first thing he asks you is "How do I look?" Actually, he doesn't look that good. You don't say "You look great" to his face, then laugh about him later behind his back. That's not being sincere. On the other hand, you don't say "You look awful" because there's no need to hurt his feelings.

Admittedly, this is a tricky situation. You might say "You look nice in blue." Or you might say "You look nice in blue, but I like your old blue shirt better." It depends on what kind of relationship you have. You'll have to be the judge of what's best.

When you're sincere, you're free from hypocrisy and pretense. You express your feelings openly and honestly. Your speech is natural, without double messages or hidden agendas. People know they can count on you to say what you mean and mean what you say.

"The most exhausting thing in life, I have discovered, is being insincere."
Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Honor and Fairness

You overhear a teacher blame a student for taking the lunch money from her desk. In fact, you saw another student take it. Would you be lying if you said nothing? Technically, no. Would this be the honorable thing to do? No again.

When you have a sense of honor, you do the right thing.¹ You might have to spend some time figuring out *how* to do the right thing, and you might have to play out a few scenarios in your mind before taking action, but you know that staying silent isn't an option. In this case, you might tell the teacher what you saw and let her handle it. Or you might go to the student who took the money and suggest that he give it back. Explain that if he doesn't, you'll have to tell the teacher. You're not going to sit by

¹ See also "Integrity," pages 135–141.

and let the other student be blamed for something he didn't do.

“Lying is done with words and
also with silence.”

Adrienne Rich

Having a sense of honor isn't easy. It means that you're true in all you say and do. Your life exemplifies truth, and people can trust you to do and be what you say. You stand up for the truth even when silence is more comfortable. If you hear one person telling a lie about another, you stick up for the person being lied about.

Having a sense of honor can also mean that you're patient and understanding with someone who might have lied. You don't tolerate the lie, but you can forgive the liar,² because you know that it's only human to make poor choices and mistakes.

When you have a sense of fairness, you don't take things you don't deserve.³ These “things” might include awards, praise, money, or credit for good ideas or a job well done. If you win first prize in an essay contest because a teacher spent hours listening to you and making suggestions, you don't just take the prize and smile. You take the prize, smile, *and* thank your teacher.

Having a sense of fairness means that you don't tell your employer that you worked a half-hour more than you did. You don't tell your trombone teacher that you practiced every day when you didn't. You don't let your dad pay you to mow the lawn and then do a shabby job. If the cashier at the grocery store gives you change for a \$20 bill when you paid with a \$10 bill, you don't keep the extra change. You give it back. And if you don't discover it until after you get home, you *take* it back.

Being Trustworthy and Genuine

When you're trustworthy, your parents know that you'll be home by curfew. They don't have to worry

(although they *will* worry, of course, until you walk through the door). They don't have to remind you or hound you. Similarly, if your parents go out for the evening or away for the weekend and leave you in charge of the house, they know that you'll take good care of it. You won't let your friends in for a wild party, even if your friends show up uninvited and make fun of you for not letting them in.

Being trustworthy means that if you promise to meet your math teacher at 7:00 A.M. for a makeup test, you arrive on time. And if you forget to do your homework, that's what you tell your teacher—not some phony story.

“But wait!” you might say. “If I tell my teacher I forgot to do my homework, he'll yell at me.” So what? If your teacher yells, that's *his* problem. What you do is *your* problem. When you're trustworthy, you accept the consequences of your actions.⁴

Being trustworthy doesn't mean that you're perfect. It means that when you make a mistake, other people can count on you to tell the truth and take responsibility. *Example:* Your club leader asks you to call 10 people on a phone list she gives you. If you're trustworthy, you call them. And if you forget to call them, you're *still* trustworthy if you admit it and promise to call them right away. Basically, being trustworthy means that you're a No-Excuses Kid.

When you're genuine, the “real you” is the one people see. You're the legal tender dollar bill, not the counterfeit. You're authentic.

Some people have a hard time being genuine. Maybe they're insecure, or they're afraid that other people wouldn't like their “real” selves. So a boy whose father was a so-so boxer brags that his dad was a middleweight champion. Or a girl pretends that her family is rich because that makes her feel more important around her friends. Or politicians develop public selves that are very different from their private selves, hoping to win more votes that way.

Being genuine means that you don't bother with games, ruses, and masquerades. You are what you are, and other people know that. They can relax around you and be genuine, too.

² See “Forgiveness,” pages 94–102.

³ For more on fairness, see “Justice,” pages 142–153.

⁴ See “Choice and Accountability,” pages 28–34.

"I yam what I yam."

Popeye

Character Dilemmas

For journaling or writing essays, discussion, debate, role-playing, reflection

Suppose that . . .

- 1 Your four-year-old nephew asks you if Santa Claus is real. You can tell by the way he asks that he still wants to believe in Santa Claus. Are you lying if you say yes? Give a reason for your opinion, and look at both sides.
- 2 You're living in Belgium during World War II, and you're secretly hiding a Jewish family in your attic. The police show up at your door and ask if you're harboring Jews. Do you lie or tell the truth? Are there times when you might make a greater mistake by telling the truth than by lying? Give other examples to support your opinion.
- 3 A salesperson at a clothing store works on commission. (This means that she earns a small salary plus a percentage of anything she sells.) A customer tries on a suit that's much too tight for her. When the customer asks "How do I look?" is it the salesperson's responsibility to tell the truth? Why or why not?
- 4 You're a doctor, and one of your patients has severe heart disease. You discover that he also has incurable cancer. Should you tell him about the cancer, knowing that the stress of hearing the news might bring on a heart attack? Or should you say nothing and do your best to treat him?
- 5 The President of the United States (or the leader of your country) has learned about a new communications device that will allow the U.S. government to discover where other countries store their weapons. The same device can also be used to snoop on people in the U.S. Is the President obligated to tell the people about the new device? Why or why not?
- 6 One night, while your parents are away, your brother drives your mother's car without her permission. He doesn't hurt it, and he even puts

gas in the tank on his way home. The one thing he *doesn't* do is put the keys back exactly where he found them. Later, your mom asks you both if anyone moved the keys. Your brother says, "Not me." He avoids looking at you. What might you say and why? Should you cover for him, stay silent, or tell?

Activities

WRITE AND PERFORM A SKIT in which you and a friend debate the saying "Honesty is the best policy." This saying has been credited to two famous people: Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616), author of *Don Quixote*, and George Washington (1732–1799), the first President of the United States. To add interest to your debate, one of you might play the role of either Cervantes or Washington (in costume, of course).

DISCUSS WITH YOUR CLASS, CLUB, OR family what it means to "live a lie." Brainstorm examples of lies that people might "live" and reasons why they might do this.

LIST EXAMPLES of what honesty means to you. *Example:* "Honesty means stopping for a red light even when no one is around." Ask your friends to make similar lists. Combine your lists in a booklet to share with your class, school, club, family, or faith community.

ROLE-PLAY HOW YOU MIGHT RESPOND IF:

- 3 a friend invites you to his house to watch an R-rated movie, and your parents have made you promise not to watch R-rated movies
- 3 a friend asks you to keep a secret, then tells you she's planning to run away from home
- 3 a friend you're shopping with slips a CD into his jacket and walks out of the store without paying for it.

RESEARCH WHISTLE-BLOWERS. A "whistle-blower" is someone who goes public about an unfair, unsafe, or unethical practice in his or her workplace or somewhere else. (*Example:* An employee learns that his company is illegally dumping toxic waste into a stream, then takes the story to the local media.)

Whistle-blowers may get fired or face other types of abuse. Ask your librarian to help you search newspaper archives for stories about whistle-blowers. For each story, decide if you think the whistle-blower did the right thing.

Variation: Talk about what journalist Bill Moyers has said about whistle-blowers: "They're not always right, they don't always win, and they're not always likable. They break the china and rattle the cages of conformity. What would America be without them? They keep the high and mighty on their toes and the majority on notice." Based on what you learned from your research, do you agree or disagree?

STUDY HONESTY (AND DISHONESTY) in advertising. Read ads in newspapers and magazines and watch them on TV. When do advertisements exaggerate, make promises that seem unrealistic, and make comparisons with other products that seem unfair? Do they use words like *always*, *never*, *perfect*, and *best*? Collect examples of your research. Compile an "Honesty in Advertising?" booklet. Include your evaluation of each advertisement and a list of guidelines that you think would help to ensure honesty and fairness in advertising.

"Advertising may be described as the science of arresting the human intelligence long enough to get money from it."

Stephen Leacock

CHECK IT OUT



Caution: This May Be an Advertisement: A Teen Guide to Advertising by Kathlyn Gay (Danbury, CT: Franklin Watts, 1992). Examines the persuasive techniques used by advertisers and their effects on consumers. Ages 14–18.

Adbusters

The Media Foundation
1243 West 7th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V6H 1B7
Canada
1-800-663-1243
www.adbusters.org

A quarterly magazine published in Vancouver, *Adbusters* is for people who are tired of TV and magazine ads full of stereotypes, sexism, and propaganda. You might ask your library to subscribe. The Web site includes articles from past issues, previews of upcoming issues, and more.

LEARN ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP between honesty and health. Invite a mental health expert to your class to talk on this topic. Are honest people more or less healthy than dishonest people? Are there any diseases or illnesses that seem to be linked to dishonesty and guilt?

LEARN ABOUT HONESTY in scientific or medical research. Interview researchers at a local university. Do this in person or, if there's no university nearby, by telephone, mail, or email. (To identify researchers you might want to interview, check the faculty biographies on the university's Web site.) Ask each person a series of questions about honesty in research. You might ask questions like these:

- ? Can you give any examples of researchers who have exaggerated or minimized test results to try to prove something?
- ? What happens to people who manipulate research results and get caught?
- ? How common is manipulation of research results in your area of study?
- ? Are there any safeguards in place to increase the chances of honest research and reporting? If so, what are they?
- ? Do you know of any cases where results were manipulated and something terrible happened?

COMPARE NATIONAL HONESTY with local honesty. Contact the National Crime Prevention Council and request the latest statistics for juvenile robbery, burglary, or shoplifting. Next, contact your local police department and request similar numbers from them. Are your local statistics higher or lower than the national numbers? Make a graph to show what you've learned and share it with your class, school, or community.

Variation: Meet with your local police, city or community council, juvenile justice department, or intervention program to make a plan for lowering crime local statistics. Ask how you can help.⁵

⁵ See "Safety," pages 234–244.

CHECK IT OUT**National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC)**

2614 Chapel Lake Drive, Suite B
 Gambrills, MD 21054
 (443) 292-4565
 www.ncpc.org

RESEARCH CULTURES PAST OR PRESENT to learn their views of honesty. *Examples:* Did ancient Greece have the same ideas about honesty as medieval England? How did Native Americans during the 1800s view honesty as compared to the Caucasians who were expanding westward across North America? Choose 2 or 3 cultures and investigate how the concept of honesty has varied. Write a report about what you learn, or write a skit that demonstrates the differences in how honesty has been perceived (and practiced).

Variations: Make a scroll showing how the concept of honesty has changed through time. Learn how other cultures have punished people for dishonesty (lying, stealing, cheating), and display your findings on a chart or graph. Or draw cartoons showing how dishonesty is treated in different cultures.

FIND OUT HOW YOUR SCHOOL handles dishonesty. Does your school have a student handbook? If so, what does it say about cheating, stealing, lying, plagiarism, and other honesty-related issues? What are the consequences for students who are dishonest? Do the consequences seem fair or unfair? Survey students to collect their opinions about the consequences, and report your findings to the administration.

Variation: If your school doesn't have a student handbook, form a committee to create one. Your committee should include members of the administration, the faculty, and the student body. You might start by collecting examples of student handbooks from other schools. Contact the schools directly or search schools' Web sites (TIP: Educational institutions—schools, colleges, and universities—have Internet addresses ending with .edu). Some universities have student "honor codes." Under the terms of these "honor codes," students are allowed to take exams unsupervised. Do you think that an honor code would work in your school? If so, suggest that it be included in your handbook.

SURVEY YOUR CLASS OR SCHOOL to find out how honest students are. You can copy and use the survey on

page 123 or write your own questions. Distribute the surveys and set up a collection box where people can return their completed surveys anonymously. Afterward, score the surveys and compile the results. Graph them and display the graph in your classroom or school. On your graph, you might want to compare males to females (which gender seems to be more honest?) and/or different age groups or grades. Your graph should include information about how the surveys were scored. *How to score the surveys:* Give 3 points for each "Yes," 2 points for each "Maybe," and 0 points for each "No." *How to evaluate the scores:* 27–30 points = Very Honest; 22–26 points = Mostly Honest; 18–22 points = Bends the Rules; 17 points or fewer = Needs to Reevaluate What Honesty Means. (NOTE: You may disagree with this scoring scale. That's okay. The point of this survey is not to judge, but to get people thinking and talking about honesty. You might want to discuss the scale with your teacher and come up with a different version to use with your class or school.)

COLLECT PICTURES OF PEOPLE throughout history who have been known for their honesty. *Examples:* Abraham Lincoln ("Honest Abe"), George Washington ("I cannot tell a lie"). Use your pictures to create an Honesty Mural.

Variation: Ask your friends and classmates to tell about times when they were honest. Take their pictures and display them along with brief stories about their honesty.

HOLD A JINGLE-WRITING CONTEST. Invite people to write and record jingles about honesty or dishonesty. Award prizes for the best three. Play the winning jingles over your school intercom, or take them to a local radio station and ask if the station will play them on the air.

PLAY A "WINK THE TRUTH" GAME. The purpose of this game is to create a group story that's half true and half lies—and to discover how hard it is to keep a story straight if you need to remember many facts and lies. You'll need a group of at least 4 people (more is better). To play:

1. Begin by agreeing on what the story will be about. Try to keep the topic simple. *Examples:* A day at school; something specific that happened at

school or near the school; how the basketball team played at the last game.


2. The first player starts the game by saying two sentences about the topic. One sentence is true, and one is a lie. It doesn't matter what order the player says them in, but he or she must wink when telling the lie. *Example:* "Mrs. Brody was standing at the door of the school this morning when we arrived." (True.) "She was wearing red shoes." (A lie; wink.)

3. The second player repeats the first player's sentences and adds two more sentences to the story, winking for each lie.


4. The third player repeats all four sentences said by the first two players, adds two more sentences, and winks three times.


Continue until the story gets very complicated and people start forgetting which parts are true and which parts are lies. Afterward, talk about the game. Is it hard to keep a story straight if you have to remember many facts and lies?


READ STORIES ABOUT HONESTY. Look for these books:


 *Jennifer-the-Jerk Is Missing* by Carol Gorman (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).
Thirteen-year-old Amy is baby-sitting

Malcolm, an eight-year-old with a reputation for making up stories. When he tells her he's witnessed the kidnapping of a schoolmate, Amy doesn't know if she should believe him. Ages 10-14.

 *One-Eyed Cat* by Paula Fox (New York: Bradbury Press, 1984). Eleven-year-old Ned has tried to be the perfect person that his minister father wants his to be, but is filled with guilt after shooting a stray cat with his new air rifle. Ages 10-13.

 *Spying on Miss Muller* by Eve Bunting (New York: Fawcett Book Group, 1996). At a Belfast boarding school at the start of World War II, 13-year-old Jessie must deal with her suspicions about a teacher whose father was German and with her own father's drinking problem. Ages 11-14.

 *Water Sky* by Jean Craighead George (New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1987). While living in Barrow, Alaska, with friends of his father, a boy learns the importance of whaling to the native Eskimo culture. Ages 11-14.

 *Your Move, J.P.* by Lois Lowry (New York: Dell, 1991). Lovestruck J.P. goes out of his way to impress his new interest, but things get complicated after a simple lie gets out of control. Ages 9-13.

Survey

This is an anonymous survey. Don't write your name anywhere on it! Please drop your completed survey in the collection box in _____ location.

- | | Yes | No | Maybe |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. If you were driving five miles per hour over the speed limit, and a police officer stopped you and asked how fast you'd been driving, would you tell the truth? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. If you cheated on a test and didn't get caught, would you tell the truth if your teacher later asked if you cheated? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. If you arrived home one night 30 minutes after curfew and your parents weren't there, would you tell them that you had been late? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. If you found a wallet in the street with \$200 in it, would you try to return it to the owner? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. If a cashier at a checkout stand mistakenly undercharged you for something you bought, would you tell the cashier about it and pay the correct amount? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. If you knew you could sneak into a concert without paying, would you buy a ticket anyway? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. If someone you wanted to impress thought you were rich (and you really weren't), would you tell that person the truth about yourself? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. If your parents promised to pay you a lot of money if you earned all A's and B's on your next report card, and if you could keep them from finding out your real grades, would you tell them the truth if you <i>didn't</i> earn all A's and B's? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. If you promised your teacher that you'd complete a task by a certain date, would you keep your promise? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. If you knew that a friend stole \$10 from someone else's locker, would you report him or her? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please be sure to complete this information:

You are a male female

What grade are you in? _____

How old are you? _____

THANK YOU for taking this survey!

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See "Survey your class or school" on page 121.

Character in *ACTION*

Jana Benally: Telling the Truth

Jana Benally grew to be five feet eleven inches—a tall Navajo—and a star on her high school volleyball team in Blanding, Utah. She spiked, blocked, and scooped up impossible smashes from the other team before they hit the floor. Her team members trusted her skills and depended upon her honesty.

But Jana hadn't always been completely honest. When she was in fourth grade, she lied to her teacher when he asked her if she were chewing gum. "I quickly swallowed the gum and said 'No,'" Jana remembers. "The dumb thing about it was that I didn't need to lie. He probably would have just asked me to spit it out. I felt so guilty, I couldn't think about anything else, and I vowed I would never lie again."

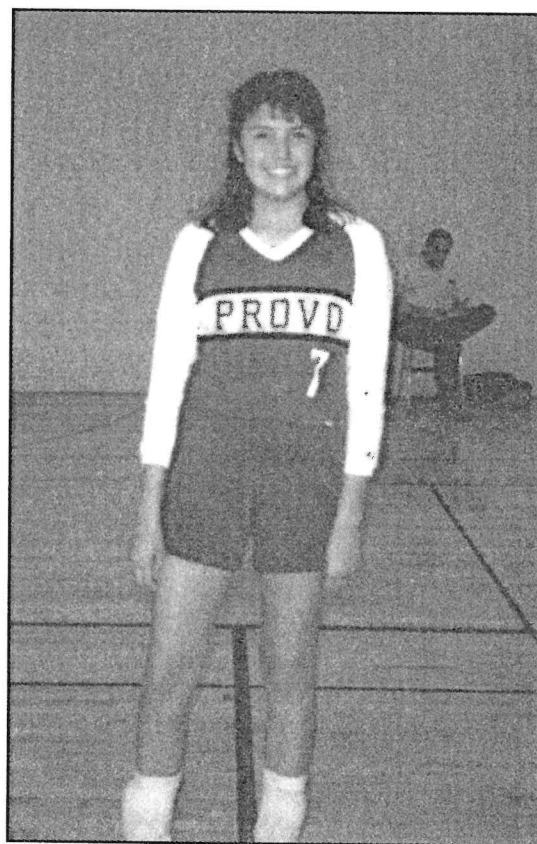
But she did lie again, and she cheated, too. "In fifth grade, my friends and I had a huge social studies assignment. We were all good students and liked to finish our assignments ahead of time. So we divided up the parts and copied from each other." Then her teacher, who conducted secret raids on her students' desks, found three of their notebooks in one desk, all with the same answers. The teacher called in the girls and their parents for a talk.

When Jana and her parents went to see her teacher, Jana's stomach dropped, and all she could see were her teacher's big, round, horrified eyes, with eyelashes that poked straight up as if they were drawn on her eyelids. Jana burst into tears and confessed. This time, she promised herself that she would never cheat again—or lie. For real.

And she didn't, even under pressure. Tremendous pressure. When she was a sophomore at San Juan High School, her team played Morgan High School in the state volleyball championship. The game was tight. Morgan would score, then San Juan would score. Jana leaped, dove, smashed the ball, and wiped the sweat from her forehead between plays.

Near the end of the game, the score was 12 to 14, with Morgan ahead. Morgan only needed one more point to win the state championship. Morgan served to San Juan, and Jana's team passed the ball to the center. Jana set it up and spiked it down hard on Morgan's side of the net. A Morgan player dove for the ball and miraculously dug it up from the back row. The Morgan setter went underneath it and set the ball up to the offhand hitter, who spiked it to San Juan. Jana blocked the ball and it smashed down, in-bounds, on Morgan's side.

The referee blew his whistle and yelled "Side out!" San Juan got the ball, and Jana knew that her team could tie the game and maybe even win. But there was just one problem. As Jana had blocked the spike from Morgan, she had felt the underside of her



Jana Benally

arm brush the net. The referee hadn't seen it. Nobody knew but Jana.

She hesitated for a moment. Then she grabbed the net, motioned to the referee, and said "I touched the net."

Jana's coach glowered and shouted at her. "Let the ref call the game!"

The referee called "Time out!" As he studied Jana's face, his eyes widened into circles. He paused. Then he blew the whistle, called the net ball, and gave the point to Morgan.

Jana took a long, scorching shower before she left the locker room. It was quiet. Her shoes squeaked as she crossed the empty gym floor. No one on her team had blamed her—but they hadn't congratulated her for being honest, either. No one had said much of anything to Jana after the game. But she knew that it took a whole team to win or lose, and she didn't blame herself, either. Although the state championship was blown away, Jana smiled, because inside she knew she had really won.

Respect

Courtesy, manners, assertiveness, politeness, reverence

“Even if someone doesn’t treat you with the respect you deserve, you can give them the respect they don’t.”

Sharon Martin

I once taught a fifth-grade student by the name of Allen. He was a red-haired, freckle-faced boy who bounced around the class with the energy of a geyser. He was sometimes noisy, dressed sloppily, and often spoke out of turn. But he also did something that amazed me: Whenever he talked without first raising his hand, he would say “I’m sorry.”

There’s more: Whenever he wanted to get my attention, he would interrupt me at my desk with “Excuse me, please. . . .” And if I gave him anything, even a compliment, he bubbled “Thanks a lot!”

He treated the other students the same way. There was a girl in our class with special needs who was two years older than any of the other kids and could hardly speak. One day at recess I watched from the school steps as Allen took out a large red ball, walked over to the girl, and slowly taught her to catch the ball from only a few feet away. Soon he threw the ball to another student and the three of them started playing catch. Any time the girl caught the ball, I heard Allen say “Great! Good job!” Then the other kids started saying it, too. Before long, it became a daily classroom activity for someone to spend time with our special girl. Allen’s example spread to the others—in more ways than one. Soon other children were

congratulating each other, saying “Excuse me,” and so on. I could hardly believe it.

I learned a lot from Allen that year. One day I sneaked up to him and whispered in his ear “I have a secret for you.” His eyes lit up as I whispered “You surely are polite and nice.” He flashed his infectious grin that had become familiar to the whole class. Then he cocked his head and said “Thank you. But, Mrs. Lewis, that’s no secret.”

Do you remember learning about Sir Isaac Newton? The scientist who discovered gravity when an apple supposedly fell on his head? Sir Isaac also discovered and described some laws of motion. One of his laws says “For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.” In other words, if you turn on a garden hose, the water will rush *out* (action) and the force of it will also push *backward* (reaction). If you don’t hold tightly to the hose, it will jump out of your hand.

You might apply Sir Isaac’s law to human behavior. If you push someone, you’ll probably get pushed back. Similarly, if you treat people politely—with respect that is sincere—they’ll treat *you* that way (most of the time). You’ll be a better friend and leader. You’ll impress your parents, teachers, and other adults, and they’ll be more likely to choose you for special experiences and rewards. And you’ll like *yourself* better. It feels good to be respectful, and it feels even better to be treated with respect.

Sincere respect means:

- ♥ using good manners; being courteous and polite; speaking to others in a kind voice; using polite body language
- ♥ showing consideration toward other people (including your elders, parents, guardians, teachers, peers, siblings, other family members, employers, and people in authority)
- ♥ honoring other people's wants, needs, ideas, differences, beliefs, customs, and heritage
- ♥ caring for other living things and the earth (animals, plants, the environment)
- ♥ obeying the rules, laws, and customs of your family, faith, community, and country.

Ralph Cantor, an author of the *Days of Respect* handbook,¹ defines respect as “mutual care and regard, dignity, and physical and emotional safety; a state in which everyone counts, and everyone counts upon everyone else. Respect is a quality that we can all define for ourselves—and we all know when we are receiving it, and when we aren't.” In other words, respect is about *relationships*: with people we know and people we don't know; with our society, culture, government, and God or Higher Power; with the planet we live on and the living things we share it with; and even with ourselves.

When you treat all people with equal respect—especially those who can't do anything special for you—you accept what they are and appreciate what they *may become*. This type of respect is unselfish, sensitive, and a foundation for many other values and positive character traits.

Respect has a cornerstone, and it's called *self-respect*. It's easier to respect others if you first respect yourself. When you respect yourself, you don't belittle yourself out loud or in your private thoughts. You take care of your mind and body, and you don't use alcohol and drugs. You eat well, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep. You don't give in to sexual pressure. You do your best to stay physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy.²

“Self-respect has nothing to do with the approval of others.”

Joan Didion

Some people use rudeness, bullying, and force to try to win the respect of others. It doesn't work. People *fear* bullies, but they don't *respect* them. When you respect others, you admire them and like them. Nobody feels that way about a bully. If you think that you might be a bully, get help. Talk to your parents, a teacher, school counselor, or another adult you trust.



“You'd better respect me or I'll MAKE you respect me!”

How to Disagree Respectfully

Being respectful toward other people doesn't mean that you always have to agree with them. You can still speak your mind and stick up for yourself. It's called *being assertive*.

Suppose that your teacher repeatedly calls you “Brain Child”—a name you don't like (even if it's said in fun). You can use the ASSERT Formula to deal with the problem respectfully. Here's how:

¹ See page 221.

² See “Health,” pages 103–114.

A stands for **“Attention.”** Before you can work on a problem you’re having with another person, you first have to get the person to listen to you. Wait until after class. Then go up to your teacher and say “Excuse me, but may I speak to you about something that’s bothering me?” If the teacher is too busy to talk right then, ask if there’s a better time. “If you can’t talk now, how about tomorrow before school or after class?”

S stands for **“Soon, Simple, Short.”** Don’t put off talking to your teacher. Do it as soon as you can—unless you’re too upset to talk. In that case, wait until you calm down. State the problem simply and briefly.

S stands for **“Specific Behavior.”** Focus on the behavior of the person you’re having trouble with, not how you feel about the person. Even if you’re angry with your teacher, try to keep your angry feeling out of your voice and your body language. You might say “I really don’t like being called ‘Brain Child.’”

E stands for **“Effect on Me.”** Help the person to understand the feelings and problems you’re experiencing as a result of his or her behavior. You might say “I know you probably mean it as a compliment, but it embarrasses me in front of the class. And lately, when I walk down the hall, other kids are calling me ‘Brain Child,’ too.”

R stands for **“Response.”** Wait for a response from the other person. In this case, your teacher might say “I wasn’t aware that being called ‘Brain Child’ bothered you” or “I’m sorry, I never meant to embarrass you.”

T stands for **“Terms.”** Suggest a solution to the problem. You might say “Would you be willing to stop calling me ‘Brain Child’? Or at least stop calling me that in front of other people?” It’s a reasonable request, and your teacher should agree to it. When that happens, say “Thanks. I appreciate being able to talk to you about this.”

What if your teacher *doesn’t* agree to your request? Talk to your parents and your school counselor. You have the right to be treated respectfully, too.

CHECK IT OUT

Stick Up for Yourself! Every Kid’s Guide to Personal Power and Positive Self-Esteem by Gershen Kaufman, Ph.D., and Lev Raphael, Ph.D. (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2019). Simple words and real-life examples show how you can stick up for yourself with other kids (including bullies and teasers), big sisters and brothers, even grownups. Ages 8–12.

Character Dilemmas

For journaling or writing essays, discussion, debate, role-playing, reflection

Suppose that . . .

- 1 Your mother stands in the doorway of your room and says “What a mess! I want you to clean this room *right now*.” But you’re doing your homework and an important assignment is due tomorrow. You don’t have time to clean your room. What might you say to your mother that’s both assertive and respectful?
- 2 You’re walking through a park with a group of friends. Some of them are carrying cans of soda. One friend finishes her soda and tosses the can on the ground. What might you say? What might you do? How might you teach your friend to be more respectful of the environment?
- 3 You have an elderly neighbor who lives alone. You like to spend time in your backyard playing with friends or reading in the hammock. But whenever you’re outside, your neighbor starts talking to you over the fence. You’re not very interested in what she has to say, and sometimes you wish she’d just leave you alone. What are some respectful yet assertive things you might do and say?
- 4 You’ve recently made friends with a new student in your class whose family immigrated from Tibet. Your friend has asked you to have dinner with her family tonight. You don’t know anything about Tibetan customs. How can you be sure to behave respectfully at your friend’s home?

5 The leader of your youth group is getting married, and you're invited to the wedding. It's going to be a big Catholic wedding at a local basilica. You're Jewish, and you've never been to a Catholic service or church before. How can you show the proper reverence in a house of worship that's not of your faith?

6 You're at a party at a friend's house when someone brings out a case of beer. Everyone at the party is under the legal drinking age. You could probably drink a beer without your parents finding out about it. Will you? Why or why not? Does it matter to you what the law says? Does self-respect play any part in your decision?

Activities

WRITE A POEM ABOUT RESPECT. What does it mean to you? Or write a story about a time when you were treated with respect—or weren't treated with respect. You might turn your story into a skit and perform it for your class, club, or younger kids at your school.

CHECK IT OUT

All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten by Robert Fulghum (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1988). This entertaining book says a lot about respect, sharing, playing fair, not hitting people, and saying you're sorry when you hurt someone. All ages.

MAKE A LIST OF DISRESPECTFUL WORDS and phrases you say to yourself. Do you call yourself names? ("Idiot"? "Stupid"? "Zit-face"?). Do you put yourself down? ("I'm too dumb to do that . . ." "I'll never be able to do that . . ." "I might as well just give up. . .") When you finish making your list, crumple it up, tear it up, shred it, stomp on it, and *throw it away*. Promise yourself that you'll never again use those words or phrases. Replace them with compliments, congratulations, and encouragement.

LEARN ABOUT NETIQUETTE. Millions of people are using the Internet for browsing, chatting, and email, and it's important for everyone to use good

online manners—called "netiquette." *Example:* USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS LOOKS LIKE SHOUTING. Avoid doing this unless you mean to shout—then think first about how your reader might feel about being shouted at. Research what other people have written and said about respectful online behavior, then write a "Netiquette" brochure for your school.

CHECK IT OUT



Netiquette by Virginia Shea (New York: Albion Publishing, 1994). The do's and don'ts of communicating online, recommended for everyone from "newbies" to wizards. Ages 13 & up.

Netiquette Home Page

www.albion.com/netiquette

Take the "Netiquette Quiz," learn the "Core Rules of Netiquette," join a netiquette mailing list, and more at this site from the publishers of Virginia Shea's book.

Yahoo's Netiquette Links

www.yahoo.com

Type "Netiquette" in the Search box for a list of links to sites with information about netiquette.

DISCOVER HOW MATHEMATICIANS have been respected (or not) throughout history. You might research one or more of the following:

- ▲ Pythagoras
- ▲ Euclid
- ▲ Archimedes
- ▲ Omar Khayyam
- ▲ Évariste Galois
- ▲ Descartes
- ▲ Sir Isaac Newton
- ▲ Carl Friedrich Gauss
- ▲ George Boole
- ▲ Bertrand Russell
- ▲ Kurt Gödel
- ▲ Blaise Pascal

Then discuss these questions with your class, club, or family:

1. Have mathematicians been revered as wise, treated like “nerds,” or ignored?
2. What have mathematicians contributed to human life? How has their knowledge affected other fields?
3. Now that we have calculators and computers, is mathematics becoming obsolete?
4. Why should you learn math?




Variation: Invite a mathematician to visit your class and talk about the meaning of math today. Why is it still important? What is it good for? Why do we need it? Why should we respect math and mathematicians?

RESEARCH RESPECT AND COURTESY in other cultures. Find out what rules of etiquette they have. How are they different from the rules of your culture? (TIP: Travel bureaus and embassies are great sources of information about cross-cultural etiquette.) Make a chart that shows and compares simple courtesies in several cultures. *Examples:* table manners; greetings; acceptable behavior in crowds; ways that children should show respect to adults; etc. You might want to compile a list of words and phrases that are considered polite in one culture and rude in other cultures. If you live in an ethnically diverse community, you might want to videotape interviews with people from various cultures.

CHECK IT OUT

Multicultural Manners: New Rules of Etiquette for a Changing Society by Norine Dresser (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996). An informative, entertaining guide by the “Miss Manners” of multiculturalism for the *Los Angeles Times*. Ages 13 & up.

Visit your local library and look for books in these series:

-  The “Culture Shock!” series (published by Graphic Arts Center Publishing Co.)
 -  The “Dos’ and Don’ts Around the World” series (published by World Travel Institute Press)
 -  “The Simple Guide to Customs and Etiquette in . . .” series (published by Talman Co.).
-

GUESS WHEN THIS WAS WRITTEN:

Our youth loves luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority, and disrespect for other people. Children nowadays are tyrants. They no longer rise when their elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble their food, and tyrannize their teachers.

BONUS: Guess who wrote it. (The answers are printed upside down at the bottom of the page.) Afterward, answer these questions:

- ? Were you surprised to find out when this was written? Why or why not?
- ? What does it mean to you?

FIND OUT HOW MANNERS HAVE CHANGED for children. For example, is it still true that “children should be seen and not heard”? Visit your library and look for books by Emily Post, Amy Vanderbilt, Judith Martin (“Miss Manners”), Letitia Baldrige, and other writers who are experts on etiquette. Write an article about what you learn and submit it to your school or community newspaper.

CHECK IT OUT

How Rude! The Teen Guide to Good Manners, Proper Behavior, and Not Grossing People Out by Alex J. Packer, Ph.D. (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2014). Outrageous humor and sound advice guide teens through the mysterious world of manners from A (“Applause”) to Z (“Zits”). Ages 13 & up.

Social Smarts: Modern Manners for Today’s Kids by Elizabeth James (New York: Clarion Books, 1996). Advice on how to handle all kids of social situations and personal interactions. Ages 9–13.

LEARN ABOUT AND PRACTICE good table manners. Read one or more books about manners to learn the do’s and don’ts of polite dining. Share what you learn with your class, club, or family. Then organize a dinner for a group of friends (boys and girls) where you can all practice your table manners. Give positive feedback and constructive criticism.

This criticism of young people’s behavior was written (are you ready for this?) in the fifth century B.C. The writer was Socrates, a famous philosopher.

BRAINSTORM RULES OF RESPECT for your family, classroom, club, or youth group to follow. Write down all brainstormed ideas without comment or criticism. Afterward, discuss the pros and cons of each idea. Vote to come up with a Top 10 list. Then brainstorm appropriate consequences for breaking the rules of respect. Write down and discuss those, too. Afterward, write the rules and consequences on a chart. Decorate your chart and display it where everyone can see it.

WORK TO CREATE A CLIMATE OF RESPECT and tolerance³ in your school. You might start by surveying students, teachers, and staff about what they think are the biggest respect-related problems in your school. Does everyone in your school feel safe? If not, what feels unsafe to them? Do people feel as if their ideas and differences are respected? If not, why do they feel disrespected? Encourage student groups, teachers, and staff to work together to make your school more respectful.

CHECK IT OUT



Tell your teacher about this book:

Days of Respect: Organizing a School-Wide Violence Prevention Program by Ralph Cantor with Paul Kivel, Allan Creighton, and The Oakland Men's Project (Alameda, CA: Hunter House Publishers, 1997). This handbook includes everything needed to plan and hold a multi-day, school-wide event on the theme of preventing violence and creating an atmosphere of respect in school. For grades 6–12.

DRAW TWO-PANEL CARTOONS showing different types of interactions between people. *Examples:* parent and child, teacher and student, two friends, two strangers, child and senior citizen, two neighbors, customer and store clerk, etc. In the first panel, show a situation in which one or both people are behaving disrespectfully. In the second panel, show the same situation, but this time both people are behaving respectfully.

LISTEN TO POPULAR MUSIC. You might listen to your favorite kind, or to many different kinds (pop,

rock, country, hip-hop, R&B, folk, bluegrass, etc.). Pay close attention to the lyrics. Consider these questions: Do the lyrics show respect for people, things, creatures, and the earth? Do you think that today's music has an influence on how respectful (or disrespectful) people are to each other? Do you think it affects how they respect (or disrespect) laws and rules? Find examples of positive and negative lyrics and play them for your class, family, or club.

EXAMINE THE ROLE OF ETIQUETTE IN SPORTS. What types of actions and behaviors make someone a "good sport"? What types of actions and behaviors make someone a "bad sport"? How do the rules of sports etiquette compare to the rules of family or community etiquette? Share your findings in a report.

PLAY A "POLITICALLY CORRECT" NAME GAME. You'll need two teams (Team A and Team B), a leader, and a stopwatch to play this game. First, the leader makes a list of *biased* words and phrases (words that discriminate or reflect a negative attitude) and *bias-free* alternatives. *Examples:*

Biased	Bias-free
policeman	police officer
mailman	mail carrier
fireman	firefighter
waiter, waitress	server
blind person	person who is blind, person who is visually impaired
retard	person with a mental disability
mongoloid	person with Down syndrome
spastic	person with a seizure disorder
AIDS victim	person with AIDS

Include biased and bias-free words and phrases for people of various ethnic groups, races, religions, ages, ideas, beliefs, jobs/professions, etc. *To play the game:* The leader says a biased word or phrase to Team A, who has 5–10 seconds to come up with the bias-free word or phrase. (Decide on the amount of time that seems reasonable for your group, then use the stopwatch.) If Team A comes up with the answer, they earn *one* point. If they don't, their turn passes to

³ See "Justice," pages 142–154, for reasons to be tolerant, tips for being tolerant, and resources about tolerance.

Team B. If Team B comes up with the answer, they earn *two* points. Ask Team A the first three questions, Team B the next three questions, and so on for as long as people want to play (up to 24 questions). The team with the most points at the end of the game wins.


CHECK IT OUT



Talking About People: A Guide to Fair and Accurate Language by Rosalie Maggio (Westport, CT: Oryx Press, 1997). A comprehensive guide for everyone who wants to use language accurately, gracefully, and respectfully.

“Guidelines for Reporting and Writing about People with Disabilities” (The Research & Training Center on Independent Living, updated often). For a free copy of the current Guidelines, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to RTC/IL Publications, University of Kansas, 4089 Dole Bldg., Lawrence, KS 66045. A partial list of the Guidelines is available online at www.rtcil.org.

READ STORIES ABOUT RESPECT, courtesy, and manners.
Look for these books:

 *Altogether, One at a Time* by Elaine Lobl Konigsburg (New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1989). A collection of four short stories that

describe kids learning to respect people with learning differences and also people of different ethnic groups, ages, and body types. Ages 9–13.

-  *The House of Wings* by Betsy Byars (New York: Puffin Books, 1982). Left with his grandfather until his parents are settled in Detroit, Sammy learns to respect and love the old man as they care for an injured crane together. Ages 9–13.
-  *Racing the Sun* by Paul Pitts (New York: Avon Books, 1988). Twelve-year-old Brandon has lived in the suburbs all his life. When his grandfather comes to live with the family, Brandon discovers the importance and difficulty of staying true to his Navajo heritage. Ages 11–13.
-  *Sixth-Grade Sleepover* by Eve Bunting (New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1987). Janey worries that her friends will learn of her fear of the dark when her sixth-grade reading group plans a sleepover. Ages 10–12.
-  *The Twelfth of June* by Marilyn Gould (Newport Beach, CA: Allied Crafts Press, 1994). Thirteen-year-old Janis wonders how her cerebral palsy will affect her future and her relationship with her friend Barney. Ages 10–14.

Character in *ACTION*

Helen Setuk: A Young Woman with Respect

ee My Auntie Diane owns twenty dogs and many sleds, and she lets me take them dog mushing," explains Helen Setuk, a young South Central Alaskan woman from the Athabascan and Aleut tribes. "I train the dogs myself. I never use a whip or yell at them. I just tell them what to do. I reward them with food, and I love them. They know I respect them, and they respect me." Helen's dog team hasn't won any races (so far), but at the banquet at the end of one dog-mushing season, she received the Sportsmanship Award.

Because Helen also respects nature, her mother calls her "Miss Earth." Helen describes her feelings about the environment: "If I am walking in flowers,

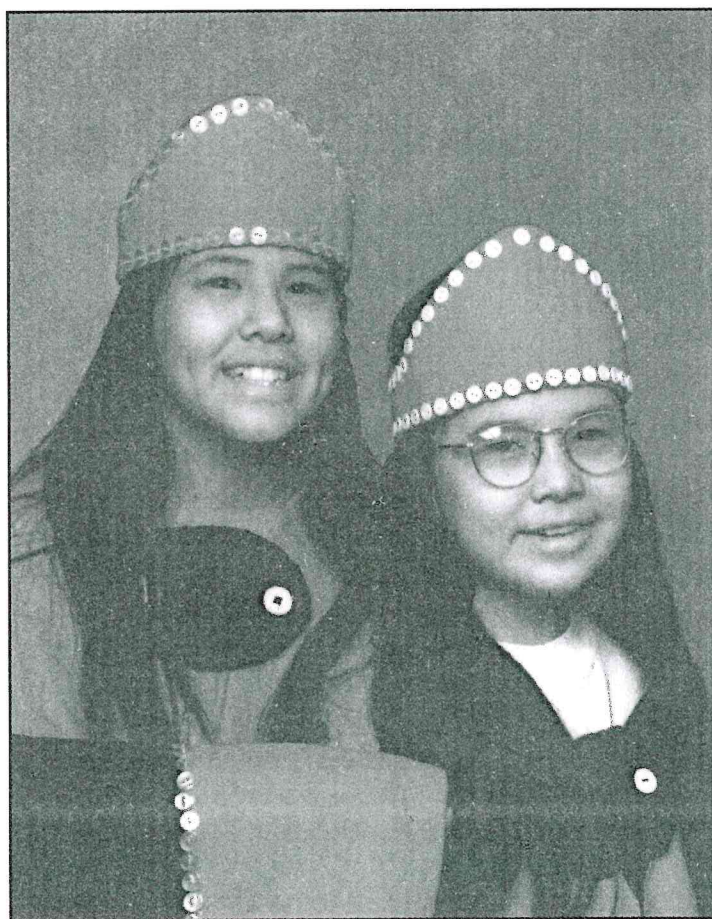
I will not step on them. I will go around them. I leave things growing where they are. And I never throw stuff on the ground. I collect cans so I can recycle them."

One day Helen's Auntie Diane asked her if she'd like to join a dance group that performs traditional native dances and songs. Both Helen and her little sister Laura wanted to join, and now they practice once a week at the Alaskan Native Medical Center. Helen and Laura have performed for the Museum of History and Fine Arts, at the 1996 Juneau Celebration, for elementary schools in Anchorage, and at other places throughout the city.

Helen especially enjoys doing the Raven Courtship dance. She dons her black pants and red tunic, throws a wool blanket over her shoulders, and dances as one of the Eagle Women. People of all ages dance together, and some of the women carry infants as they whirl around. The Raven, dressed in black, flirts with the Eagle Women, who pretend to ignore him. Sometimes Helen beats a drum as other dancers keep the rhythm with rattles.

Helen also dances at powwows. Sometimes she dances alone in the middle of the others, swaying to the drumbeats, her long, black hair swinging freely like a silk streamer. At the end of each performance, the elders step forward, and Helen applauds them. She moves out of their way when they pass to honor their wisdom and age. "I respect my elders because they give me my culture and heritage," she says. By connecting with her culture, Helen knows who she is. She knows her past and has reverence for her history. She understands that her culture will be important to her in the future, too.

Helen does her best to get along with others. "When my mother tells me to do something, I do it. I say 'please,' 'thank you,' and 'excuse me' to be polite. If my teacher tells me



Helen Setuk (left) and her sister Laura

that I did something wrong, I say 'I'm sorry. I'll try to do better next time.' I also respect myself. If I do something wrong, I tell myself 'It's okay. I just made a mistake.' I also respect and take care of my body."

Because Helen impressed adults with her dignity, courtesy, and reverence for all forms of life,

she was selected to do a national TV commercial for Payless Drug Stores and was featured in advertisements in both *Time* and *Newsweek*. So watch for her in the future. If you're lucky, you might see her dance one day.



Helen (center) at the JunEAU Celebration

Self-Discipline

Self-control, self-restraint, self-reliance, independence

"Without discipline, there's no life at all."

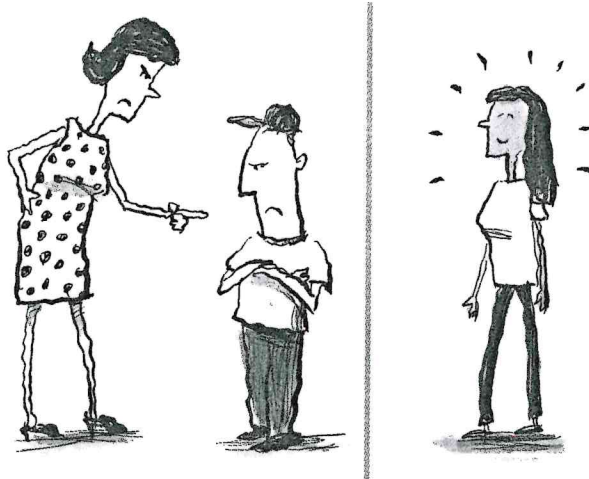
Katharine Hepburn

Have you ever been in a classroom when the teacher steps out for a few moments? The teacher is barely out the door when one student starts entertaining the others by telling jokes, drawing cartoons on the blackboard, or standing on a desk. In an instant, other students jump up, chase each other around the room, and wrestle on the floor. Missiles of wadded paper and erasers shoot across the desks. Then suddenly a spy shouts "The teacher is coming!" Instantly, the students rush for their seats. A desk is accidentally overturned. The teacher enters the room, hands on hips, and demands to know what's going on. Everyone sits quietly, pencils ready, with innocent smiles of conspiracy on their faces.

Sound familiar? Here's a contrasting story:

Unionville School in Indiana was a small school that housed students from first grade through high school. When I was teaching there, my students decided to have a real experience in democracy and wrote their own class constitution. One day there was a huge, unexpected snowstorm that dumped a two-foot layer of icing over Southern Indiana. Living 30 miles out of town, I was unable to make my way to school until two hours after it started. The principal greeted me with "Hey, you didn't even need to come in today. I sent someone down to your room to take care of your class, and the kids were already doing it for themselves. They were halfway through their English assignment."

What's the difference? In the first example, the students expected the teacher to control their behavior. Their discipline came from *without*. For the Unionville kids, their discipline came from *within*.



Discipline from *without*.

Discipline from *within*.

Taking Charge of Your Life

When you were very young, your parents had to tell you what to do, and they had to do nearly everything for you. As you grew older, your parents (and other people) expected you to start making some of your own decisions and taking

care of yourself in certain ways. You learned to do what you should (“will power”) and stop yourself from doing what you shouldn’t (“won’t power”). You started using *self-discipline* and *self-control*. The more this happened, the more you freed your parents, your teachers, and even yourself, because you didn’t have to keep making case-by-case decisions about your behavior. You *internalized* some of these decisions, and they became automatic and habitual.

When you depend on other people to determine your behavior and always be in charge of your “will power” and “won’t power,” you’re like a pawn on a chessboard, waiting for someone to move you. You feel powerless—because you are. Self-discipline and self-control give you power over your life. It’s only when you’ve developed these important traits that you can grow into the wonderful person you’re meant to be.

“I’m not afraid of storms, for I’m learning
how to sail my ship.”
Louisa May Alcott

Self-restraint is what helps you in unpredictable or tempting situations. You hold your fists back when someone shoves you; you hold your tongue back when someone insults you. You can even put the brakes on your thoughts when a harmful idea or thought pops into your head. Using restraint doesn’t mean that you let other people pick on you. You can still be assertive and stick up for yourself.¹ But you don’t act impulsively in ways that hurt you or anyone else. You behave respectfully no matter what.

Self-reliance means that you always have someone you can count on—YOU. When you’re home alone and feeling hungry, you don’t wait for your parents to return and fix you something to eat. You make yourself a snack. If you want to learn how to play the guitar and your parents can’t afford to pay for lessons, you get a part-time job and earn the money you need. If you know that you want to go to college someday, you do your best to earn good grades.

¹ See “Respect,” pages 217–218.

Chicago Bulls superstar Michael Jordan took cooking classes when he was an adolescent—“because girls weren’t interested in me or whatever it was, and I thought, I may be alone for the rest of my life.” He wanted to make sure he could take care of himself. (Of course, this assumes that women should do all of the cooking—a more common belief when Jordan was a teen than it is today.)

When you *demand* independence, the adults in your life usually pull tighter on your chain. When you *demonstrate* self-reliance—along with self-discipline, self-control, and self-restraint—adults often trust you more and *give* you more independence.

What can you do to develop and strengthen these character traits in yourself? Following are some strategies you can try.

Eight Ways to Strengthen Your Self-Discipline

1. **Decide that you really want to be someone who’s self-disciplined**, self-controlled, self-restrained, and self-reliant. Your desire will motivate you to make good choices. When there’s something you want, you work to get it.
2. **Make a personal commitment** to develop and strengthen these traits. Write down specific things you’ll do to fulfill your commitment. *Examples:* “I’m going to start washing my own clothes instead of expecting my parents to do it.” “Starting tonight, I’m going to save half of the money I earn from babysitting.” Tell someone you trust about your commitment. That person can encourage you to keep your promises to yourself. From time to time, tell him or her about the progress you’re making.
3. **Learn the rules** that determine what you can and can’t do. Family rules, school rules, society’s rules, laws, the rules of your culture, heritage, traditions, and/or faith—find out what they are and follow them. Do this on your own, with your family, with your class, with your faith community.

4. Be accountable. Accept responsibility for your behavior. Don't blame others for your actions and decisions.²

5. Practice. New character traits don't form on their own. If you wanted to learn to play hockey, you'd have to practice. At first your skates would refuse to stay beneath your body. With practice, however, you'd slowly gain the skills you need to stand, glide, and control the direction of the puck. Self-discipline is something you can teach yourself. If it's new to you, start slowly. *Example:*

✱ Do something you're supposed to do for one hour each day. Clean your room, do your homework without being told, stop yourself from speaking out in class without raising your hand, and so on.

✱ Increase the time to two hours, then three . . . and eventually most of the day.

6. Do activities that enhance your self-discipline. You might try yoga, walking, rock-climbing, practicing a musical instrument, or whatever else interests you.

7. Eliminate harmful habits. *Example:* If you spend several hours each week watching violent videos or TV programs, make a conscious decision to spend your time in healthier, more productive ways. You might start by watching different videos or TV programs, then gradually cut back on your TV-watching time.

8. Start a self-discipline support group. Tell a few close friends about your decision to develop and strengthen these character traits and ask if they'd like to join you. Talk together about your plans, dreams, mistakes, frustrations, and hopes for the future. Plan and do activities that strengthen your self-discipline.

"There's only one corner of the universe
you can be certain of improving,
and that's your own self."

Aldous Huxley

² See "Choice and Accountability," pages 28–34.

Character Dilemmas

For journaling or writing essays, discussion, debate, role-playing, reflection

Suppose that . . .

① Someone you know has been calling you names on the way to school each morning. You've tried to ignore him and say nothing, but the verbal abuse keeps coming. How might you use self-restraint and stop the abuse at the same time? Is this even possible?

② You've just moved to a new town, and you'd really like to try out for the football team. To do this, you'll have to spend several hours each day practicing and working out. You'd also like to develop new friendships so you don't feel lonely. You sign up for football practice every night after school . . . and the next day, a group of popular kids invites you to play street hockey with them every night after school. What should you do? How could you handle this?

③ You have strange and uncomfortable thoughts that keep squeezing their way into your brain. You want to do a little "brain housecleaning," but you aren't sure how to discipline your mind. What might you do?

④ You bite your fingernails whenever you're under stress. You're sick of having ragged nails, but just thinking about stopping is enough to cause stress . . . and you start chomping your nails again. How can you discipline yourself to break this habit?

⑤ You suspect that one of your friends has started smoking cigarettes. How might you help her develop the self-discipline to quit—without losing her friendship?

Activities

BRAINSTORM A LIST OF PROBLEMS that might result from a lack of self-discipline. Consider how they might affect some or all of the following:

- ▼ personal appearance
- ▼ physical, mental, or emotional health

- ▼ school success
- ▼ life success
- ▼ friendships
- ▼ job performance
- ▼ talents
- ▼ participation in family, clubs, community, or faith
- ▼ marriage
- ▼ parenting
- ▼ anything else.

Example: What if a person didn't have the self-discipline to wash or comb her hair? Problems might include a sloppy appearance, poor self-esteem, disapproving teachers, disgusted friends (or no friends), inability to get a job, angry parents, and so on—plus an itchy head.

DO SILLY EXERCISES to strengthen your self-discipline. When you read these, you might laugh out loud or think they're *very* strange. Try them anyway. They really work!

1. Go to a fast-food place and buy the tastiest item on the menu. Keep it wrapped up and nearby while you study, practice, clean your room, etc. See how long you can go without eating it. Try it for five minutes the first time, then increase your resistance to ten minutes the next time, and so on.

2. The next time you get a mosquito bite, don't scratch it. This silly exercise has an added benefit: The less you scratch, the sooner the bite will stop itching.

Make up your own silly exercises—whatever works for you. Just keep in mind that your purpose is to become more self-disciplined. **IMPORTANT:** Don't carry this too far or hurt yourself in any way. If you've just had a long day and a hard soccer practice and you haven't eaten since lunch and you're dizzy with hunger, eat!

ROLE-PLAY HOW YOU MIGHT TALK with a younger brother or sister who's demonstrating a lack of self-discipline (*examples:* always late, doesn't complete chores or tasks, is doing poorly in school, etc.). How might you encourage or help your sibling to develop self-discipline?

WRITE OR TELL A CHAIN STORY about a make-believe prince or princess who has no self-discipline. You might do this with your family, class, club, or

youth group. *Example:* The first person writes (or says) "Princess Miss-apline woke up every morning, stretched in her crisp white sheets and fluffy blankets, and simply couldn't force herself to get out of bed. . . ." The second person writes (or says) "This was a serious problem for the kingdom, because the Princess was the one who opened the palace gates each morning, and until the gates were open, the King's and Queen's advisors couldn't come inside. . . ." Decide in advance if your story will have a happy ending (the Princess learns self-discipline) or an unhappy ending (the Princess never learns self-discipline). Here are a few other characters you might want to write or tell about:

- Willy Won't-power (an athlete)
- Merva No-Nerva (a girl who's afraid of taking charge of her life)
- Ironless-Will Phil (a boy who watches TV 24 hours a day).

IMPORTANT: These and other make-believe names should only be used to stimulate creative thinking. They should not be used to make fun of real people.

INTERVIEW SCIENTISTS, ENGINEERS, and doctors to learn what role self-discipline has played in their lives. Compile your interviews into a booklet and donate it to your school library's biography section.

• *Variation:* Interview any successful people of your choice.

INVESTIGATE DIFFERENT ANIMAL species to learn if they use discipline. Do gorillas, wolves, and lions discipline each other and themselves? Does one animal seem to be in charge of the others, or do they share this responsibility? Do they punish misbehavior? Write your findings in a log or in a chart, showing comparisons if you choose several animals or species. (What about birds? Fish? Insects?)

VISIT WITH A PROFESSIONAL MATHEMATICIAN (you might find one employed in an area industry or business, or teaching at a nearby college or university). Ask him or her to outline for you the self-discipline that's required to train the mind to think analytically. Write an article about what you learn and share it with your class, club, or family.

EXAMINE NATURE TO FIND EXAMPLES of discipline and order. Fibonacci numbers (named for the 12th-century European mathematician who discovered them) turn up everywhere in nature, from bees' family trees to petal arrangements on flowers, pine cones, groups of leaves, whirls on sunflower seeds, and more. The "Fibonacci sequence" of numbers goes like this: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13 . . . and so on. Can you figure out the next two numbers in the sequence? (The answer is printed upside down at the bottom of the page.) Find as many Fibonacci numbers in nature as you can. List each object and its number.

CHECK IT OUT



Fibonacci Numbers and the Golden Section

www.maths.surrey.ac.uk/hosted-sites/R.Knott/Fibonacci/fib.html

Tons of fun and fascinating information about Fibonacci, the Fibonacci numbers, and where they appear in nature, plus puzzles where the answers all seem to involve Fibonacci numbers. This award-winning site is hosted by the Department of Mathematics of Surrey University in the United Kingdom.

EXPLORE TESSELATIONS. A tessellation is a repeating geometric pattern—forms that interlock without gaps or overlaps and can theoretically go on repeating forever. The Moors used tessellations in the palaces of the Alhambra in Spain; Japanese artists have made beautiful repeating patterns; Dutch artist M.C. Escher was a master of tessellations, creating them from lizards, fish, and birds. Create your own tessellation, using color and contrast to make each shape stand out.

CHECK IT OUT



M.C. Escher: His Life and Complete Graphic Work by F.H. Bool et al. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1982). A big book with 606 Escher illustrations including 36 plates in full color. (NOTE: If your local library doesn't have this particular book, it's almost

certain to have others about Escher, since his art is very popular.)

M.C. Escher Foundation

www.mcescher.com

Visit this site to read Escher stories, essays, quotes, and a biographical chronology; view images in an online art museum; and more.

RESEARCH DISCIPLINE IN HISTORY. How have people of different times and cultures disciplined their children? What rewards and punishments have they used? Write an essay about your findings.

LEARN ABOUT TIMES IN HISTORY when the arts have been controlled. *Example:* In Nazi Germany, many painters were denounced as "degenerates" and forbidden to paint. When and where have the arts—painting, music, theater, literature—flourished? What kinds of circumstances—government, economic, political—seem to encourage the arts?

Variation: Debate whether art should ever be controlled—or censored.

VISIT A JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER. Talk with the supervisor about the role self-discipline plays in the lives of the young people there. If possible, talk with some of the young people themselves. **IMPORTANT:** Get permission to visit, and go with chaperons. Afterward, talk about the experience with your family, class, or club.

DRAW CARTOONS SHOWING EXAMPLES of self-discipline vs. no discipline. *Examples:* Jenny gets out of bed on time; Ray sleeps through his alarm. Maurice does his homework; Keesha watches TV.

WRITE NEW LYRICS TO A POPULAR SONG—lyrics that encourage self-discipline, self-restraint, and self-reliance. You might choose a children's song, a rap, a rock song, a country music song, or anything else you like to listen to.

Here's the key to the Fibonacci Sequence: $1 + 1 = 2$; $2 + 1 = 3$; $3 + 2 = 5$; $5 + 3 = 8$; $8 + 5 = 13$. So the next two numbers in the sequence are 21 ($13 + 8$) and 34 ($21 + 13$). Still don't get it? Each *new* Fibonacci number is added to the *preceding* Fibonacci number to get the *next* Fibonacci number.

EXPLORE MUSICAL DYNAMICS AND CONTROL. What happens when you alter the volume control on your stereo? You either increase the loudness (*crescendo*) or decrease it (*decrescendo*). How does a change in volume make you feel? Do you think it's harder for a big choir to sing loudly or to sing softly? Which requires the most control? Listen to a choral recording and pay attention to the various dynamics you hear.

Variation: Research musical symbols that control loudness, softness, speed, slowness, and so on. Ask a music teacher or look in a music dictionary. Make a poster illustrating the various symbols and telling what they mean.

LEARN ABOUT SELF-DISCIPLINE IN SPORTS. Which sport do you think requires the *most* self-discipline to play? Dodgeball? Football? Ping-pong? Tennis? What else? Does it take more self-control to play an individual sport or a team sport? Give reasons for your answer.

PLAY A "STOP-WAIT-GO" GAME. Make a list of situations for which people might choose to:






1. *stop* and do nothing,
2. *wait* to do anything, or
3. *go* immediately and do something.

Examples:

- ? You observe a student in your class cheating on a test. Do you *stop* (do nothing), *wait* (see if the teacher notices), or *go* (tell the teacher)?
- ? You're trying to eat more healthfully when someone you like offers to buy you a chocolate malt. Do you *stop* (say "No, thanks"), *wait* (say "Let me take a rain check on that"), or *go* (say "Sure!")?
- ? Your teacher publicly accuses you of stealing something from the classroom. Do you *stop* (say nothing), *wait* (think about what you might say or do), or *go* (defend yourself immediately)?

Make three colored cards for each player: red (for stop), yellow (for wait), and green (for go). As you read the situations aloud, each player holds up the card that represents his or her answer. Tally how people voted, then discuss the results. TIP: Not all situations have definite "right" or "wrong" answers. In many cases, the answers can be debated.

READ STORIES ABOUT SELF-DISCIPLINE, self-control, and self-reliance. Look for these books:

-  *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by E.L. Konigsburg (New York: Dell, 1997). After running away with her younger brother to live in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 12-year-old Claudia strives to keep things in order in their new home and to become a changed person and a heroine to herself. Originally published in 1967. Ages 10–13.
-  *Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers, 1997). Records the courage and self-reliance of a Native American girl who lived alone for 18 years on an isolated island off the coast of California. Originally published in 1960. Ages 10 & up.
-  *A Likely Place* by Paula Fox (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975). A boy who can't spell or ever seem to please his parents spends a week with a kooky baby-sitter and makes a special friend. Originally published in 1967. Ages 9–12.
-  *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George (New York: Puffin Books, 1991). A young boy builds a treehouse in the Catskill Mountains and lives alone for a year, struggling to survive and ultimately realizing that he needs human companionship. Ages 11–14.
-  *When the Phone Rang* by Harry Mazer (New York: Scholastic, 1989). When their parents are killed in an airplane crash, three siblings try to keep the family together in the face of overwhelming personal and financial problems. Ages 12–16.

Character in *ACTION*

Iris Zimmerman: Totally Disciplined

When 15-year-old Iris Zimmerman was in kindergarten, she tackled a boy around the neck and planted a kiss on his cheek. She also talked nonstop in class and spent a lot of time in the corner. As she grew older, she took her older sister Felicia's clothes without asking and messed them up.

Iris's dad enrolled Felicia in a fencing class. Iris ran around the Rochester Fencing Center for four years wishing she could fence, too. When Iris was six, she was accepted as a student, and she loved it. But while fencing helped Felicia learn assertiveness, it helped Iris learn self-discipline.

Iris began competing when she was nine years old. To develop her talent, she began going straight from school to lessons at the fencing center. She also learned to play the flute and the piano. Eventually she was accepted at the School of the Arts.

To maintain her mostly "A" average, Iris uses every hour of the day. She has made a strict schedule for herself, and she sticks to it. She studies in study hall at school and at home on weekends. She doesn't have much time to study in the evenings, because after fencing, she lifts weights to improve her strength and endurance. She falls in bed at night, feeling like a limp dishrag. But she thrives on the competition and self-discipline.

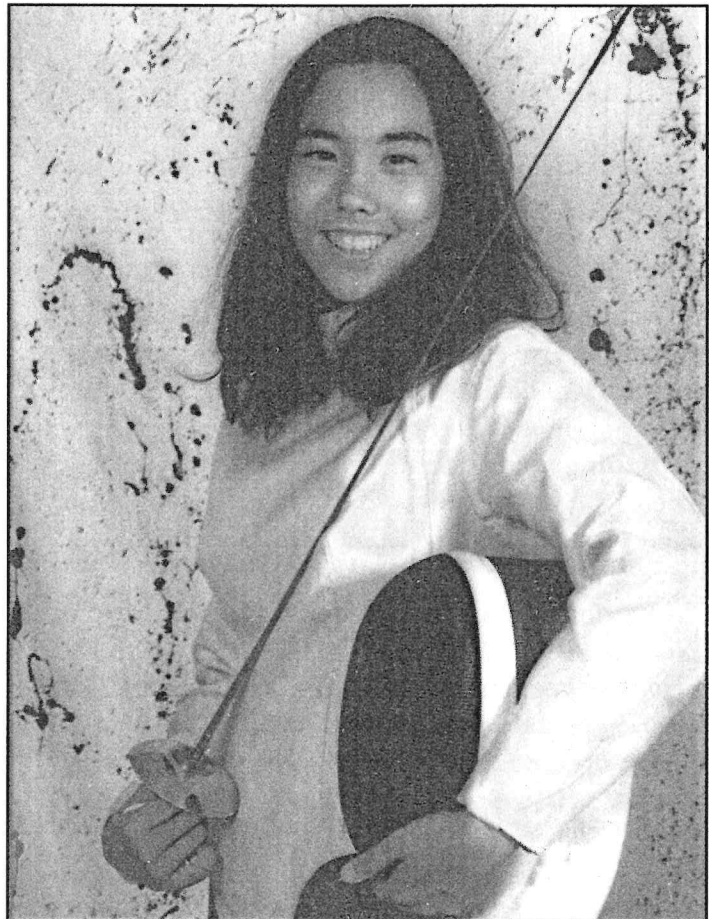
"I don't have time to do some of the normal girl things," Iris explains. "A lot of my friends go home from school and watch TV or just hang out. But I have to tell myself 'If I go with them, I'm not going to be ready to compete.' When I relax, I usually hang out with my sister and my fencing friends. This is what I want to do."

Her self-discipline and practice have already paid off. In 1995, Iris traveled to France and won the World Fencing Championship in the Under

17 category. In 1996, she went to Belgium and came in third place in the World Championship for the Under 20 category.

"I've learned that you have to be totally disciplined," Iris explains. "The greatest fear I have to overcome is the fear of losing. When you're on your way up, you have nothing to lose, but when you're at the top, you have a lot to lose."

"I've learned that I don't have any limitations. You can do anything you want to do . . . if you have the self-discipline."



Iris Zimmerman