



CHARACTER BUILDING ACTIVITIES

SOMMER-TIME STORIES

by Christa Grant, PhD

THE EAGLE AND THE CHICKENS

Story Description

“Why fit in when you were born to stand out?”

When a storm separates a young eagle from his family, he takes up residence with a group of chickens. Because the chickens were poking fun at his crooked beak, the way he flaps his wings, and his white feathered head, the eagle is ashamed and embarrassed.

Soon he discovers even more differences. Unlike the frightened chickens, he does not fear the sly fox. While the chickens are happy to live on the ground, he yearns to fly. Although the rooster insists that the eagle was born to keep his feet on the ground, the sight of two soaring eagles changes everything. From this delightful tale, readers learn to reach out for their full potential and let their spirits fly.



Major Objective

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

- Self-esteem—having a positive opinion of one’s self
- Perseverance—continuing to do something until the obstacles are overcome and the task is completed
- Assertiveness—expressing ideas or actions toward others with confidence

Story Time Interaction

Read the story, *The Eagle and the Chickens*, and then write these character traits on the interactive whiteboard: self-esteem, perseverance, and assertiveness. Define and discuss these character traits.

Discuss these characters:

| | |
|-----------|---------------------------|
| The eagle | eagle’s mother and father |
| chickens | rooster |

Activity Objectives

To use the following activities to reinforce the character traits of self-esteem, perseverance, and assertiveness. To guide students to consider the importance of having courage to be yourself and of listening to good advice and good influencers.

Who Are You?

The Eagle did not know who he was. He did not realize he was an eagle. Explain to students that it is important to know yourself. Show students a brown paper bag. One at a time take an object out of the bag and explain why that object represents you. For example, you might have your favorite book in the bag or a travel brochure of a place you love to visit. Another object you could put in your bag would be your favorite food, something you collect, or something to represent your hobby. Next give each student a brown paper bag and tell them to go home and find things that represent who they are. In a couple of days, have them share the contents of their bags and what the objects represent about who they are.

Next to help students better get to know themselves and their classmates, have them answer these questions:

1. What are you most afraid of?
2. What is your best memory?
3. What is your favorite sport?
4. What do you want to be when you grow up?
5. What is your favorite movie?
6. What pet would you like and why?
7. If you could be famous, what would you want to be famous for?
8. What is something hard for you to do?
9. What is your favorite food?
10. What makes you mad?
11. What is your favorite holiday?
12. What would you do if you won a million dollars?
13. What do you like about yourself?
14. How have you recently helped someone?
15. Where would you like to go on a field trip?
16. What is your favorite season?
17. If you could go back in time, where and when would you go?
18. What is your favorite breakfast?
19. What is a superpower you would like to have and how would you use it?
20. What is your favorite color?
21. Who is a special person you know?
22. What do you most hate to eat?
23. If you were teacher for a day, what would you do?
24. What is an important quality for a friend?
25. What is a good rule and why?
26. If you could have any toy, what would it be?

Next have students fill in these blanks or circle the appropriate

answer:

1. I am right / left handed.
2. My hair color is: red black brown blond
3. My hair length is: short long medium
4. My hair is: straight curly wavy
5. My eyes are: brown black blue green gray
6. I am: an only child a middle child the oldest child
the youngest child
7. I like to collect_____.
8. At home I like to _____.
9. At school I like to _____.
10. With friends I like to _____.
11. By myself I like to _____.
12. I would like to learn about _____.
13. I have ____ sister(s). (How many?)
14. I have ____ brother(s).

Finally, ask students to do this self-assessment. The student should put a smiley face next to the question if he feels he always or almost always does what the item says. If he does not usually do it, he puts a sad face next to it. If he does it sometimes, he puts a face with a straight line instead of a smile or frown.

1. I work hard on my schoolwork.
2. I clean up after myself.
3. I encourage others.
4. I tell the truth.
5. I don't talk in the hall.
6. I keep my hands and feet to myself and don't bother others.
7. I listen and follow directions the first time.
8. I use an inside voice when I'm in the classroom or hallway.
9. I do what is right even when it's hard.
10. I treat others fairly.
11. I cooperate with others.
12. I say thank you and please.
13. I am kind to others.
14. I show respect to adults.

15. I keep trying even when it is hard.
16. I control my anger.
17. I do my job.
18. I obey my teachers and parents.
19. I think before I act or speak.
20. I listen to wise advice.

Tug of War—Good Influences or Bad Influences?

The eagle needed to stop listening to the chickens and do what he was meant to do. Instead he let the chickens' words and laughter convince him that he looked funny, could not fly, and should be afraid of the fox. This is another reason why we must know who we are: so we don't listen to others and become convinced by their negative words. We call this influence; people can be a positive or negative influence. The chickens were a negative influence. Explain that influence is when someone pulls you into thinking or doing things their way. It is similar to a tug of war because you can be pulled one way by certain people, and then pulled the other way by other people. For example, when you are with your parents, they explain to you the importance of never stealing, and so you promise them that you will never steal. However, when you get with your friends, they want you go with them to steal some candy from the store. They convince you that the store clerk cannot see you do it, so you won't get caught. You are pulled between doing what is right and pleasing your parents or doing wrong and stealing the candy which would taste great and please your friends. Which influence will be greater, your parents or your friends? To demonstrate this tug of war between right and wrong, have a tug of war with your students. Which team won? Yes, the stronger team. Who will win between the influence of your parents or the influence of your friends? Which relationship is stronger? That is who will win. Your parents should be the stronger influence. You will always have your parents, but friends come and go.

Here is another experiment that demonstrates people being pulled by other people or influenced by people. If you do not have a sink in your room, arrange for your class to go to the cafeteria or rest-room with you. Take an inflated balloon and a wool sock with you. Turn the running water on; then rub the balloon with the wool sock. Put this part of the balloon next to but not touching the stream of running water. Move the balloon slightly away from the stream of water. The water will move towards the balloon. The static electricity on the balloon is causing (or influencing) the water to move towards the balloon. Remind students that they can be positive influencers. They can explain to their friends and family members about always doing what is right. This can help their friends and family to make good decisions and to do right. Always be a positive influence!

Rub Off on Others!

To remind students that we can influence others or rub off on them, have students do leaf rubbings. Bring in a variety of leaves and students will put the leaves under their papers and then color over them. The leaves will show up with all of their ribs and veins. Encourage students do use more than one color. It is also helpful to show an example that you have complete in advance.

Don't Let That Label Stick!

The eagle was labeled by the chickens as unable to fly and unable to protect himself or them. Many times people get labeled for certain things. This means that someone calls a person funny and then everyone thinks of that person as funny or someone gets labeled as a trouble-maker and everyone expects that person to get into trouble. We must realize that just because we have a certain label does not mean that we have to live up to that label. Give students some blank labels, about four-six each; rectangular address labels work well. Have students write some character traits on the labels—some traits that they have or would like to have and some that they feel people have incorrectly or correctly labeled them with. Then they stick the labels on themselves. Let each student tell which labels accurately describe them. Are they happy with these labels? Which do they want to keep? Which do they want to get rid of? They should throw away the ones they want to get rid of. Explain that it isn't that easy, however, in real life, but if they work hard at it, they can get rid of an undesirable trait. Then they talk about the traits they want to keep and explain if they have the trait already or want to get it. (These they keep on their shirts). Explain that anyone can get the desirable traits if they really want to enough, but it does take effort and self-control. They must think before they speak or act and have the courage to speak up for what is right which is called assertiveness.

Try, Try, and Try Again

When the eagle finally decided to try to fly, it didn't happen on the first try. He had to flap his wings a lot to build up his strength, but he kept trying and trying until he was finally able to do it. This is called perseverance when you try and try and don't give up. Sometimes people fail or have a problem so they quit trying. They need to remember what Albert Einstein, one of the smartest people in the world, said, "Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new."

Mistakes help us learn things, like what didn't work. Mistakes and problems also help us become stronger. To help students learn perseverance, bring in a potato and a plastic straw for each student. Explain that you want them to stick the straw through the potato, but

don't give them any hints on how to do it. Let them try for a while. If a student is successful, let him tell how he did it. The secret is to put the potato on the table and stab it really hard and fast with the straw. It would be a good idea to try this out at home first because some straws will work better than others. A straw that is too fat will not work. Also, if none of the students are able to do it, give them some tips and demonstrate it for them. Remind them that persevering will pay off and they will do it!

Unwrap It!

Next students can play this fun little relay race to practice persevering. Bring in each team a pair of gloves and a big open pack of gum. To win the relay race, the players on each team put on the gloves, take turns taking a piece of gum, then unwrap the gum, chew it, and pass the pack and the gloves to the next player. The first team to finish is the winner! It will take perseverance! (Tip: Wrapped pieces of candy can be used instead of the gum).

A Tight Squeeze

Explain to students that persevering doesn't mean you keep trying the same thing over and over. Sometimes you have to look for a new way to do something—a different way to solve the problem. Do this science experiment to show what you mean. Get a glass bottle that has an opening a little smaller than the egg you boil. It should at least hold 4 cups of water. First show the children that the peeled hard-boiled egg will not fit into the bottle unless you smooch it in. Ask if anyone knows how to get the egg into the bottle while keeping it whole. Let them think about it for a minute and give their suggestions. Then explain that you have researched the problem and will show them how to do it. You will also need a cotton ball (make sure it isn't fake cotton like polyester) and a long match or a camping lighter. Carefully light the cotton and drop it into the bottle. Quickly place the egg on top of the bottle with the small end pointed down. As air comes out of the bottle, the egg will vibrate, so you may have to steady it to keep it from falling off. Soon the flame will go out, the bottle will burp, and the egg will be sucked into the bottle. Pretty cool! Remind students that persevering means trying different things and also getting help or knowledge from others or from research.

Tying It All Together

The eagle needed to be true to himself and not listen to those around him who were trying to negatively influence him. Many people will try to put you down, but don't listen to them. They may try to label you as worthless, as a loser, or something else negative. Instead, be true to who you are and work hard at whatever you do. If you persevere and keep on trying, you will succeed in life.