

Cooperation

When I work with you,
we both succeed.

Teamwork:

Coming together is a beginning...

Keeping together is progress...

Working together is success.

Anonymous



January 2006 Character Connection Theme: Cooperation



Definition

Cooperation is the act of working “together toward a common end of purpose.”¹ It is an association with others for mutual benefit.² Brian Tracy commented, “No one lives long enough to learn everything they need to learn starting from scratch. To be successful, we absolutely, positively have to find people who have already paid the price to learn the things that we need to learn to achieve our goals.”³ Truly the great feats and wonders of the world are a product of cooperative efforts.

James P. Comer, 20th century U.S. psychiatrist and author, says, “Playing games with agreed upon rules helps children learn to live by rules, establish the delicate balance between competition and cooperation, between fair play and justice and exploitation and abuse of these for personal gain. It helps them learn to manage the warmth of winning and the hurt of losing; it helps them to believe that there will be another chance to win the next time.”⁴

Quotes

“The world basically and fundamentally is constituted on the basis of harmony. Everything works in co-operation with something else.” —Preston Bradley

“It is through cooperation, rather than conflict, that your greatest successes will be derived...”—Ralph Charell

“I love to hear a choir. I love the humanity--to see the faces of real people devoting themselves to a piece of music. I like the teamwork. It makes me feel optimistic about the human race when I see them cooperating like that.” --Paul McCartney



“It is one of the beautiful compensations of this life that no one can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.” –Charles Dudley

“A hundred times every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life depend on the labors of other men, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving.” --Albert Einstein⁵

Activities

** Divide a story into several parts. Assign a child to each part. Have the children all read their part at the same time. After a few minutes of the resulting chaos, have them read their parts one at a time, in the right order. Discuss how cooperating means working together and taking turns.

** Tape each student’s thumb to the rest of his hand so the thumb can not move. Have the students perform a simple task such as tying their shoe. Discuss how each member of the group has an important contribution to

¹ “cooperate” The American Heritage Dictionary

² January 1998 Character connection Newsletter

³ TCPN Quotation Center http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_cooperation.html

⁴ The Columbia World of Quotations. 1996, <http://www.bartleby.com/66/78/13078.html>

⁵ TCPN Quotation Center http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_cooperation.html

make. The thumb is different than the rest of the fingers. It is shorter and turned out. Yet, without it, even simple activities become difficult. Cooperation means valuing the abilities of all, no matter what their shape or size.

**Buckminster Fuller said, “We are not going to be able to operate our Spaceship Earth successfully nor for much longer unless we see it as a whole spaceship and our fate as common. It has to be everybody or nobody.”

Divide students into groups. Each group must try and move a garbage can (bomb) from one area to another without talking and without the use of hands. If the can tips, the “bomb explodes” and the group must start over. Talk about the cooperation among nations and people that is essential to peace.

** Divide into groups. Each group must form a monster that has a different amount of hands and feet than currently exist in the group. (Try 1 more foot and 1 less arm, or half the feet.) The monster must move 10 feet while making a monstrous sound, retrieve a bucket of water and come back to the starting line. If the monster collapses or the water is spilled, the group must start again.

**Sit members of a group of 8 in a circle. For each person in the group, write directions for interaction on a card. Make 3 cards with “Cooperate with me” and others such as “Smile at me,” “Ignore me,” “Disagree with me,” “Agree with me,” or “Frown at me.” Without letting the person see his card, tape it onto his forehead. Ask the members of the group to solve a hypothetical problem, such as where to go for the next field trip. Have them interact with each person according to the directions on the card. Discuss the results.

Stories



The Lion and the Bull (Aesop’s fable)

A lion prowled about in a pasture where four bulls were grazing. He tried many times to capture them, but each time he failed. Whenever he came near, the four Bulls turned and formed a ring, so that no matter which way the Lion approached, he was met by their horns.

One day, however, the Bulls had a quarrel and would not speak to one another. Each went alone to a separate part of the pasture to graze. This was the moment the Lion had been waiting for. One by one he attacked the Bulls and made an end of them.

Well fed and contented, the Lion thought, “Those beasts would still be grazing had they remembered: *United we stand; divided we fall.*”



The Ant and the Dove (Aesop’s fable)



An ant went to a garden pool to take a drink. Unfortunately, he fell into the water, and almost drowned. Luckily, there was a dove sitting on a tree nearby who saw what was happening. She pulled a leaf from the branch with her beak, and dropped it gently into the water. The ant climbed onto the leaf, and it drifted to the shore. The tiny creature was safe.

At that very minute, a man was spreading his net to try to catch the dove. The ant saw what he was doing, so he scuttled up, and stung the man’s heel. Of course, this made the Man drop the net, and the dove flew safely away. *One good turn deserves another.*

African and Asian Hornbills

Raising a hornbill family is a lesson in cooperation between the mother and father hornbill. Weeks before the mother hornbill lays her eggs, she steps into a hole in a hollow tree. Next, she and her mate work together to close the entrance, she on the inside of the hole, he on the outside. They use a special cement that they make out of mud, saliva, and food to almost completely enclose the mother in the tree, leaving a tiny hole so that the father can pass berries and other fruits to the mother in her hideout. When the baby chicks hatch, the father feeds the entire family. When the chicks are old enough to fly, his work is done and he helps the mother break open the cement. *How is cooperation important to our own families?*

Common Shrew

When their lives are in danger, the common shrew and her children cooperate to ensure the safety of all. Shrews are very similar to mice and larger animals like owls and foxes feed on them. When one of these

enemies is near, the baby shrews rush to make a chain behind their mother. One baby grabs its mother's tail with its teeth, the second grabs the tail of the first and so on until the chain is complete. They then escape to the safety of the woods, linked together as one. *Describe various dangerous situations. How does cooperation relate to safety?*

The Golden Rule Store

In 1904, J.C. Penney studied his customers, bought quality needed merchandise, marked it with "one" price, deluged the town with handbills, and opened his first Golden Rule Store. Unlike the mining town stores of his day, he operated on a "cash only" basis and charged the same price to all customers, no matter what their social status. By 1913, there were 34 Golden Rules stores and their sales exceeded \$2 million. The company motto was "Honor, Confidence, Service, and Cooperation." In later years, his charitable works included building "Penney Farms" in Florida where destitute farmers could work and gain financial stability again. He also supported 4-H, homeless shelters, and libraries.⁶ Mr. Penney said, "Cooperation is not so much learning to get along with others as it is learning to take the kinks out of our own selves so people can get along with us."⁷

Writing or Discussion Topics

**Benjamin Franklin said, "We must, indeed, all hang together or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately." Talk about the ways early American colonists, Underground Railroad operators and certain professions, such as firefighters, "hang together." How do people of nations "hang together" in times of war and peace?

**Aesop told of a father using a bundle of sticks to teach his sons about cooperation. The father comments, "My sons, if you remain united you will be as strong as this bundle of sticks. But if you are divided among yourselves, you will be broken as easily as you have broken the sticks. Know that *in union there is strength.*" Have students talk to their parents about the importance of cooperation in the workplace and in the family. Talk about some of the "give and take" that goes on in relationships and at work. How does one learn to cooperate? Are there words or phrases that are more conducive to cooperation?

**Have students write in poetry or prose on the theme: "Cooperation is. . ."

** When two different organisms live together in a close relationship, it is said to be symbiotic. For example, certain kinds of ants live in thorny plants. The plants provide food and nesting sites for the ants. In return the ants protect the plant from other insect invaders. Talk about other symbiotic relationships in nature and with people. Why is cooperation important?

Role Plays

**Susan is in a group of students that is assigned to do a report on Japan. However, Rosa would rather be doing a report on Mexico. Yesterday, when the group worked on the report, Rosa refused to help. *What can Susan do to encourage Rosa to cooperate?*

** Justin is the tallest on the basketball team. Often he is under the basket, open and in a position to score points. However, the ball is never passed to him. His English is poor. Often he is made fun of off the basketball court. *How can Justin encourage more cooperation on the basketball floor?*

Book List

Chicken Sunday by Patricia Polacco

Stone Soup retold by John Warren Stewig

The Turnip: An Old Russian Folktale. Milhous, Katherine & Alice Dalgliesh. Illustrated by Pierr Morgan. New York: Putnam, 1990.



February: Trustworthy

March: Accountability

April: Self-Control

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⁶ JCPenney-History and Guiding philosophy, <http://www.jcpenny.net/company/history/history.htm>, accessed December 11, 2001

⁷ January 1988 Character Connection Newsletter



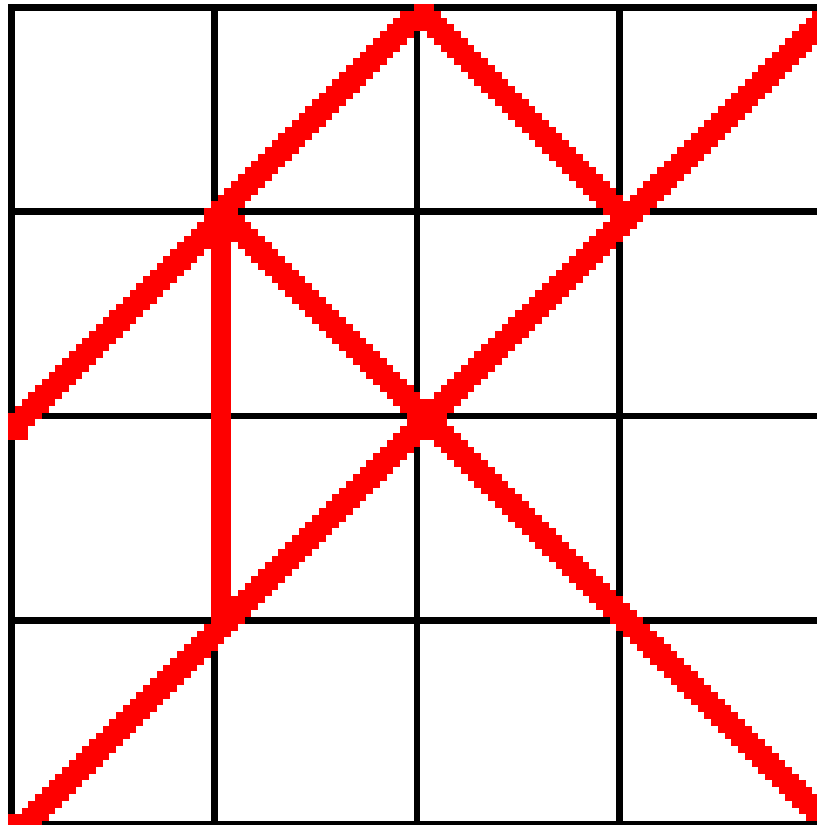
Cooperation: A Tangram Puzzle



This ancient Chinese puzzle uses five triangles, one square, and one rhomboid. Try making an animal, a triangle, a chair, or a candle shape out of these “seven pieces of cleverness.”



Divide into groups. Give each member of the group a piece of a tangram puzzle. Group members take turns adding their piece to form a new shape. See how many figures each group can make cooperating and using all of the pieces. Like different pieces of a puzzle, when we work together, the picture we create in life is unique and beautiful.



Please see <http://www.tangrams.ca/index.htm> for more tangram information.