



# CHARACTER BUILDING ACTIVITIES

## SOMMER-TIME STORIES

### CHICKEN LITTLE

#### Story Description

Chicken Little lives in a world of fear, in spite of her big sister and loving parents' advice. She trembles at a mouse, cowers during a wind storm, and panics when the tricky fox tries to fool her with superstitions. When an acorn hits her on the head, she's convinced that the sky is falling. Frightened, Chicken Little starts a panic among all the animals until they take the problem to wise King Leo.

King Leo's simple explanation makes Chicken Little and her friends realize they shouldn't be gullible, but should check things out before believing them. When Chicken Little stops listening to superstitions and unfounded fears, she becomes a very happy and peaceful hen. This expansion of the Chicken Little story demonstrates the dangers of being too gullible.



#### Major Objective

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

- Listening: valuing the opinions of others
- Respect for Leaders: showing high honor and regard for a leader
- Self-Discipline: controlling one's conduct for improvement

#### Story Time Interaction

Read the story, *Chicken Little*, and then write these three character traits on the interactive whiteboard: listening, respect for leaders, and self-discipline. Define and discuss these character traits.

Discuss the characters:

Chicken Little	Her sister and parents
Freddy Fox	Tom Turkey
Daisy Duck	Gabby Goose
Randy Rooster	Chippy Chipmunk
King Leo	The other little chicks

#### Activity Objectives

To use the following activities to reinforce the character traits of listening, respect for leaders, and self-discipline. To guide students to consider the importance of assertiveness, courage, citizenship, obedience, safety, trust, and trustworthiness.

## Peer Pressure and Following the Crowd

Discuss with students what peer pressure is (feeling the need to do what others do or tell you to do—going along with the crowd). Explain that peer pressure is real and it really can hurt, but those who pressure you are not worth having as a friend and are not real friends. If someone is a real friend, he will not pressure you to do something wrong or even something you just don't want to do. Discuss the ways that children pressure others:

1. Ridicule—Others tell you that you are a loser, a nobody, and other put-downs, name-calling, laughing, and insults.
2. Rejection—Children fear being left out or that a friendship will end.
3. Reasoning—Someone or others try to talk you into to doing something and why it is okay to do it.
4. Group pressure—Sometimes children gather in a group and laugh and make fun of someone.
5. Giving a look—Sometimes just a simple look is enough to say—You aren't cool like us.
6. Subtle pressure (example)—Because the “cool kids” wear it or do it, others feel the pressure to do the same.

### Science Experiment—Peer Pressure

To demonstrate peer pressure, conduct this experiment. Get an empty water bottle, a balloon, and a black Sharpie marker. Before class, blow up the balloon and draw a face on it. When it is dry, let the air out and disinfect the mouth of the balloon. In front of the class, insert the balloon into the bottle and pull it over the mouth of the bottle. The balloon will be hanging inside the bottle. Ask who thinks he can blow up the balloon. Let a student come up and attempt to blow the balloon up. Tell him to blow really hard. However, no matter how hard he tries, he will not be able to blow the balloon up that is in the bottle. Explain that the air pressure in the bottle pushes against the balloon, keeping it from being blown up. Now relate how this air pressure is like peer pressure—it pushes students into doing things they don't want to do. A student tries to do right, but the peer pressure pushes them into doing wrong. The easiest way to avoid peer pressure is to avoid being friends with people who pressure you to do wrong things. However, explain that students can stand up to peer pressure. They need to be aware of it and think about how they will act in a certain situation.

### Peer Pressure Role Plays

Have students act out some role plays so they will know what to do in a real situation. Here are some possible scenarios to act out:

One student tries to get another to smoke and says that no one will know, and it will make them cool.

One student tells another that he won't be his friend if he doesn't let him copy his homework.

The other girls in class all have the latest cell phone, so the new girl wants one, too.

Some of the boys make fun of one of the other boys because he tripped over his shoe laces in gym class.

A group of girls turn their backs on the new girl and roll their eyes at one another.

### **Are You a Robot?**

Bring in a toy robot. (One of your students or another teacher may have one you can borrow). Demonstrate how the robot works. Ask if anyone would like to be a robot (some may). Ask how robots are different from people. Yes, they cannot think or feel. They can only do what they are programmed to do. Explain that the factory where this robot was made probably had thousands of robots just like this one. Next ask: Don't you think it would be boring if the robot was the only toy that you could ever play with? Then ask students to think about the fact that peer pressure tries to make everyone alike. Peer pressure says that if you are different, you are weird and should be ridiculed. If everyone dressed the same, looked the same, said the same thing, and did the same thing, life would be very boring. Don't let peers or "the crowd" tell you how you should look or act. Be yourself; don't be a peer pressure robot. Remember that the crowd can be and many times is wrong in their opinions.

Display and discuss this quote: The man who follows the crowd will usually get no further than the crowd. The man who walks alone is likely to find himself in places no one has ever been.—Alan Ashley-Pitt

### **Game: Follow the Leader**

Discuss how following the crowd is many times not something we should do. In the story, Chicken Little, everyone except Chippy Chipmunk went along with the others and believed what Chicken Little thought. It may seem like the crowd or "everyone" knows what is true or right, but many times they do not. For example, if all of your friends want you to join them in smoking or drinking alcohol, you should say, "No!" You may be the only one who does right, but later in your life you will be glad that you made the right decision. Everyone who starts smoking later wishes that they had never taken the first puff because smoking costs a lot of money, and it causes people to get cancer and other diseases and to die. Many teenagers who start smoking only think about being cool and doing what their friends are doing; they don't think about how bad it is for their health or how much they will regret it later. Always do the right thing no matter what others are saying or doing, and you will not be sorry.

Now lead students in a game of Follow the Leader. Whatever the leader does, the rest must also do. If possible, play the game outside and show students that they are to go from point A to point B. (Don't call them points A and B to the students; specify by the tree or to the slide, etc.). Explain that you will be looking for someone to be the next leader, so they should all do exactly what you do in order to be chosen. Continue changing leaders and following the leader until all but five students have had a chance to be leader. On the final game, call out the last five children to be leaders all at once. When you finish playing, discuss some of the things that students noticed while playing. Was it always easy to do what the leader did? Were they tempted at times to quit? Was it easier to follow the leader when they were closer to the leader? Were some leaders easier to follow than others? What happened when

there were five leaders? Was it confusing? Did they know who to follow? (Discuss the importance of having one leader). When you were the leader were you a good leader? For example, I don't think any leader took others into a puddle of water, mud, or in front of a moving car. Remind students why is important to follow a good leader who will take us where we need to go—down good paths and not off a cliff or into quicksand or into doing wrong things. If someone didn't pay attention, did they do what the leader did and did they wind up where the leader went? Talk about how in life we must be careful whom we follow. Some friends will want us to do bad things with them while others will want us to do good things. We need to choose the friends who do right and who make good decisions.

### **Trust Activity with Strange Fruit**

Discuss the fact that we learn to trust people by observing what they do over and over again. We don't trust strangers because we don't know them and don't know what they may or may not do or what they might have done in the past. Students can trust their parents and their teachers to do what is best for them and to help them be successful in life. Tell students that they are going to get a chance to show how much they trust you. Let each student (who wants to) eat some fruit. Bring in a fruit (or some other food) that is unusual, something that students have not tried before, but that is really good. For example, you could bring in pluots or star fruit. Then discuss how they felt about trying the fruit. Talk about how they knew you, and knew that they could trust you to bring in something good. Next, discuss how it is important to always do what is right so that our friends and family will know we can be trusted. We call this earning a reputation. How we act and the things we do over a time period earn us a reputation as being trustworthy or not trustworthy.

### **“Falling” Trust Activity**

To demonstrate trust, tell students that they are going to fall backwards and you will catch them. Tell them to stiffen their bodies and close their eyes; then they fall backwards. For an extra safety measure, put a mat down under them. Let each student who wants to, have a turn. Then discuss how they felt before and after falling backwards into your arms. Talk about how they knew you, and knew that you would not let them fall; they knew they could trust you because of your reputation.

### **Believe It or Not?**

Explain to students that today you will discuss when to believe something. First of all, we cannot just believe everything we hear or read. If we did, we would be gullible and would believe a lot of untrue things. We need to think about what we are told and see if it makes sense. We should also consider the source—the person telling us the information or whoever is producing the information. Some people are known to tell the truth and be a trusted source, while others have a reputation for not telling the truth. If something seems unlikely and we are hesitant to believe it, then we should check out the information. Ask someone else if it is true or read more about it to figure out if it is true. This is also true about the Internet. Some Internet sites are reliable, but others are not. Only use trusted sites. (Children will learn more about this as they get older).

## Superstitions

Lead a discussion with students about superstitions. Explain that superstitions are not true. In the past when people did not know much about science, they tried to come up with reasons for things happening, so they made up superstitions. They did not mean to lie; they really thought that they were true, but they simply were not and are not true. Maybe one day a cat walked across the road, and a little while later the person who saw it had an accident. This person tried to figure out why the accident happened and the only thing different about the day was the black cat, so he decided that the accident happened because of the black cat, but this was not the case. Have children help you make a list of any superstitions they have heard. If they are not familiar with any, you can mention these—a black cat crossing your path causes bad luck; Friday the 13th is unlucky; opening an umbrella in the house is unlucky. Other superstitions: whistling on a boat whistles up a storm; rubbing a rabbit's foot brings good luck; breaking a mirror brings seven years of bad luck; throwing salt over your left shoulder brings good luck; knocking on wood will help something to happen; crossing your fingers will help something to happen; a four-leaf clover brings good luck; step on a crack and you'll break your mother's back; a cat has nine lives; a horseshoe brings good luck. Point out the fact that most of the superstitions involve luck, either good or bad. Explain to students that you have never had good or bad luck when you did any of these things. Having either good luck or bad luck is not really something that exists. Things just happen, good and bad, to all of us because that is how life works. Ask students their ideas on how these different superstitions got started.

### Tying It All Together

Remember that you need to always do what is right, so that you will have a good reputation and people will trust you. Sometimes you need to check things out so that you don't spread false information. You may think you are doing a good thing, but if you are spreading false information, you will earn a bad reputation and someone could get hurt. Finally, don't always follow the crowd because sometimes the crowd is wrong. Instead, focus on doing right, and you will not be sorry. The crowd may try to pressure you into doing wrong, but doing the right thing will always help you in the end.