
ANNUAL TEACHERS' TRAINING COURSE YEAR 2007 SEMESTER 1

MORAL

Moral Values

Values, as we know them, can be either preferences or principles, which represent the opposite ends of the moral spectrum.

Values that are preferences, like any other preferences, whether it is for tea or coffee, for long rather than short hair, are personal choices that are subjective and able to be changed at any time. On the other hand, values that are principles, like honesty and compassion, are consistent, universal, transcultural and objective.

The greatest difference between the two types of values is that preference values are some thing "to have," in the same way as one may have a skateboard or a bag of marbles, while values that are principles, are something "to be." In fact, the most important thing to be, like, honest, kind, compassionate and responsible.

Over recent years, as citizens throughout the western democracies have become aware of, and concerned about, the loss of social cohesion in their communities, the part played by values in the formation of character has been more closely studied.

The three inter-related aspects: Moral knowing, feeling and behaving

The three parts of an objective core value, moral knowledge, moral feeling and moral behaviour are directly linked to good character. Good character is the habit of knowing the good, the habit of desiring the good and the habit of doing the good.

To possess the objective core value of, for example, compassion, one must first understand what compassion is and know what it requires of one's relationship to others. To be compassionate one must have moral knowledge, but that does not make one compassionate.

That requires the addition of a moral feeling about compassion, being emotionally committed to it, having the capacity for appropriate discomfort when one behaves without compassion, and being capable of moral indignation when one sees others victims of suffering, exploitation or greed.

But again, moral knowledge and moral feeling do not make one compassionate. One must behave with compassion; acting compassionately in one's personal relationships and carrying out one's obligations as a citizen to help build a caring and just society.

Compassion, like all objective core values, requires the involvement of the head and the heart together with the hand.

Teaching moral

The teaching of objective core values like honesty, kindness, compassion, respect and responsibility by parents and schools is essential if communities are to restore and advance their social cohesion.

Historically, education, in countries all over the world, has had two main goals. To help young people master the skills of literacy and numeracy, and to help them build good character. Societies since the time of Plato have made character a deliberate aim of education. They understand that to create and maintain a civil society there has to be education for character as well as intellect, for decency as well as literacy, and for virtue as well as for skills and knowledge.

Until recent decades, major philosophers concerned with education stressed the critical role of moral education. They were almost unanimous in assuming that adults, as either parents or teachers, should bear the central authority and responsibility for shaping the character of the young.

Objectives:

- ❖ To expose children to good basic values
- ❖ To train children how to behave or react under different circumstances in their daily lives

KOHLBERG'S STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Level 1- Pre-moral Level

(Right/Wrong; Good-Bad)

Level 2-Conventional Role-Conformity

(Family, society or group perceptions)

Level 3- Self-Accepted Moral Principles

(The right action is a decision of conscience in accord with self-chosen ethical principles)

Moral Reasoning

While there are a number of models of the development of moral reasoning, most research on the relation of parenting to moral reasoning development has relied predominantly on Kohlberg's (1976) theory. Kohlberg (1976) has identified three main stages of reasoning about morality; i.e., a developmental progression of increasingly more effective ways of thinking about and resolving moral problems and issues. Research suggests that the first stage is an early childhood stage, the second a middle childhood stage, and the third an adolescent stage, although there are quite varied rates of development through these stages ([Colby & Kohlberg, 1987](#)).

Relation to parenting

Most research has focused on three principal parent variables, parental stage of moral reasoning, parental discipline style, and family communication patterns, but only the latter two appear to account for most of the development of moral reasoning in children.

Baumrind (1971) and others (e.g., Hoffman & Saltzstein, 1967) have identified discrete patterns of parental behavior that are referred to as *Parenting Styles*. Baumrind has described three predominant parenting styles.

Authoritarian parents - highly controlling and demanding, cold and hostile and generally uncommunicative.

Permissive parents - tend to be loving and communicative but wield little control and set few demands for mature behavior.

Authoritative parents - are loving, controlling, communicative, and set high maturity demands for their children. It is those parents whom researchers have found to produce the most positive child characteristics, including higher moral functioning.

Family communication has been studied in the development of children's moral reasoning capacities. Numerous investigators have examined the nature of family discussions of moral issues (real and hypothetical) and their relation to children's moral reasoning development. There are two types of such studies: those that use family discussions as interventions intended to stimulate children's moral reasoning development and those that simply analyse family discussions and look for relations to children's levels of moral reasoning.

NATURE vs. NURTURE

Nature - All important developmental changes are controlled by biological factors.

Nurture - Psychological environment is the master of our development.

Our behaviour is moulded by experiences.

Teaching by example

"One of the surest ways to help our children turn their moral reasoning into positive moral behavior is to teach by example. Teaching kids respect by respecting them is certainly one way to teach by example. But this goes beyond how we treat our children. It has to do with how we treat and talk about others outside the family - relatives, friends, strangers. It has to do with how we lead our lives" (Lickona, 1983) p. 20). We have already discussed how parents' behavior during interactions with their children regarding moral issues serves as a model for them; parents who express empathy or discuss moral reasoning also are modeling these qualities.

There also are more direct ways that modeling can influence children's moral development. Children closely observe their parents' interactions with each other, with family members, and with people more generally, and from those observations learn a great deal about how to treat others. As parents can model respect and compassion toward others, so may they model behavior that is harmful or abusive. For example, parents who resolve disagreements by belittling, coercing, or physically dominating their spouse may teach children that aggression is an appropriate response when their interests conflict with another's. Although children may not imitate the specific behaviours they observe, their beliefs and attitudes about how to treat other people may well be shaped by such family experiences. The fact that these "lessons" are unintended makes them no less powerful.

Parents also act as models for moral behavior when they relate events in their lives to their children. Damon (1988, p. 124) offers as the first of his four specific recommendations for parenting moral children that "parents should share openly with children moral reactions to events in their own adult lives. Sharing emotional reactions means demonstrating them when appropriate, describing them clearly, and answering children's questions about them candidly."

Why use stories?

- Good way to teach children realistic thinking.
- Effective in influencing the way our children think and behave, because they like to hear or read them over and over again.
- This repetition, combined with your children's imaginations and the inestimable power of your presence, makes stories one of the best ways to influence their thinking.
- Important part of healing, self-knowledge, and personal and spiritual vehicle for connecting us to other people, a means for understanding ourselves and our place in the world.

Our lives is a web of stories - a historical novel or a mini-series in the making. . . .

We tell stories in order to live.

We use stories to construct meaning and communicate ourselves to another.

Stories help us organize and make sense of the experiences of a life.

Stories are mighty, however, not only because we shape our lives through them but also because they have the power to unsettle the lives we have comfortably shaped by them

Stories have the potential to build authentic communities of shared meaning and values.

Why not simply explain the difference between right and wrong to your children?

- Why not supply them with a list of dos and don'ts.
- Explanations are important but fail to touch children on the level where it matters -- the level of imagination.
- Imagination. The word comes from "image" -- a mental picture. When a moral principle has the power to move us into action, it is often because it is backed up by a picture or image.

Plato said that children should be brought up in such a way that they will fall in love with virtue and hate vice. How does a child fall in love with virtue? By being exposed to the right kind of stories, music, and art, said Plato.

- Stories, can create an attachment to goodness. The nature of stories enables us to "rehearse" moral decisions, strengthening our solidarity with the good.

Books That Build Character

by William Kilpatrick and Gregory and Suzanee Wolfe

Reading stories aloud

- Reading aloud may be one of the most important contributions that parents can make toward developing good character in their children.
- Why?
- First, stories create emotional attachment to goodness, a desire to do the right thing.
- Second, stories provide a wealth of good examples - the kind of examples that are often missing from a child's day to day environment.
- Third, stories familiarize youngsters with the codes of conduct they need to know.
- Finally, stories help to make sense out of life.

Follow-up activities for story-telling

- **Questions about the story:** Designed to spark a meaningful discussion with your child.
- **Daily practice:** Simple ways of keeping a child interest focused day by day on the principle and its values.
- **Craft activities:** Includes 3 or 4 quality craft ideas designed to be successful and fun.
- **Quiet time/self-reflection activities:** Effective methods to help your child focus on the principle of the month and gain self-control.
- **Role-playing activity:** Enjoyable activities that help a child internalize the principle.

Additional Ideas for Storytelling Activities

Story telling activities are a great way to allow students to express themselves freely and creatively in an authentic and real way.

- **Sharing personal life stories.** Get students to divide a sheet of paper into four boxes and then get them to draw pictures about one of the following or similar topics:
 - My life Story,
 - My family story,
 - What I did on my last holiday etc.

The students then tell each other their story based on the pictures they have drawn. This works well if you model this on the board by drawing your pictures and telling your story first.

- **Tell a short funny story,** joke or anecdote at the beginning of class as a warm up and ask the students if they have any funny stories or jokes that they would like to tell you.
- **Stories and pictures.** Get students to bring in cut out magazine pictures of their favourite stars. Then write different words on the board such as love, jealousy, fame, travel, murder, marriage, luxury hotel, boat, fast car, money, big dark house, family, friends, accident, disappearance, theft, adventure, suspicious, secretive, treasure, jewels, fortune, etc. Then tell the students they have 10-15 minutes to make up an interesting story about their favourite stars. Tell the students they can use any vocabulary or grammar that they want to but that they must use at least five words from the board. Students then make up their stories and tell the rest of the class or other groups their stories.
- **Give students a picture of someone or a picture of a face from a magazine** and write various questions on the board for students to discuss in pairs or groups. Afterwards students can introduce and present their character to another pair or group.
 - What does this person look like?
 - What do you think his/her name is?
 - Do you think he/she is happy? Sad? Why?
 - What do you think he/she is doing now? Why?
 - What kind of house do you think he/she lives in?
 - What do you think his/her family is like?
 - What does he/she do in their free time?
 - Does he/she have any secrets?
- **Story Dominoes.** Students work in small groups. Write the words in the boxes below on to a set of cards, one word per card and give each group a set of cards and tell them to divide the cards evenly amongst the group. The aim of the activity is to tell a story in domino fashion.
 - Student **A** puts down a card and starts the story then student **B** puts down one of their cards and continues the story etc. until all the students have used all their cards and the story is complete.
 - Students then re-tell their story to another group and listen to other groups' stories. You can easily make up your own story dominoes on other topics such as Sci-Fi, Urban Life, Football, Harry Potter etc. or if you are artistic you can even draw pictures on your dominoes instead of words. One variation is to stick the words or pictures onto playing cards and the students play story cards instead of story dominoes.

- **Modern Children's Tales.** Write the names of popular children's stories on the board such as 'Goldilocks and the three bears', 'Peter Pan', 'Red Riding Hood', 'Jack and the Bean Stalk' etc. and ask if the students know these stories and can tell them to you.
 - Once the students have told you the rough outline of the stories put them into pairs or small groups. Now tell the students that they have 10-15 minutes to re-create one of these stories in a different genre, for example as a horror story, a detective story, a love story, an adventure story etc.
 - Tell the students they are free to add in new characters or events if they want to and that at the end of the activity they will vote on the most original and creative story.