

What Is Character?

1. Character is the sum of the stable and unique qualities that determine our response to a given situation.
2. Character is who we are at all times and circumstances.
3. A good, strong character helps us do right, even when no one is looking.
4. The best index to our character is how we treat people who cannot do us any good, and how we treat people who cannot fight back.
5. Everything we say or do, and all that we allow to be said or done in our presence, either reinforces or undermines the credibility of our messages about the importance of our character.
6. Children will judge our values not by what we say, but by what we do and what we permit them to do. They will judge us, not by our best moments, but by our worst act.
7. We are born with a distinct character, just as we are born with a distinct body. It takes discipline to shape each into a healthy component of our person.
8. Making tough choices, when cost of doing the right thing is high, is what shapes character.

Six Pillars of Character

1. Trustworthiness

- A. Be honest and reliable.
- B. Have the courage to do the right thing.
- C. Build a good reputation.
- D. Honesty is most essential quality of a leader.
- E. Honesty is the best policy.
- F. Trust is vital to building and sustaining community life.
- G. Duplicity kills trust.

2. Respect

- A. Follow the Golden Rule (*Treat others the way you would have them treat you* (Mt. 7:12), or *“That which displeases you do not do to others”* (Rabbi Hillel).

- B. Be tolerant of differences.
- C. Use good manners, not bad language.
- D. Be considerate of the feelings of others.
- E. Do not threaten, hit or hurt anyone.
- F. Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements.

3. Responsibility

- A. Perform your duties well.
- B. Persevere in what you do.
- C. Always do your best.
- D. Use self-control.
- E. Be self-disciplined.
- F. Think before you act: consider the consequences.
- G. Be accountable for your decisions.

4. Fairness

- A. Play by the rules.
- B. Take turns and share.
- C. Be open-minded.
- D. Listen to others.
- E. Do not blame others carelessly.

5. Care

- A. Be compassionate and show you care.
- B. Express gratitude.
- C. Forgive others.
- D. Help people in need.
- E. Pray for others.

6. Citizenship

- A. Help make your school and your barangay better
- B. Cooperate
- C. Stay informed
- D. Vote
- E. Do not sell your vote
- F. Be a good neighbor
- G. Obey laws and rules
- H. Protect the environment

(Adapted with permission from *Josephson Institute of Ethics*)

Character Building

Character building requires discipline. The basic natural virtues that help in the conduct of human affairs are prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. Around them hinge all the other virtues.

PRUDENCE helps us to correctly apply moral principles to particular cases, and to overcome doubts about which good to achieve and which evil to avoid.

JUSTICE consists in being constant and firm about giving what is due God and his fellow men. Justice demands that each one respect the rights of others. Justice is both the aim and the intrinsic criterion of all politics.

TEMPERANCE moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance within the limits of what is honorable.

FORTITUDE endures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It enables one to conquer fear, even to the extent of renouncing and sacrificing one's life in defense of a just cause.

The Exercise of Good Character

Good Manners and Right Conduct

- A. Say "Please."
- B. Perform acts of kindness always.
- C. Take and use only what is necessary. Avoid wastefulness.
- D. Show deference for older people and women. Show respect for persons in authority.
- E. Perform your duties cheerfully and promptly.
- F. Say "I'm sorry." Say "Excuse me." Be prudent in speech. Be tactful. Avoid idle talk and gossip.
- G. Greet people politely according to the time of day. "Good morning. Good evening." Listen attentively when people talk to you. When entering a house, greet the host. Say goodbye properly when leaving.
- H. Dress properly. Be neat and clean in your person.
- I. Fall in line. Wait for your turn to be served.
- J. Say "Thank you."
- K. Be punctual. Keep your appointments.

Back to Basics

1. Uphold and respect human dignity.

2. Observe cleanliness and a sense of order.
3. Plant and grow a tree.
4. Pay taxes and be vigilant in guarding its use.
5. Deplore violence, exploitation and corruption.
6. Promote honest labor, simplicity of life, and cooperation.
7. Share your blessings.
8. Side with the truth and what is fair.
9. Protect our hard-earned freedom.
10. Extend a helping hand.
11. Respect the peso and develop the habit of saving.
12. Build a home.
13. Promote anything beautiful.
14. Preserve the sanctity of the ballot.
15. Make God your best friend.

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Human Options

What our society needs is a massive and pervasive resensitization. The first aim of education should not be to prepare young people for careers but to enable them to develop respect for life. Related lessons would be concerned with the reality of human sensitivity and the need to make it ever finer and more responsive; the naturalness of loving and the circumstances that enhance it or enfeeble it; the right to privacy as an essential condition of life; and the need to avoid the callousness that leads to brutalization. Finally, there is the need to endow government with the kind of sensitivity that makes life and all its wondrous possibilities government's most insistent concern. (Norman Cousins. *Human Options, An Autobiographical Notebook*)

No Man Can Serve Two Masters

A human being is very complex, made up of body and soul, flesh and spirit, sensate in his love of pleasure, but rational in his thoughts and ideals. The character each of us creates depends on whether we give primacy to the body or to the soul. 'No man can serve two masters.' It is easy to let the body, or the senses, or carnal pleasures dominate. All we have to do is to 'let go.' But it is very hard to have the right spirit and the soul and the ideal dominate. This requires the harnessing of the sensate

and a disciplining of our lower appetites. (Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. *Life Is Worth Living*)

How to Develop Character

No character ever develops without a certain amount of punishment and resistance and mortification to that which is evil. It will hurt a bit as the violin, if it were conscious, would scream with pain when the violinist tightens the strings. But the violinist would say, 'My dear string, this is to give you a better tone.' If a block of marble were conscious, it would protest when the chisel strikes, but the sculptor would say, 'There is a beautiful form inside of you, and all you have to do is cut away that which is gross, and the inner beauty will be revealed.' (Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. *Life Is Worth Living*)

Civic Duty and National Renewal

Civic duty in our time, I submit, consists mainly of three tasks. The first is to seek to understand the demands of modern society and to participate responsibly in its collective life. The second is to help lessen the suffering of others in our midst. And the third is to make accountable those who make decisions in our name.

These three elements of civic duty are interrelated. Our ability to make others accountable for the decisions they make in our name depends very much on the extent of our fidelity to our obligations to members of society. We would be deterred from demanding of others what we ourselves fail to practice in daily life. We would feel compromised and ethically disabled. In like manner, we may be so engrossed in our personal lives that we fail to connect to the life of the community in any way.

In times such as ours, one's first duty, I think, is not to despair but to seek greater understanding of what is happening to us as individuals and as a nation. Despair is the other face of confusion. Our failure to make sense of complex events is bound to lead us to ineffective action. We must learn to think reflexively and critically so we may begin to realize our blind spots and correct them. We must not fear and obstruct the new; rather, we must track its movement and befriend it.

The modern society that is upon us demands that we abide by its most basic rules. They are not difficult to

understand. What are these? Three things basically: (1) Fall in line and wait for your turn; (2) Know the rules and follow them; (3) Come on time. These simple rules will permit us to navigate the complex terrain of the modern world with ease. There is not a single modern society in the world today that does not strictly enforce these rules. (Randy David's Column, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Jan. 30, 2008)

PROVERBS (from The Wisdom Books, *The Jerusalem Bible*)

Portrait of a Scoundrel

*A scoundrel, a vicious man,
He goes with a leer on his lips, winking his eye, shuffling
his foot, beckoning with his finger.
Deceit in his heart, always scheming evil, he sows
dissension.
Disaster will overtake him sharply for this, suddenly,
irretrievably, his fall will come.*

Seven things hateful to God

*There are six things that Yahweh hates, seven that his
soul abhors:
a haughty look,
a lying tongue,
hands that shed innocent blood,
a heart that weaves wicked plots,
feet that hurry to do evil,
a false witness who lies with every breath
a man who sows dissension among brothers.*