The Pledge

A Commitment to Stand Against Bullying
A Desire to Value Others & Make a Difference

10 Topics
30+ Lessons
on
Making a Difference

Character Ed Tools
Character Ed Tools’ Vision

Empowering students to stand on a foundation of character so they may act responsibly when faced with difficult decisions.

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Building a Foundation of Character

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The Pledge

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How To Use This Character Ed Tools Program

Overview

Everyone faces difficulties in life; we all experience loneliness, frustration, and the pressures to do negative things like drugs, alcohol, smoking, or bullying others. This Pledge program will challenge students to make good decisions and commit to building others up rather than tearing them down. It’s a pledge to be part of the solution—a call to step up and make a difference.

The Pledge program will encourage students to take control of their lives and make a difference in the world around them. Students will learn how to take control of a bullying situation. They’ll be motivated to get involved in helping others who are being bullied and take an active role in ending bullying and cyber bullying at their school. It’s an engaging program designed to get students thinking about the substantial role they play in reducing bullying at their school and in the cyber world.

This program will explore several aspects of bullying, helping students to consider changing and taking control of the situation. They’ll be encouraged to develop their self-confidence, giving them the skills they need to put an end to bullying and help others achieve success. They’ll move forward in life with a determination to achieve a goal despite the distractions and temptations of the world around them.

The Pledge program will motivate your students to take control of their lives. Students will develop skills to overcome peer pressure and feel empowered to say “no” to things like smoking, alcohol, and drugs. This program will encourage students to control their impulses and recognize that bullying isn’t fair and it isn’t right. They’ll discover that if they stand together with others they can put an end to bullying, make a difference in the world, and create a future and a community that they can be proud to call home.

Daily Reflections On The Pledge

We have provided you with an opening comment for each chapter. Our vision is for the entire school to participate in encouraging and building others up. With that in mind, we wrote these daily reflections as witty statements that could be given during your school’s morning announcements for ten days. If it is only your class going through this book, a great way to reinforce the important topics of this program is to begin or end your class period reading these daily statements. Also, these reflections could be used as a reminder for the students weeks after you’ve ended your lessons. Remember, we move in the direction of our dominant thoughts. Let’s make ending bullying, developing self-confidence, and building others up one of those dominant thoughts.
**Chapters 1 Through 10**

Each chapter is loaded with insights and thoughts to get your students talking for hours on end about how to put an end to bullying, to improve their self-confidence, and seeking ways to encourage those around them. Okay, maybe we’re exaggerating a bit, but this will get your students talking.

**Activities**

This program contains simple and yet creative activities for each lesson. Use as many of these ideas as time or resources permit. Our goal is simply to get your students talking, thinking, and acting on what they think and have learned.

**The Lessons**

Each lesson is packed with thought-provoking content to get your students talking. An interesting comment is followed by open class discussion. We think you’ll find it fun to see what your students think about each topic presented and how they can improve their lives and the lives of those around them.

**Tip for the teacher:**

Please remember that calling on students to verbally respond to any question from this program puts that student on the spot. The resulting tension can lead to a rushed response, a wild guess, or simply no response at all.

Please give students 10-15 seconds between asking a question and asking a student to respond. This gives them time to formulate an answer. Help each student feel involved and encourage the others to practice good citizenship when listening to other students’ responses.

**Biographies, Historical Data, and Poems**

We thought you could use some real examples of people, historical events, and poems that demonstrate each topic in different ways. With each chapter you’ll find a whole bunch of data on a real person, an event, or a poem to give a real example of the topic being discussed.

**Worksheets**

A student response page is provided with each lesson to get your students’ feedback as they reflect on what they have learned.

**Some Legal Thoughts**

Copyrights and all that jazz. You know the drill. These lessons are owned by Character Ed Tools, so don’t copy them. How fair would it be if you copied any of these lessons without permission? If you want more books or a license to use this program school-wide, just give us a yell, we’ve got solutions. But when it comes to those worksheets? Copy tons of the worksheets (well, perhaps not tons since we are supposed to be saving trees, but you get the idea). Let’s get those students writing and reflecting on what they have learned. And most important of all, let’s have fun learning!
Daily Reflections On The Pledge

CHAPTER 1: WHAT IS A PLEDGE?

The difference between involvement and commitment is like an eggs–and–ham breakfast; the
chicken was involved in supplying the eggs but the pig is committed. Making a pledge to accomplish a
task takes more than just getting involved. It’s taking a stand, formally committing yourself to achieve
a goal that will make a positive difference in your life and in the world around you.

CHAPTER 2: PLEDGE TO TAKE A STAND AGAINST BULLYING

Too often we approach bullying and say “why? What can I do? I am only ‘one.’” But imagine what it
would be like if everyone took a stand against bullying. How comfortable would the bully feel knowing
that everyone around them disapproved of their actions? George Bernard Shaw imagined this, “You
see things; and you say, ‘Why?’ But I dream things that never were; and I say, ‘Why not?’” When it
comes to bullying, let’s say “why not stand against it.” Let’s pledge to stand together as a group to let
the bullies know they are not welcome here.

CHAPTER 3: PLEDGE TO STAND AGAINST CYBER BULLYING

Cyber bullying attacks can be more devastating than face to face conflicts. These conflicts involve
entire networks of friends enhanced by those passing it along as rumors or gossip. But consider this
thought. When you pass along a negative message or humiliating photo of someone, you are as guilty
of cyber bullying as the one who started it. So come on, think before you click. Let’s stand together
against cyber bullying. Don’t be mean behind the screen.

CHAPTER 4: PLEDGE TO TOLERATE DIFFERENCES

Imagine eating the same food every day for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The same taste, the same
flavors, the same look, and the same smell. Ooh, now that wouldn’t be to exciting would it? So it’s
kind of silly to expect everyone around us to think and act exactly like we do? We need to celebrate
our differences, engage in positive debates, and work at creating a common ground that everyone
can enjoy. Hillary Clinton stated it like this, “What we have to do is to find a way to celebrate our
diversity and debate our differences without fracturing our communities.”

CHAPTER 5: PLEDGE TO BE A CARING INDIVIDUAL

Think about how much it means to you when someone smiles at you, compliments the way you look,
helps you solve a problem, or gives you a helping hand. How does your outlook on a given day or a
problem change when you know others care about you? Quite a bit doesn’t it? Quite often it’s the
simple things we do that make a huge difference in someone’s day. Motivational writer, Leo
Buscaglia, once wrote, “Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a
listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to
turn a life around.” Let’s make a pledge to brighten someone’s day by showing them that we care.
CHAPTER 6: PLEDGE TO HELP OTHERS SUCCEED

We will find greater success in life when we work together with those around us. Henry Ford put it this way, “Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.” Reaching our goals and dreams will be easier when we help those around us succeed. Together we stand and divided we fall. Let’s choose to stand together victoriously.

CHAPTER 7: I PLEDGE TO RESPECT MYSELF

You can gain more friends by being yourself than you can by putting up a front. You can gain more friends by building people up than you can by tearing them down. And you can gain more friends by taking a few minutes from each day to celebrate something they have done or by doing something kind for them. You know what’s going to happen if you make a pledge to do those things and become a better friend? You guessed it! You’ll feel better about yourself and where your life is going.

CHAPTER 8: I PLEDGE TO MAKE GOOD DECISIONS

The number one reason people get involved in using drugs, alcohol, or smoking is because their friends are doing it. Why are we so afraid of saying “NO” to our friends? Perhaps we can begin to think like Frederick Douglass, an American Social Reformer, who declared, “I prefer to be true to myself, even at the hazard of incurring the ridicule of others, rather than to be false, and to incur my own abhorrence.” Let’s pledge to make decisions that will make us feel good about ourselves.

CHAPTER 9: I PLEDGE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Barbara Bush, wife of the 41st President, stated, “Never lose sight of the fact that the most important yardstick of your success will be how you treat other people—your family, friends, coworker, and even strangers you meet along the way.” Lasting happiness in life is found in having done something that truly makes a difference in someone’s life. Let’s pledge to build others up and work harder at making someone’s life better today than it was yesterday.

CHAPTER 10: I PLEDGE TO HELP THE ENVIRONMENT

Everyone knows the environment needs help. We’ve been instructed to recycle, reuse, and reduce the items we consume but do we do it? Perhaps we would do well to follow the artist, inventor and scientist, Leonardo da Vinci’s advice, “I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough, we must do.” Let’s pledge to apply that which we know and do that which we know we should be doing.
What is a Pledge?

Chapter #1

Objective:

To get your students thinking and talking about what it means to make a pledge.

Lesson:

This lesson takes a look at what it means to make a pledge. Several differing meanings are explored with examples. It will spark discussion and motivate your students to consider why we make pledges and what we hope to achieve by making a pledge.

Lesson #1: A Pledge = A Call to Action

Activity:

Time: 15 Minutes
Materials: None

Read the following quotes to the students:

“I firmly believe that any man’s finest hour, the greatest fulfillment of all that he holds dear, is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle—victorious.” Vince Lombardi

“My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” John F. Kennedy

“There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured with what is right in America.” William J. Clinton

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Talk about each of these quotes. How can we apply these statements to our lives today? How might these words of wisdom challenge us to rise up and take action to overcome a difficult situation? Talk about the determination needed to achieve big goals in life. What causes some to give up and quit? What type of commitment or pledge is needed to have the firm desire to carry on when you feel like quitting?

Discussion:

A pledge can be a formal promise. It’s a firm commitment to alter, change, commit to or do something. It can be a call to action, a desire to refrain from something or serious commitment to a particular relationship. For a moment, let’s consider what it means to make a pledge to do something.

Think about some things you might commit to doing. For example, exercising daily, writing in a journal regularly, walking the dog, or getting to school on time are a few examples of things we might wish to make a commitment to accomplish. Now, we can make a commitment to do those things or we can make a pledge to do them. How would the commitment to do those be different from making a pledge to accomplish one of those tasks?

Well, a pledge would be a formal commitment, perhaps similar to the commitment each of us have to breathe and consume water. You are formally committed to breathing. You will do anything you can to make sure you breath air. Likewise, if you formally commit to exercising daily, it becomes extremely important for you to do. It’s a commitment that you take very seriously.

1. Talk about the difference between simply making a commitment and formally making a commitment. What do we hope to gain from making a commitment?

2. New Year’s resolutions are a type of pledge people make each year. Discuss the various resolutions people make, such as exercising daily. Why is more effort made to keep these commitments than others made during the year?

3. Why are commitments easily broken? How might a formal commitment or pledge be less likely to be broken? What is causing us to feel the deeper need to keep the pledges we make?

“If a train is coming at you, closing your eyes won’t save you. Your tomorrow will only be seen if you make a decision to do something.” Unknown Author

“At a certain point, I just felt, you know. God is not looking for alms, God is looking for action.” Bono

“The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.” Walt Disney
A Call to Action
Worksheet for Lesson #1

1) What makes a pledge a stronger commitment than a simple promise?

2) What motivates someone to make a pledge?

3) Motivational speaker, Jack Canfield, notes, “Not every decision will produce the desired result. Not every action will work. Making mistakes, getting it almost right, and experimenting to see what happens are all part of the process of eventually getting it right.” What should you do when you fail to achieve a goal?

4. How important is perseverance to keeping a pledge?
Lesson #2: A Pledge = A Determination to Refrain

Activity:

Time: 15 Minutes
Materials: Several Magazines & Newspapers

Pass out several magazines and newspapers to the students. Have the students browse through the magazines or newspapers to locate any article or ad that is motivating someone to refrain from various activities or events. For example, an ad to stop smoking is motivating smokers to use their product or service to help them refrain or stop smoking.

Have the students talk about who their ads or articles are targeting. Why would someone need their product or service to help them keep a pledge, such as ending a smoking habit? What makes a pledge to stop smoking so difficult to keep?

Discussion:

A pledge can be a formal promise. It can be a call to action, a desire to refrain from something or serious commitment to a particular relationship. For a moment, let’s consider what it means to make a pledge to do refrain from something.

Smoking, drugs, and alcohol are addictive substances that can be harmful to the body. No one sets out to become an addict but those addicted to these types of things have a difficult time escaping their hold. It takes a pledge to gain the resolve needed to kick these habits. There are other habits that may not have life threatening ends but can be damaging to ones lifestyle. Disrespectful behaviors, poor hygiene, foul language, and shyness are a few things people regularly battle with that if changed could radically alter the direction of our lives.

A pledge to refrain or stop a particular action may go a long way to improving our lives. These pledges are not easily kept. Often, it takes the help of others to keep these pledges. However, the rewards for doing so could lead to a better quality of life and open more doors of opportunity.

1. Talk about the difficulties associated with being addicted to smoking, drugs, or alcohol. How might these addictions shatter lives and cause heartache to so many?

2. Why might making a formal commitment or pledge to refrain from smoking, drugs, or alcohol be necessary to end these activities? When does a person need to seek help to end these activities?

3. Talk about other habits that can be damaging to your life that you should make a pledge to end, such as poor hygiene.
A Pledge = A Determination to Refrain

Worksheet for Lesson #2

1. List three New Year’s resolutions people might make that involve refraining from or ending a particular activity.

2. Smoking, drugs, or alcohol are very addicting activities. Why does a formal pledge to stop these activities give you more power over them?

3. Even those who make a pledge to stop smoking, using drugs or consuming alcohol have to get help. Why is that?

4. Why do so many start smoking when they know it’s so difficult to stop? What can you do to keep them from starting?
Lesson #3: Devotion to a Relationship

Activity:

Time: 15 Minutes
Material:

The following is the Oath for Office administered to government officials. Write it on the whiteboard.

I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter: So help me God.

Have the students talk about the various segments of the Oath for Office. Why do you suppose certain phrases are in the oath? What are those reciting these words pledging to do? What power would a few spoken or affirmed words have over someone? Why is it vital to our nation for elected officials to make such a pledge?

Discussion:

A pledge can be a formal promise. It can be a call to action, a desire to refrain from something or serious commitment to a particular relationship. Let’s consider what it means to make a pledge to a particular relationship.

The Pledge of Allegiance, Boy & Girl Scout pledges, and marriage vows are a few examples of pledges given to a particular relationship. These relationships may be defined as faithful, determined, loyal, or devoted. We honor, protect, and give more of ourselves and our resources to those whom we have pledged our loyalty. We may be loyal to a particular restaurant, clothing line, gaming equipment, or sports team. We've pledged our allegiance to them. We're devoted fans.

1. Talk about the various relationships we pledge to keep. What motivate people to decide to be more devoted to one relationship over another?

2. Discuss the various groups at your school that students may have pledged to be a part of. Is the commitment or level of devotion to each group the same? Why or why not? Is there a way to break that obligation? What might happen if you became disloyal to the group?

3. What might happen if you break a commitment or pledge to a particular group at school? How do others view disloyalty?
A Pledge = Devoted to a Relationship

Worksheet for Lesson #3

1) List three relationships that people pledge to maintain.

2) Why do people make commitments to the relationships listed above?

3) What penalties might there be for breaking a commitment to one of the relationships you’ve listed?

4) How does a pledge to that relationship make it more binding than a promise made to the same relationship?
Lesson #4—The Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance is a national symbol, one that practically all Americans have heard at some point in time. The Pledge was written in August 1892 by a socialist minister, Francis Bellamy. Bellamy hoped that the pledge would be used by citizens in any country. It originally read as:

“I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

Students were to stand at attention and salute the flag until they reached the word flag at which point they extended their hand toward the flag.

The Pledge was created as a way to teach patriotism to the nation’s youth. The Civil War era had left it’s scars. The unity of America was at a low. Times were changing. There was considerable unrest. Drugs and alcohol use were being contested. Voting rights for blacks and women were being challenged. The nation was still healing from the War and Bellamy felt there needed to be some sort of national pride.

Bellamy set out to write a statement that symbolized the essence of what this country stands for and it’s ultimate goal. The statement is a vow to be devoted to the nation represented by the flag. One nation, indivisible is a reminder of the Civil War era and the need to remember what had transpired and the need to stand together. He believed that liberty and justice were the core qualities in the freedoms we hold dear.

In 1923, the words, “the Flag of the United States of America” were added because there was a large number of foreign children in the schools. In World War II, the salute towards the flag was too similar to the Nazi salute, so it was changed to keep the right hand over the heart throughout. In 1954, in response to the Communist threat of the times, President Eisenhower encouraged Congress to add the words “under God,” creating the pledge we say today.

1. Take a moment to consider how you may have felt had you lived in the South following the Civil War. How might you feel about the words, “one nation, indivisible?” Would you feel any differently if you had lived in the North?

2. Discuss examples of when our liberties could collide with others freedoms of expression. For example, loud music after 10PM at night. When does one person freedom of expression interfere with another’s right to a good night’s sleep? Is this what the words “liberty and justice for all” are attempting to balance?

3. The words “under God” were added to separate our nation from what was perceived as the Godless Communist countries. These words seem to be under fire today. What do you think?
Lesson #4—What is a Pledge?
Worksheet for The Pledge of Allegiance

1) When was the Pledge of Allegiance written?

2) What is one possible reason for wanting school children to recite the Pledge of Allegiance?

3) What do you think the phrase “under God” means and do you feel it should still be in the Pledge? Why or why not?

4) Reciting the Pledge is optional for most students. Do you feel this is wise? Why or why not?