

Stressing Positive Character Traits as Part of the Instructional Process

A Note for Teachers, Facilitators, and Parents from Michelle Willis

The need for honesty is built into the scoring process used with this program. Given the technological capabilities at our disposal today, the scoring process could be accomplished automatically. However, not utilizing automatic scoring has two positive benefits. First, students are not as conscientiously aware or as actively engaged when the scoring is done automatically for them, at least this has been my experience. However, there is actually a more important reason for using a manual scoring process. Honesty is a very important positive character trait, and the scoring process in *Growing Up* is designed to help develop honesty in the young people who use it. While it is certainly obvious that a student can “cheat” in several ways, deliberately altering his or her score to give the impression of being higher than it actually is, the very fact that this choice exists makes the development of honesty all the more realistic. *If the choice to cheat is not an option, the choice to be honest is pre-determined and therefore, it is not a “free” choice.*

To understand this concept, one needs a brief explanation of how the conscience operates. By definition the conscience is **the function of the human intellect which makes judgments about right and wrong**. In order for one’s conscience to function properly -- to be what is called an *“operational conscience”* -- an individual not only needs to know the difference between right and wrong, but must also have the self-discipline to follow the dictates of the conscience, even when doing so is difficult.

Teachers, facilitators, or parents who use *Growing Up* with young people should explain to them the importance of honesty, as well as the necessity for making the conscious choice *not* to cheat in the scoring process, even though it is something they could easily “get away with.”

Initially, in Part 1 - Lesson 1, honesty is stressed as an important positive character trait. Students hear the description of an honest person: *“An honest person is fair and truthful. He or she does not lie, steal, or cheat.”* Later, in Part 2 - Lesson 4, honesty is stressed as a part of good sportsmanship. Here students learn that *“good sports act in ways that are right or proper even when an adult is not watching. Good sports do what is right, even when they are sure they will not get caught doing what is wrong.”* Contrarily, students also learn that *“a poor sport is willing to break the rules or cheat to win.”*

Presenting these concepts about honesty and good sportsmanship in advance of the first lesson and following them up with the opportunity to actually put honesty into practice through honest scoring, is a simple, but effective, way to reinforce positive character development. From experience, I have also learned that opening each session with a quick review of these concepts is very helpful.

One other note: If a student, teacher, or facilitator must exit the program before completing a lesson, it might be helpful to make a written notation of the title of the section which was last viewed or of the title of the section to be viewed when returning to the program. Upon one’s return, one can simply use the *Navigation Feature* to locate that section.

OUTLINE OF PROGRAM CONTENT

PART 1: PREPARING FOR ADOLESCENCE

Lesson 1: Understanding Your Needs -- Main topics include:

Physical Needs -- Emotional Needs -- Social Needs
Adolescence: Changing From a Child to an Adult
Building Your Character During Adolescence
Positive Character Traits
Negative Character Traits
Your Character Traits and Self-Esteem

Lesson 2: Changes During Adolescence -- Main topics include:

Changes in Your Body (No sexual references)
Changes in Your Feelings
(*Silliness, Feeling Talkative, Crankiness, Love*)
Different Kinds of Love
Appropriate and Inappropriate Ways of Showing Love
Feeling Unloved
Changes in Relating to Others
Peer Pressure During Adolescence

Lesson 3: Adolescence and Independence -- Main topics include:

Independence - A Privilege and A Responsibility
Making Decisions and Solving Problems
Seeking Help From Parents and Family
Uncomfortable Feelings and Situations
A Big Mistake -- Drug Abuse
Problem Solving and Self-Esteem
How to Make Good Decisions

PART 2: BUILDING GOOD FRIENDSHIP SKILLS

Lesson 1: Making and Keeping Friends -- Main topics include:

A Doctor's Study of Popular and Unpopular Young People
Traits of Popular Young People
Traits of Unpopular Young People
Being a Friend To Yourself
Dealing With Disappointment

Lesson 2: When You Feel Angry -- Main topics include:

How to Deal With Anger
Applying The "Stop and Think" Rule
Applying the Stop and Think Rule to Several Common Situations
(*cutting in line, resenting household chores, feeling left out*)
Using Anger as a Basis For Success

Lesson 3: Learning About Some Other Feelings-- Main topics include:

Shyness/Steps for Overcoming Shyness
Envy/Steps for Overcoming Envy
Overcoming Prejudice

Lesson 4: Good Sportsmanship-- Main topics include:

Traits of Good Sports
Applying Good Sportsmanship Throughout Life
Traits of Poor Sports
Good Sportsmanship's Role in Making and Keeping Friends