



# CHARACTER BUILDING ACTIVITIES

SOMMER-TIME STORIES

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## THE DONKEY, THE FOX, AND THE LION

### Story Description



Mom and Dad Fox try to set a healthy example for triplets Freddy, Fay, and Flip. Even though Mom cooks nutritious meals, Freddy prefers to stuff himself with sugary treats and refuses to participate in healthy family exercise. One bad choice leads to another and, in spite of Dad and Mom's efforts, Freddy finds himself part of a crooked gang of foxes. When the leader recruits Freddy as a decoy to help him outwit a lion and a donkey, the plan backfires.

Is Freddy too chubby to get away? This retelling of Aesop's classic fable reminds readers that parents always have their children's best interests at heart.

### Major Objective

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

- Healthy Living: eating a healthy diet, getting plenty of exercise, and getting proper rest
- Respect for Parents: valuing one's father and mother by making their desires and counsel important considerations
- Picking Good Friends: choosing friends who display good character, are loyal, and show respect to others

### Story Time Interaction

Read the story, *The Donkey, the Fox, and the Lion*, and then write these character traits on the interactive whiteboard: healthy living, respect for parents, and picking good friends. Define and discuss the character traits.

Discuss these characters:

Freddy	Fay and Flip	Freddy's parents
Mack	The Donkey	The Lion

### Activity Objectives

To use the following activities to reinforce the character traits of healthy living, respect for parents, and picking good friends. To guide students to consider the importance of eating healthy, exercising, being honest, listening to parents, and having the courage to stand for what's right.

## **Listen Up, Math Whiz!**

In this story, Freddy the Fox did not listen to his parents, respect his parents, or obey his parents, and because of it, he almost lost his life. If Freddy had respected and obeyed his parents, he would have chosen good friends and would not have become a gang member. If he had listened to his parents, he would have eaten healthy foods and exercised and would have been able to run fast. If he had done these things, he would not have been in the situation that almost cost him his life. To demonstrate to students the importance of being good listeners, do some fun and amazing math tricks. Students must listen and follow instructions exactly, or they will not get the correct answer. (These can be found in the appendix).

### **How Well Do You Listen?**

Remind students the importance of listening well. Explain that being a good listener can even mean the difference between life and death. There have been cases when a snake was about to strike a child. The parent saw what was happening and knew that if the child moved quickly the snake would strike. Instead the parent told the child not to move a muscle. The child was perfectly still and the snake moved away. Then the parent explained what happened. If the parent had told the child about the snake, the child may have reacted by trying to run away. This may have caused the snake to strike. This is a good example of the importance of obeying without question and obeying immediately!

Here is a game to play with the class. Write instructions on cards, one per card. Mix the cards up and one at a time, students will draw a card from the pile. The first student reads the card silently and then acts out whatever the card says to do. (The first student ignores the first half of the card). The rest of the students listen and watch to see if the student does what is on his or her card. For example, if the cards says, "When someone claps five times, you stand up, turn around, and sit down," this student is watching and listening for someone to clap five times. As soon as he sees/hears someone clap five times, he stands up, turns around, and sits down. The student with a card saying, "When someone stands up, turns around, and sits down, you wink or blink your eyes until the next person goes," then this student winks or blinks his eyes until the next person goes and so on. Time the class from beginning to end and the next time see if they can beat their time and show that they are good listeners! Here are enough cards for a class of thirty:

1. When you hear someone sneeze, say your teacher's name.
2. When you hear your teacher's name, you say "My teacher

is great!"

3. When someone says, "My teacher is great!", you stand on one foot.
4. When someone stands on one foot, you clap your hands five times.
5. When someone claps five times, you stand up, turn around, and sit down.
6. When someone stands up, turns around, and sits down, you wink or blink your eyes until the next person goes.
7. When someone winks or blinks his eyes a lot, you make a funny face.
8. When someone makes a funny face, you crow like a rooster.
9. When someone crows like a rooster, you meow like a cat.
10. When someone meows like a cat, you flap your arms like you're flying.
11. When someone flaps her arms like she's flying, you do a dance.
12. When someone does a dance, you act like a monkey.
13. When someone acts like a monkey, you pretend to snore.
14. When someone pretends to snore, laugh until the next person goes.
15. When someone laughs a lot, you pretend to skateboard.
16. When someone pretends to skateboard, you act like you're swimming.
17. When someone pretends to swim, you pretend to drive a race car.
18. When someone pretends to drive a race car, you fall down.
19. When someone falls down, you scratch your head.
20. When someone scratches her head, you sing a song.
21. When someone sings a song, you do four jumping jacks.
22. When someone does four jumping jacks, you pretend to ride a bike.
23. When someone pretends to ride a bike, you pretend to paint.
24. When someone pretends to paint, you cough.
25. When someone coughs, you pretend to drink.
26. When someone pretends to drink, you pretend to climb a tree.
27. When someone pretends to climb a tree, you pretend to play baseball.
28. When someone pretends to play baseball, you pretend to play basketball.
29. When someone pretends to play basketball, you pretend to play soccer.

30. When someone pretends to play soccer, you pretend to cut with scissors.
31. When someone pretends to cut with scissors, you pretend to sneeze.

### **Listen, Learn, and Be Safe!**

As previously mentioned, it can be important to listen and be safe. We must listen for sirens, for warnings from others, and for instructions. Remind students that in case of fire they should stop, drop, and roll. If someone catches on fire and they run, it will only make the fire worse. Allow each student to practice the fire safety rule of stop, drop, and roll.

### **Animal Sounds**

This game will allow students to practice listening skills while having fun. Make either 2 picture cards or 2 word cards with each of these animals: monkey, cow, cat, dog, sheep, donkey, elephant, horse, duck, rooster, snake, pig, bird, lion, owl, bee, and wolf. To play the game, pass out the cards to students. (If there are cards left over, make sure that matches are used in the game). Warn students not to let anyone see their cards. Students leave the cards face down at their seats and move to the center of the room or mill around desks. On the count of three, all students start making their animal sounds at the same time. As soon as a student finds his partner, they sit in a designated spot. The object of the game is to find your partner as quickly as possible. Time the class and then play again and try to beat that time. Afterwards ask students if they found it difficult to find their partners because of all the noise. They will see for themselves that at times one must listen very carefully and tune out distractions.

### **Recipe to Remember**

Have students go home and have one of their parents tell them how to cook something. The next day at school, have students write down the recipe and turn it in. The next night, ask parents to write the recipe down so students can bring it in the following day. Students should compare their recipes with their parents' recipes. How are they the same? How are they different? What would happen if they made the food using their recipes instead of their parents' recipes? Would they want to eat it? How well did they listen? Was listening important? Was remembering important? If you have trouble remembering, what can you do? Yes, write it down right away!

### **Test on Following Directions**

An interesting and fun way to test students' ability to listen and follow directions is to have them take a test. In this test the teacher

tells the students to read the test all the way through and then begin. If they read it through, they will see that the last item says to only do items one and two, and they will pass with a 100%. However, if they don't read the test all the way through, they will do all the items and it will take a lot longer. When they get to the end, they should realize that they did not follow instructions. This means they failed the test. However, explain that this is not a test grade. Instead this was a test to help them see whether they listen well and follow instructions, or if they need to work on improving their listening skills. The test can be found in the appendix.

### **Watch Where You Step!**

Another way to help students realize the importance of listening and obeying is an activity that is best performed outside. Spread a tarp on a level area of ground. You will also need two blindfolds and a dozen raw eggs. Randomly crack the eggs onto the tarp. Then choose two students, blindfold them, and have them take off their shoes. Guide the first student through the "mine field" by telling him which way to go. He should be able to navigate through it without stepping on any of the eggs. The second student should walk through the "mine field" without any help. She can do it on her own, but will probably (hopefully) step on an egg or two. This will demonstrate to students the need for guidance from parents, teachers, or other trusted adults and the importance of listening and obeying that guidance and advice. (Tip: Be sure to rinse the eggs off the tarp when you finish or you will soon have a very nasty smell).

### **Post It!**

Have students make posters showing how to be a good listener. The title will be "Be a Good Listener!" Here are the statements for the poster: Eyes look at the person talking. Lips are zipped. Ears listen. Brain thinks about what is said. Feet are on the floor. Hands are in lap. Raise your hand to ask a question. Next to each statement students should glue a coordinating picture from a magazine (eyes, lips, ears, brain (head), feet, and hands). Students can draw a question mark next to the last statement. Provide either a large piece of construction paper or poster board for each student. Have students use a pencil first, and then they can trace over their letters with markers.

### **Who Has the Most Influence?**

Discuss influence with students. Explain that when two friends are together, one of them usually has a stronger personality and therefore, more influence. If you have the ability to influence people, it means that you can cause them to do something. Some people influence others to do good, while other people influence people to do

wrong. That is why it is important to have good friends; then you can influence each other to do good things. Even if you want to do good, if you hang around friends who do bad things, they will eventually pull you down into doing things that you shouldn't do.

Here is a science experiment that demonstrates this. Blow up two balloons—one fairly big, but not about to burst and the other fairly small, about the size of a small cabbage or small cantaloupe. The two balloons should be noticeably different in size. Use a twisty to tie off both balloons. Use a large spool of thread with access to the middle hole where air can pass through. Stretch the end of each balloon over the ends of the spool. Explain to students that you are going to take the twisty ties off. Ask students what they think will happen. Students will probably think that the air in both balloons will even out. Take the twisty ties off. The air from the small balloon will move into the large balloon. Therefore, the large balloon had more influence than the small balloon. It seems like the large balloon had more power than the small balloon. Discuss how this is similar to people and their influences.

## **Appearances Can Be Deceiving**

Mack was not really being a friend to Freddy. He pretended to be nice, but he really had a bad motive for befriending Freddy. Discuss with students how people can seem nice and good, but really be bad. That is why we never go with a stranger. We only trust people who we know or who our parents know. Allow students a chance to share what they know about this.

Then perform this science experiment to demonstrate that what seems to be true and good may not always be true and good. Show students a tall glass and a paper towel. Have a tub or bucket of water available. Tightly wad a paper towel and place it in the bottom of the glass. Ask students what will happen to the paper towel when you push the glass under the water. Of course, they will say that the paper towel will get wet. However, you are going to do it in such a way that it will not get wet. Turn the glass upside down and push it straight down into the water so it is completely covered. (If you tilt the glass at all, the air will be released from the glass and the paper towel will get wet). Carefully pull the glass straight up out of the water and remove the paper towel. IT IS DRY!!! (As always, it is a good idea to practice at home). The air in the glass stayed in the glass and kept the paper towel from the water. It didn't seem possible, yet it was! Likewise, people may seem nice and good, yet they do bad things. Don't be fooled! Always obey your parents and don't trust strangers. Sometimes a person can seem like a friend, but as time goes on you realize that they aren't treating you like a friend should treat a friend.

If that happens, find a new friend!

## **Take Off That Mask!**

Freddy thought that Mack was a good friend because he acted friendly and singled Freddy out to do something special. Freddy didn't find out how mean Mack was until he spent more time with him. One of the reasons it is so difficult to determine if someone is good or bad is because people put on pretend faces or masks. Show the class some masks that you brought in. Put one of the masks on for a minute or so and then take it off. Let's assume that you put on a mask of a princess. Ask the class, "Did wearing the mask make me a princess?" After students answer, you can reply with something like: "Of course, it didn't. However, it made me look kind of like a princess. Maybe someone would even have believed I was a princess if I was also wearing a princess dress." Next explain that we say that people wear masks when they don't actually wear a mask. We just mean that their face is not showing what they are really like. Sometimes people smile and act friendly and nice, but then they do mean things. We say that they were "wearing a mask." This is why we stay away from strangers. It is also a good idea not to be alone with any adult man other than your father. (It is up to the teacher as to whether or not to go into a more detailed lesson on stranger danger).

## **Catapult Bad Habits Away!**

Freddy had begun to get some bad habits such as lying, smoking, being lazy, just eating sweets, picking bad friends, and joining a gang. The best thing is not to start a bad habit, but if you do, you can stop if you determine that you will. Stopping a habit suddenly can be difficult, but it is usually the best way to stop something. One way to stop a habit is to get away from anything that would cause you to fall into the habit trap. For example, someone who has a habit of smoking should stop buying cigarettes and stop being around others who smoke. Another example is someone who is addicted to eating sweets. Don't buy sweets or have them in the house. Realize that you may need to eat more fruit and keep busy so you won't think about sweets. Since you want to stay away from sweets or whatever the bad habit may be, think of getting it far away from you and getting it away quickly. That is what a catapult does.

Show students how a catapult works and that they can easily make one with a pencil and a tongue depressor or craft stick. Put the pencil on the table and place the craft stick on top of the pencil. The pencil and craft stick should be perpendicular to each other. The craft stick will hang over the pencil by about four inches on one side and about an inch on the other. Place a tiny paper wad on the long end of the craft stick. Hit the short end of the craft stick and watch the paper wad fly. Move the craft stick so that the pencil is nearer to the stick's

center and try the catapult again. Did the wad go further or not as far? This can be a good experiment about a lever and fulcrum. However, don't let students forget that this represents getting bad habits far away from us.

## **I Need Air!**

Discuss with students the fact that everyone must breathe air (oxygen) in order to live. That is why smoking is so bad for people. Here are some smoking facts: Each year smoking kills over 480,000 people in the United States (some die from secondhand smoke). Worldwide, smoking causes almost 6 million deaths. Smokers die approximately 10 years earlier than non-smokers. Smoking causes many lung diseases such as cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, bronchitis, emphysema, and many others. It also causes heart disease, strokes, and diabetes. Smoking interferes with the lungs' natural cleaning system. It destroys the tiny hairs that line the upper airways and protect against infections. These tiny hairs, along with mucus, trap tiny particles of dirt and pollution so they can then be expelled by coughing. In smokers, the dirt and pollution stay in the lungs. Smoking also damages the lungs' air sacs, making it difficult to breathe. Now do this science experiment to show the need for air (oxygen). This experiment shows how a candle needs oxygen, too. You will need a votive candle, a large glass or a glass jar, and a match or lighter. Light the candle and, when it is burning well, cover it with the glass or jar. In a little bit the candle will die out. The candle needed oxygen and could not keep burning without it. People need oxygen. When we breathe, oxygen goes into our lungs. If we did not have oxygen, like the candle, we would die.

## **Balanced Living**

Freddy did not realize the importance of balanced living. That means a person has a healthy diet, exercises, gets plenty of rest or sleep at night, and has a good support system of family and friends. Here is an experiment to perform that will show students the importance of balance. Blow up four balloons (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  full) and tie them together. Label each balloon with one of the four aspects of balanced living (healthy diet, exercise, sleep, family/friends). Next to show students that it is difficult to have a balanced and good life without these four aspects, place a board on top of the balloons and help a student stand on the board. The balloons should support the student without popping. Help the student down and cut one of the balloons away. Put the board back on the balloons and help the student stand on top. It should be harder to balance, but not impossible. Next help the student down and cut another balloon away. Replace the board and again help the student stand on the balloons. It should be difficult for the student to stand on only two balloons, but some students may



be able to manage it. Following the same procedure, remove another balloon and see if the student can balance on one balloon.

Remind students that to be healthy and happy, you need all four aspects mentioned above. You may be able to function, but you won't be functioning at your best if all four aspects are not in place in your life. Also, sometimes the results of ignoring one of these aspects may not be apparent at first, but later in life it will catch up with you. For example, a smoker may smoke for twenty or thirty years before he gets a heart attack or cancer, but it will catch up with him. Or maybe a smoker does live to the age of seventy or eighty, but his wife dies of cancer from being exposed to his smoke. The important thing to remember is not to begin a bad habit. Then you won't have to go through the pain of trying to break it.

### **The Crazy Game**

Freddy did not like the rules and principles his parents tried to teach him. He thought that the rules were keeping him from having fun. He did not realize that rules help us be safe and live happy, successful lives. Ask students to tell what they think life would be like without rules. Then have students play the Crazy Game so they can realize what it would be like to have no rules in a game. Explain that they are going to play a game and divide the class into groups of 3-4 students. Give each group a pair of dice. Then smile and tell them to begin playing. Explain that you will be watching, but that you can't answer any questions. If they sputter and complain, just keep smiling and tell them to go ahead and start the game. After ten minutes or before they get too mad at one another, stop the game and ask students what they thought about the game. Was it fun? What was the problem? How did they feel during the game? They should express the fact that a game without rules just didn't work. Also, some students probably tried to take advantage of others. What were some other difficulties that occurred? Ask if this game has given students any other insights on living without rules. Rules are definitely necessary and beneficial to us.

### **Tying It All Together**

At the beginning of the story, Freddy was not eating right or exercising, and he was smoking and hanging out with bad friends. Later he even joined a gang! Unfortunately, he had to learn the hard way what happens when you don't listen to wise advice from parents. Luckily for Freddy, he was able to escape from the lion and not lose his life. Hopefully, we can all learn from Freddy the importance of living a balanced life—eating a healthy diet, getting proper sleep, exercising, and respecting family and friends. Your health and family are the most important things in life! Take care of them!