



CHARACTER BUILDING ACTIVITIES

IF ONLY I WERE...

Story Description

Missy the mouse has a very big problem—she's dissatisfied with who she is and what she looks like. She thinks her ears are too big and her tail is too skinny. Even worse, Horace the cat is constantly chasing her, and she can't do anything about it! If only she could be as big and beautiful as Horace, then all her problems would be gone.

One day, while being chased by Horace, Missy wishes herself into becoming a big cat. Her wish comes true, and she chases Horace. Missy is delighted that she is now the biggest and most beautiful cat in the whole world. But she quickly discovers that cats have serious problems with dogs. As Missy wishes herself into becoming bigger and stronger creatures, she discovers that everyone has problems. Missy finally learns to accept herself for what she is.

This delightful and powerful story by Carl Sommer shows children the importance of self-esteem, trust, and cheerfulness.



Major Objective

To define and present the following virtues so they can be integrated into the life of each student:

- Self-esteem: having a good opinion of one's self
- Trust: having confidence in the honesty, friendship, and wisdom of another person
- Cheerfulness: expressing a feeling of happiness or joy

Story Time Interaction

Read the story, **The Ugly Caterpillar**, and then write these three virtues on the board: self-esteem, trust, and cheerfulness.

Activities

Objectives: To use the following activities to help reinforce the virtues of self-esteem, trust, and cheerfulness.



Who Am I?

Define what each student's special gifts, talents, and abilities are. Emphasize that these are not necessarily flashy or readily apparent characteristics, but may also be gifts that help them to be sensitive to the needs of others.

Notice that because Missy could not accept herself, she became very unhappy. When Missy learned to accept herself, she became a very happy mouse.

The Hidden Me

Goal: To help students realize they are unique and have special giftings that can benefit others around them when those giftings are used. Finding the uniqueness within each student could be like finding the hidden uniqueness in a peanut—both must be opened up to be revealed.

Materials: A bag of roasted peanuts in the shell for students to share. (You may use raisins if some students are not permitted to have peanuts).

Activity: As the peanuts are shelled by the students and the peanut skin removed, it reveals what's *really* inside that hard-looking protective shell. Stress that every peanut is different. No two are 100% alike. Note that inside the peanut is the shape of a bearded man. When the students have examined their peanut, explain that each student has uniqueness within themselves.

Likewise with the raisins. Look carefully at each one, and you will find no two are exactly alike. It may be that you are an artist and can draw cards to make others happy; you may be able to take things apart and fix them; you may be able to play an instrument or sing, etc.

Explain: Self-determination is discovering what I like and being willing to work to improve what is in me.

I don't have to be just like everyone else. I am special and I can just be me.

Behold, The Real Me! Cube

Goal: To show the uniqueness of each student.

Project: Create a box—presenting the REAL me!

Materials:

A cube box (or create a cube box by cutting them from poster board.)

Paint, paper, or fabric to cover the cube

Glue, scissors

Crayons, markers

Student Materials: Students are to bring photos and magazine pictures that describe what they like to do, such as skateboarding, fishing, baseball, swimming, ping-pong, playing a musical instrument,

cooking, etc. Students may also draw pictures.

Activity: Instruct students to paint or cover the outside of the box. Each side can be different or alike. Attach pictures, stories, photos, ribbons, awards, or anything else that describes their gifting and talents. The cube may be a short story of the student's life, an autobiography.

Finished product: The finished product should tell others a lot about who you really are. You will see just how unique and special you are—there is no one exactly like you.

I Bring You My Best

Goal: To help each student find a creative way to use their gifting. Discuss various ways that students can present or use their giftings for their class, family, or community.

Ideas:

- Writing an autobiographical story (present it to your family or class)
- Performing a pantomime for the class or performing it for children in the hospital
- Auditioning for a part in a community play (children's parts are often available for those with little or no experience)
- Writing a letter of thanks or encouragement to a friend, family member, or someone in the community
- Writing a poem or a song to share
- Singing a song or playing a musical instrument for an elderly person in the community
- Offering to run an errand for a home bound neighbor or friend
- Helping someone with a building project
- Spreading cheer with a smile and "Thanks!" to Mom, Dad, or a neighbor
- Cheering someone up by giving them a sincere compliment

Tying It All Together

Missy was a very sad mouse because of her skinny tail and big ears. She lived in the world of "If only I were something else." Finally her wish came true, but each wish found her deeper in despair. Finally after the last wish when she became herself, she learned to accept herself the way she was.

What an important lesson to learn to accept what you cannot change. But Missy didn't accept the way everything was. She took intelligent action to solve her problem with Horace. When Horace was around, she stayed home. When Horace left, she'd go out and play. Missy became a very happy mouse. Missy's environment didn't change, what changed was her attitude