



“When I work with you we both succeed.”

*Reprint of Character Connection Article
from January 2006*

One of my favorite stories is said to have happened several years ago during the Seattle Special Olympics. There were nine either physically or mentally disabled contestants competing in the 100 yard dash. At the sound of the gun, they all started out with the same excitement and desire to win that non-disabled athletes would have in any race. However, this race wasn't like any other race. One of the runners, a boy who had an especially hard time, stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times and began to cry. The other eight contestants heard the boy and without hesitating, stopped running, turned around and went back to their fallen competitor. They helped the boy up and then all nine of these great people linked arms, ran the rest of the race and walked across the finish line together. What a great example of unselfishness and cooperation for all of us. In this one snapshot of time, these nine “Special” Olympians showed us the benefits of slowing down a bit and helping each other more. In cooperating together the joy and desired result for these athletes was not diminished but instead, greatly enhanced because they worked together. In this case all nine were winners, and no one lost.

I recently took a group of 6th graders to Alpine School District's camp at Clear Creek for an overnight camp. Some would question my sanity in doing so—but in my 15 years of teaching public school, I have learned that my greatest joy and best example of cooperation and how to get along with others comes from these young people. Sure there are the bullies and occasional fights, but as a general rule, the youth of today are concerned, loving individuals who help each other and recognize the need to cooperate in order to succeed. While at Clear Creek,

the students participated in a series of cooperative learning activities where they had to learn from each other and help each other in order to succeed. What I enjoyed most was seeing the “popular” and “cool” kids help and teach those who are traditionally on the outside and bring them into the “inner group.” Together they succeeded, and in doing so became friends and equals. During one of these activities, a taller girl actually put a much smaller, somewhat handicapped girl on her back and carried her through the activity. What was interesting was that with her new viewpoint from the back of her teammate, the younger girl was able to offer new suggestions and insights on how to solve their problem. Working and cooperating together, they both succeeded.

In his book “God, Family, Country,” Ezra Taft Benson commented on how the youth of today will determine the future of our country. The advice he gave them was to “realize their duty to serve others. ... (You) should learn cooperation. Not everybody can lead, but everybody can cooperate. We need in the world today the ability to work together and serve one another in peace and harmony.”

I hope we can all remember the examples of others that have showed us the benefits and joy that come from cooperating and working together. In so doing, I believe that our lives will be better and our community will be stronger.

John Shelton
Lindon Resident and Teacher at
Windsor Elementary

“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**

**“The law of life
should not
be....
competition,
but
cooperation,
the good of
each
contributing to
the good of
all.”**

**-Jawaharial
Nehru**

“When spider
webs unite, they
can tie up a
tiger.”

**-Ethiopian
proverb**

Book List

“Chicken Sunday”
by Patricia Polacco

“Stone Soup”
retold by John Warren
Stewig

**“The Turnip: An Old
Russian Folktale”**
Milhous, Katherine &
Alice Dalgliesh



Family Activities

—Use mealtime activities to teach the importance of working together. All are important contributors. Synergy is where two or more achieve an effect which each is individually incapable:

1. Give each person at the table one menu item. (One child has the gravy, another the mashed potatoes, another the meat, etc.) Cooperation and sharing allows everyone to have a much more tasty meal.
2. Loosely tie the right hand of one person to the left hand of another, until all are linked around the table. In order to eat, or pass the food around, at least two need to work together. Even though we are not physically tied to one another in real life, our wants and actions affect the lives around us. Cooperation makes life a much smoother process.
3. Tape the thumb to the rest of the hand. Using (or even picking up food) will be a real challenge. Each person, no matter what their size and shape has something important to contribute. Working together gets the job done!

—Daniel Webster was born on January 18, 1782. He was a lawyer and an outstanding orator. In a time when Americans were divided on many issues, he championed American nationalism. In a Senate debate on January 26, 1830, he replied to Robert Hayne, “Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!” What does cooperation have to do with preserving the individual’s freedoms in our great nation?

Laura Clement

Kid’s Corner

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Cooperation means getting along and working together for a common cause. We have to cooperate in families, school classrooms, work, in our communities, as a nation and between countries in our world to understand each other and work together to solve problems and try to live peacefully.

In our families, each member has to cooperate to make a family function and survive. In our society, if we all recycle, we can reduce our landfills. If we obey traffic laws, and take turns merging or at a 4-way stop, we can drive more safely. When we vote, we make and choose to obey the laws to govern us all. Sometimes working as a group means you don’t always get your own way. But we can each compromise a little of our own personal interests in coming up with a best decision for the whole group. Cooperating helps us grow stronger, safer and more appreciative of the good lives we are all able to live.

Spencer Olsen
Oak Canyon Jr. High

We, at Character Connection, would like to focus on helping parents access character materials by using the web site located at www.lindoncharacterconnection.com.

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Character Connection is a not-for-profit organization encouraging the enhancement of character development in our community. We are accepting financial support. If you can help please send contributions to:

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