

Worth & Potential

Because of your value
your potential is
limitless.

To do good things in the world,
first you must know who you are
and what gives meaning in your
life.

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May Character Connection Theme: Worth and Potential



Definition

Worth is defined as “the quality of something that renders it desirable, useful, or valuable. It denotes “qualities in persons or things that add up to moral excellence” or “merit considered as an intangible apart from utility.”¹ Potential is defined as “possible, but not yet realized; capable of being, but not yet in existence; latent.” It is “the inherent ability or capacity for growth, development, or coming into being.”² To judge something’s worth or potential from the outside is difficult. Sir Thomas Browne commented: “Rough diamonds may sometimes be mistaken for worthless pebbles.”³ However, the miracle of achieving one’s potential begins to happen when the surface is scratched, when the potential is seen by self and others. In the words of Rusty Berkus, “There comes that mysterious meeting in life when someone acknowledges who we are and what we can be, igniting the circuits of our highest potential.”⁴

Quotes

“Oft-times nothing profits more
Than self-esteem, grounded on just and right
Well-manag’d.” --John Milton⁵

“I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor. --Henry David Thoreau.”⁶

“Continuous effort, not strength or intelligence is the key to unlocking our potential.” --Liane Cardes⁷

“I think I can!” --the Little Engine that Could

“Success is 99% perspiration.”



Activities

**Spaghetti Demonstration

1. Stir 1 Tablespoon of soda into a jar with two cups of water.
2. Break 1-inch pieces of uncooked spaghetti into the soda water solution.
3. Stir in 3 tablespoons of vinegar.

A chemical reaction produces carbon dioxide. Bubbles form on the spaghetti pieces and they will float to the top of the jar. There the bubbles break and the spaghetti pieces float back to the bottom of the jar.⁸ Add more vinegar and soda to rejuvenate the experiment.

We can compare ourselves to the spaghetti pieces and our effort to the bubbles. We never know which effort will finally carry us to success. All endeavors have the potential to bring us “to the top.”

**Balloon Demonstration

1. Show the balloon before it is blown up. Talk about the potential of the balloon becoming a toy or giving joy to someone. Like balloons, people also have great potential.
2. Blow the balloon up. It can now be used as a “ball” in balloon volleyball.

How does a person reach his potential? (developing talents, discovering his own good character traits.)

How can the balloon be likened to self-esteem? If the balloon has too much air, the balloon pops. Healthy self-esteem is important, yet arrogance lessens one’s effectiveness.⁹

3. Give each child a balloon. Have him write one of his talents on it. Write on a piece of paper some steps to develop the talent. Then blow the balloon up. *As we practice and develop our talents, we reach our potential.*

¹ “worth,” The American Heritage Dictionary, page 1476

² “potential” The American Heritage Dictionary, page 1025

³ Cyber Nation International “potential” http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_potential.html, accessed April 15, 2002

⁴ Cyber Nation International “potential” http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_potential.html, accessed April 15, 2002

⁵ The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, John Milton, “Paradise Lost,” page 349

⁶ as quoted in Covey, Stephen R. The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, page 66

⁷ Cyber Nation International “potential” http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_potential.html, accessed April 15, 2002

⁸ Herbert, Don. Mr. Wizard’s Supermarket Science, New York: Random House, page 14

⁹ adapted from Heaton, Alma, Tools for Teaching, page 42

****Thumbprints:** To develop a print, dust it with a fine powder (talcum on dark surface, pencil dust on light surface.) Brush with softest part of feather, then blow gently across the print to remove excess powder. To lift print, use scotch tape, taping talcumed print on dark paper and pencil dusted print on light paper. Look for unusual patterns.¹⁰

Using an inkpad, make a thumbprint. Each person's print, as well as his talents and potential is unique. (Have the students write about traits that they have that make them unique. The thumbprints can be used to make people, ants, etc. Use this art with a saying such as, "I'm 'thumb' body special.")

****Order game:** Have students divide themselves into groups according to different character traits: dark eyes, like broccoli, walk to school (rank from closest to furthest), number in family, number of pets, number of times moved, etc. Rejoice in differences. (This activity could also be related to fractions or addition problems.)
Was anybody in the group in the same place every single time? What would it be like if every single person were the same?

****Grow something (or hatch a butterfly.)** Talk about the potential in a seed and how its potential is realized through water, sunshine, and nutrients. *How are people like seeds? How are people different than seeds?*

Stories



Aesop's Fables: The Donkey and the Lap Dog



There was once a man who owned two animals: a donkey and a lap dog. They were both well cared for. The donkey was kept in a warm stable and was fed plenty of hay and grain. This animal was kept busy most of the day with farm chores.

The dog was kept in the house. He jumped and played. At dinnertime, he was fed scraps from the table.

All was well for a time, but soon the donkey began to complain. He felt that he was doing too much work. He wanted the treats that the puppy received.

One day, the donkey looked into the open door of the house. He saw the man at the table with the dog on his lap eating scraps. The donkey watched the little dog bounce to the corner of the house after a ball. At that very instant, the donkey felt that his chance had come. He threw off his harness, ran into the house and jumped on the man's lap. Of course, there was a terrible crashing sound as the table settings were upset. There was also a very loud braying sound as the man took a switch to the poor donkey.

Don't pretend to be something you aren't.

A True Story: Frank Daily

Frank Daily was 14 and a freshman at Marquette High School. One winter day, he was riding home on bus Number 10 with his friends when a lady got on the bus. The lady's coat was missing buttons, her dress was smudged, her socks were ripped and she had no shoes. She talked to Kojak, the bus driver, about her 8 children and how there just did not seem to be enough money for shoes for her after she bought them shoes. Frank looked down at his own Nike basketball shoes. He quietly took his shoes off. When the bus reached his stop, he waited until everyone else got off the bus. He handed the shoes to the lady, and then said, "Here, lady, you need these more than I do." Frank then hurried out the door to walk the three blocks home.

He heard the lady exclaim, "See, they fit me just perfect."

Then he heard Kojak call, "Hey, come back here, kid! What's your name?"

"Frank Daily," he said quietly. "My name is Frank Daily."

"Well, Frank," Kojak said, "I've never seen anything like that in the twenty years I've been driving this bus." . . .

"It's no big deal. Besides, it's Christmas."

Frank never saw the woman again. He is modest about what he did, and he doesn't consider it anything special. In his words: "We all have the potential to be heroic in some way."¹¹

Mark Eaton, a Lesson in Potential

In a Deseret News article on Monday March 30, 1998, Mark Eaton told 150 Salt Lake students some of the story of his success:

"Eaton, teased in California schools for his size, played just three seconds of high school basketball in a game his team was losing by 20 points. He sat on the bench the rest of the time.

"Eaton met a junior college coach while working as a mechanic. The coach offered him one-on-one training. It took months to loosen his hand joints, used to being wrapped around a wrench, just so he could catch the ball, he said.

"But, after taking the coach's advice to set his sight on the NBA and with intense strength training throughout his career, Eaton found himself at UCLA and later, the Utah Jazz, where he played 12 years.

¹⁰ Utah National Parks Council 1997 POWWOW Book, page 189

¹¹ condensed from Lewis, Barbara A. Kids with Courage "Reaching out to a Stranger," page 81-85

"The Jazz retired Eaton's No. 53 jersey in 1996. Before back problems forced his retirement, the center blocked 3,064 shots in his career, second only to Kareem Abdul-Jabbar on the NBA's career list.

"If you have a goal, if you have a dream, you've got to pursue it," said Eaton, founder of The Mark Eaton Stand Tall For Youth Foundation. "You can do it; I'm here as living proof."

What are some of your talents? What steps are you taking to reach your potential?

Writing or Discussion Topics

****"Whether you think you can or you think you can't you're right."**

What relationship does believing in yourself have to do with achieving your potential?

What type of attitudes do successful people have about themselves and their talents?

** "Nobody knows what a boy is worth,
We'll have to wait and see.
But every man in a noble place
A boy once used to be."



Have students look into the future and write stories of potential wonderful events with them as the main character.

****Have students discuss with their parents the worth and potential that they see in each family member and the importance of this attitude in a profession. *Are there ways to help family members, friends, and places of employment achieve potential?***

Role Plays

****Jamie is six years old and dreams about being a famous _____ just like _____. At an early age, she has shown an exceptional talent in this area. *What can she do to achieve her potential? Estimate the hours of work required for a fine performance in school, basketball, ballet, piano, etc.***

****Matt is trying out for the basketball team. Last year, he was nominated as the most valuable player. It is three days before the official tryouts and everyone is practicing hard. Unfortunately, during practice, Matt falls, landing on his ankle. His ankle swells and his mother takes him to the doctor. An X-ray reveals that the ankle is broken and the doctor says, "No basketball for six weeks." *How can Matt still achieve his potential? What are some other areas in which Matt can pursue achievement?***

****Jason wants to be a pitcher for his new baseball team. In fact, last year, he was the star pitcher for his team in the lower league. Unfortunately, the coach only sees two other boys as potential team pitchers. Jason believes that he would make a wonderful pitcher. *How can Jason still achieve his potential as a pitcher?***

**** In fourth grade, Colby had studied hard but was fourth in his class for the spelling bee (or some other academic pursuit.) *What steps should Colby take to achieve his potential in the fifth-grade spelling bee? What does believing in yourself have to do with achievement?***



Book List

Many fairy tales or folk tales such as Snow White or Pinocchio are about achieving inherent potential especially when beset with trying circumstances. Below are a few of the very excellent books available that teach about worth, self-esteem and achieving potential.

Burton, Virginia Lee Mike Mulligan and his Steam Shovel Mike Mulligan's steam shovel is outdated. However, through hard work he and his steam shovel find a home in the community of Popperville.

Carle, Eric. The Very Hungry Caterpillar. New York: Philomel Books, 1969 *The story of a caterpillar.*

Graham, Amanda. Who Wants Arthur. Milwaukee, WI: Gareth Stevens, Inc, 1987. *Summary: Arthur, a dog in a pet store waiting to be adopted takes on the identities of other animals he thinks might be more appealing, until discovering that he can be a success as himself.*

English text by Yvonne Hooker. The Little Green Caterpillar. Grosset and Dunlap. 1981 *A caterpillar that is pushed around by other insects turns into a beautiful butterfly.*

de Paola, Tomie, The Art Lesson the Trumpet Club 1989. *Tomie's beginnings as an artist.*

Retold by Stewig, John Warren. Stone Soup The Trumpet Club, 1991 *Grethel lives on a farm with her mother.*

"Perhaps, being clever, she could discover a way to make life easier for her mother and herself." With a stone, she fixes a wonderful stew for a selfish village. She also teaches the village the value of sharing. She saves the stone with the village, and knows that now she can keep food on her family's table.

