

same, so this doesn't always work and can create big problems. Take school, for example. In a class of 30 students, some will be gifted, some will be "average" (another tricky word!), and some will have learning differences and need special help with things that average students learn more easily and gifted students might already know. What if the teacher treats everyone exactly the same? The average students might be okay with this, but the gifted kids and those who struggle to learn probably *won't* be okay.

The Declaration of Independence says that "all men are created equal." Does this mean that women aren't created equal? Is that what the signers meant to say, or was the word "men" supposed to include women, too? If it was, why did women have to fight for the right to vote, and why did it take until 1920 (and a constitutional amendment) before they were given that right? Does "all men" include men (people?) of all races and cultural backgrounds? If so, why do we need affirmative action . . . or do we?

"Men their rights and nothing more;
women their rights and nothing less."

Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton

You might have asked yourself questions like these. Or you might have talked about equality with your family, friends, classmates, and teachers. Keep asking, talking, and thinking about equality, because it's important to do so. What you feel and believe about equality will determine how you treat other people throughout your life—and how you expect them to treat you. Continue gathering information and opinions, then form your own conclusions about equality. You might start with these basic ideas:

- ▲ Equality isn't about sameness. It's about access, rights, and opportunity.
- ▲ Every person is unique, and all people should be able to reach their full potential without encountering artificial barriers of gender, race, religion, class, or cultural background.
- ▲ Hatred, harassment, discrimination, and prejudice have no place in a society that promotes equality.

CHECK IT OUT



Three organizations that fight for equality and fairness are:

Amnesty International (AI)

5 Penn Plaza, 16th Floor
New York, NY 10001
(212) 807-8400
amnesty.org

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

4805 Mt. Hope Drive
Baltimore, MD 21215
1-877-622-2798
www.naACP.org

National Organization for Women (NOW)

1100 H Street, NW, 3rd Floor
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 628-8669
www.now.org

Tolerance

"Every bigot was once a child
free of prejudice."

Sister Mary de Lourdes

You've probably heard the word "tolerance" often over the past few years—at school, in your faith community, and at home. We all need to learn to be more tolerant of others, regardless of whether their "differences" are due to race, cultural background, gender, age, intelligence, physical capabilities, or any other reason.

When you're tolerant, you have sympathy for beliefs or practices that are different from your own. You may not share or even agree with them, but you recognize their right to exist. You don't let prejudice and bigotry determine who your friends will be. You treat people with respect no matter who they are.

Why should you be more tolerant? Here are four great reasons:

1. ***The more tolerant you are, the more open you are to learning about other people.*** Have you ever

had a preconceived notion about a person or group, then found out you were wrong once you got to know them? What if you hadn't gotten to know them? You'd still be stuck in your old ways of thinking. When you're not learning, your brain becomes stale.

2. *The more you learn, the less you fear.* Remember when you were sure there were monsters under your bed? Or how afraid you were the first time you went swimming and put your face in the water? Then you looked under the bed or dunked your face in the water a few more times and suddenly you weren't afraid anymore. Unlearning prejudices works the same way. Once you learn that you have nothing to fear, you become willing to try more new things, ideas, and relationships. As you practice tolerance and become more comfortable with other people's differences, curiosity replaces fear. Your mind opens. You start respecting other people's opinions, practices, behaviors, and beliefs. You gain a deeper understanding of yourself and others. It's easy to hate a stereotype, hard to hate a friend.

3. *The less you fear, the more comfortable you feel around all kinds of people.* Wouldn't you like to feel safer and more secure anytime, anywhere? Studies have shown that people who get along with different kinds of people are emotionally and physically healthier—and more successful in their careers—than those who don't.

4. *The more people you know (especially different kinds of people), the more interesting your life becomes.* What if you were allowed to read books by only one author? If you had to wear blue jeans, a white T-shirt, and black sneakers every day? What if you were never permitted to try anything new, not even a new soft drink or computer game? What if all of your friends looked, thought, and behaved exactly alike? What if they all had to be the same age, religion, gender, and race?

How can you learn to be more tolerant of others? Here's how:

1. *Be willing to meet new people.* Don't ever judge a whole group of people by one person's actions.

That's poor deductive reasoning, and it leads to prejudice and discrimination.

2. *Be willing to listen and learn.* Ask people to tell you about their backgrounds, beliefs, and traditions. Sometimes this can challenge your own ways of thinking and make you reexamine your own ideas. It can also open the door to new friendships and experiences.

3. *As you're learning about differences, look for similarities.* You probably have more in common than you know.

"If four-fifths of the world's population consists of people of color, why are they still called 'minorities'?"

Lynn Duwall

CHECK IT OUT



The Misfits by James Howe (New York: Atheneum Books, 2001). Four best friends try to survive the seventh grade as they are teased about their weight, height, intelligence, and gender expression. These friends decide to fight back by running for student council and creating a platform aimed at wiping out name-calling of all kinds. Ages 11 & up.

Teaching Tolerance

400 Washington Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36104
(334) 956-8200
www.tolerance.org

A national education project dedicated to helping teachers foster equity, respect, and understanding in the classroom and beyond. *Teaching Tolerance* magazine is available free to teachers.

Character Dilemmas

For journaling or writing essays, discussion, debate, role-playing, reflection

Suppose that . . .

1 In Florida in 1993, a young boy named Gregory Kingsley tried to sue his mother for divorce. He wanted to be adopted by a family that had been caring for him. The Circuit Court ruled that Gregory had the right to do this. His mother took the case to the District Court of Appeals (a higher court), which

overruled the lower court and said that Gregory did *not* have this right. What do you think? Should children have the legal right to divorce their parents? Should they have the right to choose which parent to live with when parents divorce? What should the parents' rights be?

2 There are two different ethnic groups in your school. They don't like each other and are constantly arguing, pushing each other around, and even fighting. One day, a new student arrives, and soon you start to think that you'd like to have him for a friend. The problem is, you're in one group and he's in the other. What should you do? What might be the consequences of your actions? Could you accept the consequences?

3 A college has a limited number of scholarships to award. How should it decide which students should receive the scholarships? Should the decisions be based on 1) financial need (which would help students from low-income families), 2) affirmative action (which would help women students and those from minority groups), or 3) merit (which would help students who have earned good grades and high test scores in high school)?

4 You know that one of your neighbors doesn't pay her income taxes. Instead, she reports her earnings in a way that takes illegal advantage of tax shelters. Do you think that people should have the right to decide whether or not to pay taxes? Who should decide how much they must pay? What, if anything, might you do about your neighbor?

5 A student in your class at school has been very ill this year. You learn that he needs a heart transplant; in fact, if he doesn't have one soon, he'll probably die. His parents belong to a religion that doesn't allow heart transplants, and they refuse to let your friend have the surgery. Do parents have the right to decide whether their children get medical help? Do they have the right to decide what kinds of medical help their children can have? Explain your answer—but first, try to see both sides of this dilemma.

6 You're an employer, and you're looking for someone to fill a job. Your favorite applicant is a man. But because of affirmative action, you have to hire a woman. What are the pros and cons of affirmative action? What do you think is the best thing to do in your situation?

Activities

GUESS THE PUNISHMENT OR CONSEQUENCE for each of the following crimes or infractions. Try to be just and fair. If you do this activity with your class or club, you might brainstorm punishments and consequences as a group. Afterward, invite a law student or an attorney to visit your class or club. Share your guesses, then ask for a legal point of view.

- During a locker search of your school, two cans of beer are discovered in a student's locker.
- The governor of your state accepts a bribe from a lobbying group.
- Your best friend borrows his parents' car without their permission, and the two of you go to a movie.
- Your older sister "borrows" money from your dresser without permission.
- The school secretary dips into the school lunch money to buy food for her family.
- A high-ranking officer in the military sells government secrets to another country.
- A drunk driver hits a child, causing minor injuries, and drives away.
- The owner of a small, struggling business doesn't report all of his earnings on his income tax return.
- One of your neighbors grows marijuana in her basement.
- Gang members graffiti your school.
- A student at your school has a handgun in the glove compartment in her car. She says it's so she'll feel safe.
- One of the clubs at your school refuses to let a new student join. You overhear the president say that it's because the new student is of a different race.



**Giving, service, sharing, love, helpfulness, kindness,
generosity, unselfishness, sacrifice**

"Someone's got to go out there and love
people and show it."

Diana, Princess of Wales

Benjamin Franklin developed the stove now called the Franklin Stove, and it's still being manufactured today. At the time, he was offered a patent for his invention, which would have earned him a lot of money and given him a monopoly on it. But Franklin refused the patent. Instead, he published a pamphlet describing how to build the stove so blacksmiths or other clever people could make one themselves.

Reaching out to others makes life meaningful. What's really great about this is the more you give, the more you receive. Philosopher Deepak Chopra says that when you serve others, you gain more in return. If you give good things, then good things will flow your way.

You might be thinking "Wrong! I gave ten dollars to a friend, and I'm still waiting to get it back!" It's important to understand that when you give and share, you won't always be paid in kind (or on time). But over the long run, you'll attract love, respect, and generosity from others *in general*. You'll become a magnet for positive thoughts and actions.

When you truly care for others, there are no strings attached. You don't expect to receive anything in return for your gifts or services. You don't give or serve grudgingly; you do it with a free and open heart, and without keeping score. You don't let

the fear of rejection hold you back. Sometimes caring takes courage.¹

Real caring is unconditional. You don't stop to think whether someone deserves it. And when you really love someone, you don't worry about what's in it for you. You don't love your dad so he'll raise your allowance, or your little brother so he'll keep his hands off of your comic book collection.

Mother Teresa spent her life loving needy people in poverty-stricken countries. She saved many infants by tirelessly rubbing and stroking their weak, undernourished limbs. Human touch releases chemicals in the body which help it to thrive and grow. (How about giving your little brother a hug?)

There are many ways you can care about, share with, and serve others:

♥ **With your actions.** You might make your mother's bed, rake leaves off the front lawn, tutor a younger child in reading, open a door for a senior citizen, or sit with someone unpopular at lunch. Spend an hour listening to a lonely person. Be helpful and kind to someone who needs a hand.

♥ **With your words.** Say kind things to and about other people. Offer advice when it's wanted and sympathy when it's needed. Sometimes the kindest words are those that aren't spoken. Don't spread gossip, rumors, or cruel stories, even if they're true.

¹ See "Courage," pages 71-78.

♥ **With your thoughts.** Positive thoughts and prayers can be very powerful. You can do an act of kindness for another person merely by thinking good thoughts about him or her. This is harder than it may seem at first. It's easier to tell your hand to share a candy bar with a friend than it is to tell yourself "Even though he shoots baskets better than I do, he's cool and I like him." Other people will feel the positive thoughts you send their way.

♥ **With material gifts.** Try giving mittens to the homeless, donating trees to your community, buying a shirt for your brother or chocolates for a friend. Don't limit your gifts to special occasions (charity drives, birthdays, holidays). Give when you're in the mood and when you're not. Do it just because.

Look around you, and you'll notice many opportunities to give and serve. Think about your family, other relatives, friends, people in your neighborhood, pets and animals, the environment, your community, and the world. How can you use your skills, smarts, and experiences to improve the lives of others? What can you do for your school, club, community center, place of worship, or local government? How can you help another person (or group of people) to develop, grow, and become independent?

Sometimes service involves sacrifice—giving up something you value to benefit someone else. This might be your time, your talents, your energy and muscles, your money, or even your blood.

"If every American donated five hours a week, it would equal the labor of 20 million full-time volunteers."

Whoopi Goldberg

There's a story about a little boy whose older sister was seriously injured in a car accident. She had a rare blood type—which her little brother's matched—and she needed a donor immediately. The doctor approached the boy and asked if he would donate some of his blood to his sister. The boy turned ghostly white, but he hesitated for only a moment before nodding his head in agreement. After giving blood, he looked up at his mom and asked with wide, moist eyes, "How much longer do I get to live?"



If everyone pitched in, where would all the problems go?

When you shift your attention away from your problems and focus on helping others, your own problems don't seem as serious or daunting. If you use your unique talents and abilities to work for the good of others, you'll find greater joy, inspiration, and satisfaction in your own life.

TIP: Before you can love others, you first must love yourself.

"I have found the paradox that if I love until it hurts, then there is no hurt, but only more love."

Mother Teresa

Character Dilemmas

For journaling or writing essays, discussion, debate, role-playing, reflection

Suppose that . . .

① Your little sister never hangs up her clothes. So you decide to help by hanging them up for her. You're doing a service . . . but are you really helping your sister? Why or why not? Give other examples of times when service to others might not be helpful.

② Your high school requires students to perform 200 hours of community service in order to graduate. What are the pros and cons of this requirement? How might it affect students' attitudes toward service?

3 You're a parent of a child who doesn't know how to share (or just doesn't want to). How might you encourage your child to develop this trait? What learning experiences might you create for him or her?

4 You live in a world where service is always rewarded. If you help someone, you immediately receive thanks, kindness, and money in return. How might this affect you and others?

5 You've been asked to head a national committee to evaluate the welfare system in your country. Currently your country has thousands of second-, third-, and even fourth-generation welfare recipients; some people who receive welfare have children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who also receive it. As committee chair, you can decide to change the welfare system or leave it the way it is. What will you do and why?

Activities

READ AND DISCUSS THIS POEM by Edwin Markham:

He drew a circle that shut me out—
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in!

What does this poem mean to you and your friends? Can you think of examples from your own life that seem to fit the poem? Is there anyone you know who might benefit from being drawn into your circle?

WRITE IN YOUR JOURNAL² about a time when someone was kind to you or did a service for you. How did you feel? Have you ever received a service that made you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed? Why did you feel that way? What can you learn from that experience?

READ A BIOGRAPHY about a famous philanthropist—someone who has dedicated his or her life to improving the lives of others. Make a poster illustrating the person's achievements. Write a report or make a speech about him or her.

LEARN ABOUT THE WELFARE SYSTEM in your country. Contact your city or state government to find out

how much welfare costs your city or state. Make a line graph showing how welfare costs have increased or decreased over the past 10 years. You might want to make separate graphs showing the costs for children (ages 5–18), adults (19–65), and seniors (66 and over). Find out if the number of people receiving welfare benefits has increased, decreased, or stayed the same.

CHECK IT OUT



To learn more about the welfare system in the United States, contact:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201
1-877-696-6775
www.dhhs.gov

RESEARCH HOW OTHER COUNTRIES have cared for their citizens through history. You might take a look at Egypt, Greece, African nations, China, Russia (or the former Soviet Union), or Canada. Or find out how the United States has cared for Native American peoples. Make a chart comparing the countries or cultures you choose to research.

PLAN AND DO A SERVICE PROJECT. Follow these steps:³

1. Research your project. Choose an issue or need that concerns you, then come up with a project related to that issue or need.

2. Form a team. If you don't want to go it alone, or if the project seems too complicated to do by yourself, invite others to join you.

3. Find a sponsor. Ask a responsible adult (teacher, parent, neighbor, scout leader, etc.) to act as your sponsor. This can give your project credibility with other adults whose help and/or permission you might need.

4. Make a plan. Decide when and where to meet. Decide how you will get to the meeting place and service location. Define your goal; what do you hope to achieve? Set a schedule for your project. Estimate your

² See "Endurance," pages 88, 89, and 92, for journaling resources.

³ Adapted from *The Kid's Guide to Service Projects* by Barbara A. Lewis (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1995), pages 8–12. Used with permission of the publisher.

costs. Think hard about your project; is it realistic? Too complicated? Too simple? How could you improve it?

5. Consider the recipient. Always make sure that the people you plan to serve really want your help. What's the best way to do this? Ask them!

6. Decide where you'll perform your service. Will you go to the people you plan to serve, or will they come to you? If you go to them, be sure to visit the location ahead of time and find out if it has what you need. If they come to you, make sure that your location has what you need.

7. Get any permissions you need to proceed. Depending on your project, you might have to ask permission from your principal, teacher(s), school district personnel, youth leader, parents, etc.

8. Advertise. Let other people know about your project. Make a flyer, create a public service announcement, or send out a press release.

9. Fund-raise. Do you need start-up money for your service project? Will you need to buy equipment or supplies? If your project will cost anything beyond pocket money, you'll need to fund-raise.

10. When your project has ended, evaluate it. Reflect on your experience. Discuss it with your team, family, teachers, friends, and neighbors. Talk it over with the people you served. What did you learn? What did you accomplish? Would you do the project again? How could you improve it?

CHECK IT OUT



Four national programs that promote youth service are:

Corporation for National and Community Service

1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525
(202) 606-5000
www.nationalservice.gov

National Youth Leadership Council

1667 Snelling Avenue N., Suite D300
St. Paul, MN 55108
(651) 631-3672
www.nylc.org

Youth Service America

1101 15th Street, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 296-2992
www.ysa.org

Youth Venture

1700 North Moore Street, Suite 2000
Arlington, VA 22209
(703) 527-4126
www.youthventure.org

DO A "SECRET SERVICE." Choose someone you'd like to do something nice for or give something to. Leave a treat on a porch, in a locker, on a desk. Write an anonymous note telling the person why you admire him or her.

Variation: Do the "Twelve Days of Christmas Surprise" for someone lonely or in need. Secretly leave a treat or perform a service for the person 12 days in a row. (You don't have to wait until Christmas.)

CHECK IT OUT



For inspiration when planning your "secret service," read:

Kids' Random Acts of Kindness by the editors of Conari Press (Emeryville, CA: Conari Press, 1994). Kids from around the world tell their own stories of sudden, impetuous acts of kindness.

WRITE YOUR OWN "RANDOM ACTS" BOOK. Collect stories from friends, classmates, family members, and neighbors. Illustrate your book with drawings or photographs. Make several copies to hand out.

BRAINSTORM A LIST OF POSSIBLE NEEDS for family members (parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, etc.). You could also brainstorm lists of needs for teachers, custodians, lunchroom aides, your school, the PTA, seniors, people with special needs, animals, etc. Review your lists and choose a project to do based on a need.

START A KINDNESS "CHAIN REACTION." Place a "Kindness Box" in your school, home, or club. Put a stack of paper and a marker beside the box. Above the box, include a sheet of simple instructions. They might say "Write about an anonymous act of kindness

you've done or seen someone do." Each week, take the papers out of the box and display them in a chain on a wall. Or decorate a bulletin board with care messages or quotations about caring.

WRITE A SKIT about acts of kindness and ways to serve others. Present it to celebrate a favorite holiday or any time during the year. You might perform your skit for children in a hospital or shelter.

MAKE "I CARE" KITS. Collect personal items such as combs, toothbrushes, soaps, deodorants, etc. for a traveler's aid service. Or collect clothing, mittens, and shoes for a homeless shelter. Or collect pens, pencils, crayons, paper, and lap games for children in hospitals. Or make a Newcomer's Kit for new kids who come into your school. (This kit might include a map of the school, a school schedule, information about clubs and activities, a bus schedule, or anything else you can think of.)

COLLECT SONGS ABOUT CARING. Do this with a group of friends—you'll have more fun and find more songs. Perform some of your songs for your school, your community center, or children at a hospital or shelter.






BE A CARING TEAM PLAYER. Brainstorm ways to support team members when they make mistakes, have poor skills, or insult each other. How can you show care and concern for members of your own team, other teams, your coach, and yourself?

PLAY A "LET ME HELP YOU" GAME. Create an obstacle course that isn't too difficult. Pair off into partners. One partner wears a blindfold; the other is the helper. Start by having the blindfolded players try to navigate the obstacle course without help. They may refuse—or they may try and laugh, trip, or fall. Next, have the helpers guide the blindfolded players through the course. Switch places so all players have the chance to experience how good it feels to give and receive help.

Variations:

1. The helper gives verbal instructions but doesn't touch the blindfolded person.
2. The helper says nothing, but guides the blindfolded person with his or her hands.
3. The helper uses a combination of words and touches to guide the blindfolded person.

READ STORIES ABOUT CARING. Look for these books:

-  *Dacey's Song* by Cynthia Voigt (New York: Atheneum, 1982). Dacey struggles with school, a job, and responsibility for her brothers and sisters as she adjusts to living with her grandmother. Ages 11–12.
-  *The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996). A husband and wife give up their most valued possessions to purchase Christmas presents for each other. Ages 10 & up. (You can also find this story in many anthologies.)
-  *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein (New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1964). A tree becomes an important part of a young boy's life. As they both age, the tree keeps giving happiness to the boy until she has none left for herself. All ages.
-  *Monkey Island* by Paula Fox (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1993). Clay's father has left, and one day his mother doesn't come home. After a few days, 11-year-old Clay runs away and begins living on the streets, where he finds new friends to help him get by. Ages 11 & up.
-  *Sarah Bishop* by Scott O'Dell (New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1991). During the Revolutionary War, Sarah is befriended by an Indian couple and a young Quaker. When Sarah's reclusive lifestyle leads to charges of witchcraft, she is defended by the Quaker. Ages 11–15.

Empathy

Understanding, compassion, charity, sensitivity, concern

"You can't understand another person until you walk a few miles in their moccasins."

Native American proverb

Have you ever visited the Hoh rainforest in the Pacific Northwest? If you travel there, you'll discover the beautiful Sitka spruce, which grows abundantly in the shade of the forest's green canopy. There's something especially interesting about this tree. The young Sitka spruce seedlings have a hard time getting started alone in the dirt. There's too much competition from dense moss and other aggressive plants that spread a carpet along the forest floor. A seed must land on a fallen Sitka log in order to germinate, then live off the nourishment from the decaying trunk. The dying tree becomes a "nurse log" to new seedlings. The seedlings send roots into and around the log. Eventually the old log disappears, and all that remains are the new Sitkas standing in a colonnade on stilt-like roots.

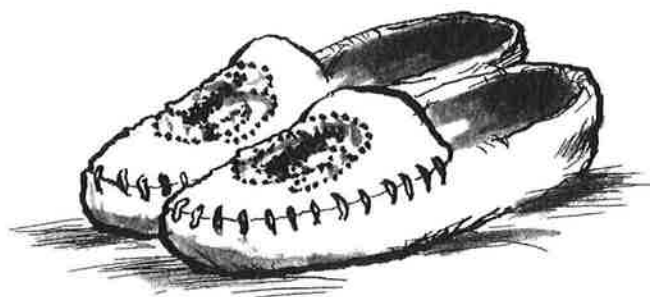
If you have empathy, you can compare yourself to that nurse log. There's a deep connection between the decaying tree and the new seedlings that grow from it. Empathy is one step beyond service. You can care for people and serve them without knowing much about their thoughts and feelings.¹ For example, you might have a friend who reads to an elderly woman every week. That's a great service. But your friend might not know that the woman is weeping inwardly for a lost child, or that she's afraid of dying.

¹ See "Caring," pages 21-27.

Empathy means that you can *sense, identify with, and understand* what another person is feeling. You can almost get inside the person's head and heart. You have a shared communion with him or her. You can connect and relate to what the person needs. For example, if your friend who reads to the elderly woman has empathy for the woman, your friend probably won't choose to read *The Giving Tree*. Shel Silverstein's story about a tree that sacrifices its life for a man might be too painful for the woman to bear, and your friend will realize this without being told.

When you shout from a hilltop, sometimes your words come back to you in an echo. You hear the same words you shouted, but they're not as loud. Empathy is like an echo. You don't add to what someone feels. You don't change the feelings. You accept and share them, but in a softer way, because it's almost impossible to feel with the same intensity of the other person's firsthand experience.

If you have empathy, you have *compassion* for others. In response, you might show them *charity*—kindness, benevolence, and goodwill. The



word “charity” comes from the Latin for “Christian love,” which is one way to understand it; if you’re not a Christian, you might interpret it as “Mohammed-like love,” “Buddha-like love,” or whatever best describes your personal faith. Mother Teresa has often been cited as an example of charity because she not only served people in great need, she also lived with them. She “walked in their moccasins.”

Empathizing with someone is *not* the same as pitying or feeling sorry for him or her. This is an important distinction. When you pity another person, you look down on him or her. You think “How awful” or “What a terrible situation that person is in” or even “Thank goodness I’m not in that situation.” Pity sets you apart; empathy brings you together.

“With compassion, we see benevolently our own human condition and the condition of our fellow beings. We drop prejudice. We withhold judgment.”

Christina Baldwin

Character Dilemmas

For journaling or writing essays, discussion, debate, role-playing, reflection

Suppose that . . .

1 There’s a new student at your school who wears clothes that are different from what everyone else wears. How might you feel if you were 1) the new student, 2) a popular student, 3) an unpopular student, 4) a teacher, 5) the parent of the new student?

2 Your state legislature has just passed a law requiring all public buildings—including schools, businesses, and houses of worship—to build wheelchair ramps within one year. How might you react if you were 1) a school administrator, 2) a person in a wheelchair, 3) a business owner, 4) a city planner, 5) a church administrator?

3 Your city demolishes an entire block of low-income housing because it’s in bad repair. How might you feel if you were 1) a person with a low income, 2) a developer who builds new houses, 3) someone who lives across the street from the newly razed block?

4 Two girls have been best friends for years. One girl starts dating the other girl’s boyfriend. How might you feel if you were 1) the girl who lost her boyfriend, 2) the girl who started dating her best friend’s boyfriend, 3) the boyfriend?

5 Your government has just announced major cuts in medical insurance for the elderly. How might you feel if you were 1) a government official, 2) a senior citizen, 3) a middle-aged person, 4) a child?

6 A teenager signs an organ donor card. In the event of his death, his organs will go to other people who need them. How might you feel if you were 1) the person signing the donor card, 2) his parent, 3) a person awaiting an organ transplant, 4) a physician?

Activities

LEARN TO EMPATHIZE WITH ELDERLY PEOPLE. Read stories, read books, or watch videos about elderly people. Then interview elderly people in your family, neighborhood, or senior citizens’ centers in your community. Try to imagine what it might be like to be one of them. (Someday you will be!) Ask them how they feel about health care, food and housing, social security, family relationships, health and sickness, the future, and anything else you’d like to know about. Write about what you learn and share your findings with your family, class, or community.

CHECK IT OUT*



Driving Miss Daisy (1989; PG). Jessica Tandy won an Oscar for her portrayal of an elderly Southern woman who can no longer drive. When her son hires a black man (Morgan Freeman) as her chauffeur, the two become faithful companions.

Harold and Maude (1971; PG). Bud Cort and Ruth Gordon star in this black comedy (and cult classic) about a friendship between Harold, a depressed 20-year-old, and Maude, a 79-year-old with a zest for life.

On Golden Pond (1981; PG). Henry Fonda and Katharine Hepburn won Academy Awards for their poignant portrayals of an 80-year-old man and his devoted wife spending a summer in Maine.

* You must get permission from your parents to watch these movies. Better yet, watch them *with* your parents.

LEARN ABOUT THE NEEDS OF VARIOUS GROUPS in your community including 1) elderly people, 2) families, 3) children, 4) parents, 5) single parents, 6) people with disabilities, 7) people who are ill, 8) minorities, 9) immigrants, 10) homeless people, 11) women, and 12) men. Contact your city council or mayor's office for information; read your local newspaper; ask people who work or volunteer for service and charitable organizations. Compile your findings on a chart showing the differences and similarities among people's needs.

WRITE IN YOUR JOURNAL² about how it might feel to have LD (a learning difference or disability). If you have LD, write about how it might feel to have another kind of difference or disability.

CHECK IT OUT



Keeping a Head in School: A Student's Book About Learning Abilities and Learning Disorders (Cambridge, MA: Educators Publishing Service, 1991). Stay on top of homework with this handy book. Ages 9–12.

Online

www.ldonline.org

An interactive site where parents, teachers, and kids can learn about LD. Includes information about LD and ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), artwork and writing by young people with LD, recommended resources, and more. Be sure to visit the section for kids: www.ldonline.org/kids

Yahoo's Disabilities Links

www.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/Disabilities
Links to sites, information, and databases about all kinds of disabilities.

TAKE FIELD TRIPS to increase your understanding of people whose lives and needs are different from yours. You might visit a children's hospital, juvenile detention home, halfway house for recovering alcoholics, home for unwed mothers, senior citizens' center or rest home, women's shelter, homeless shelter, food pantry, and any other place you're interested in. Each time you return from a field trip, write a story or a poem about your experience. **IMPORTANT:** Be sure to get permission from your parents,

your school, and the place or agency you want to visit. Go with a chaperon.

VOLUNTEER AT ONE OF THE PLACES you visit. Follow these steps:³

1. Decide where you'd like to go and what you'd like to do.⁴ Consider these questions:

- ? What might benefit the most people?
- ? What might make the biggest difference?
- ? What can I afford (in terms of time, effort, etc.)?
- ? What's really possible for me to do?

2. Talk to the administrator or volunteer coordinator. Many organizations couldn't exist without strong support from volunteers, so they already have a system in place for accepting and training them. Ask what they need volunteers to do. This might be different from what you originally thought, and it might be different from what you'd like to do, so be prepared to be flexible—or to decide that you'd rather volunteer elsewhere. *Example:* If you want to be a volunteer at a children's hospital, you may have to be 16 to qualify.

3. Once you find a good match, get any permissions you need to proceed. Depending on where you want to volunteer, you may need permission from your parent(s), teacher(s), principal, youth leader, etc. You may need an adult chaperon.

4. Decide how long you'll stay involved and what you want to achieve. Set a schedule for yourself. When will you start? How much time will you spend volunteering each week or month?

5. If you don't want to go it alone, invite others to join you. Choose people who share your interest and can make a commitment.

6. Firm up the details. Will you need transportation back and forth? Any special materials, equipment, supplies, clothing, or skills? Are there any limitations or restrictions on what you can do or when and where you can do it?

³ Adapted from *The Kid's Guide to Service Projects* by Barbara A. Lewis (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1995), pages 8–11. Used with permission of the publisher.

⁴ See "Caring," page 24, for information about national programs that promote youth service.

² See "Endurance," pages 88, 89, and 92, for journaling resources.

7. When your term as a volunteer comes to an end, evaluate the experience. Discuss it with your team members, family, teachers, and friends. Talk it over with the people you served. Consider these questions:

- ? What did I learn?
- ? What did I accomplish?
- ? What were my feelings, fears, joys?
- ? Would I do it again?
- ? How could I improve on the experience?
- ? Will I repeat the experience? When? How soon?

PRACTICE SEEING BOTH SIDES of an environmental issue. Choose an issue that's currently being debated in your community. *Examples:* the use of a stream bed; air quality; dumping; the development of an area (for high-income housing, low-income housing, retail, industry, park, etc.). Invite speakers from both sides to address your class, school, or club and express their views on the issue. Afterward, ask your classmates and friends to vote on which person seemed most persuasive. Did you have an opinion or point of view before you heard the speakers, and did anything they said change your mind? Did you empathize more with one speaker than the other?

FIND OUT THE AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME of a family in your town, city, or state. Then find out the average annual incomes of families in several countries around the world, including third world countries. (You might gather this information from almanacs, encyclopedias, or the Internet.) Calculate the differences and make a chart illustrating them. Could your family live on the amount of money earned by a family in Afghanistan? In Bangladesh? In Cuba? In India? In Zaire? How do you think families in these countries pay for food, clothing, housing, utilities (heat, light, water, telephone), medical expenses, transportation, education, and recreation? You might extend your research to include average life expectancy, infant mortality rates, and other topics. Afterward, think about how this information has affected your feelings about different peoples around the world. Can you begin to empathize with the struggles of families in poor nations?

PRACTICE EMPATHIZING WITH YOUR PARENTS. Each day, ask them how they feel about a different issue. *Examples:* family rules, money, working, the easiest/best part about raising children, the hardest/worst part about raising children, current events, their hopes/dreams for your future, etc. Do this for five days. Just listen to what they say—without arguing. Afterward, think about what you learned. Do you know your parents any better now? Can you see their point of view on certain issues? Can you understand where they're coming from and why? Tell them how you feel and practice having a discussion.

Variation: Practice empathizing with your siblings. Ask your older or younger brother(s) or sister(s) what frustrates them the most, what makes them happiest, etc. Ask if they have any advice for you.

WALK IN SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES. Literally! Exchange shoes with a sibling, parent, classmate, teacher, or friend for an hour or a day. Talk about what you learned from the experience.

Variation: Imagine what it would be like to walk in the cold with *no* shoes. Or be courageous and do it. Ask your parents for permission first. Afterward, collect good used shoes (and money for new shoes) from your school or club and make a donation to a homeless shelter, second-hand store, or kids' shelter.

LEARN ABOUT IMMIGRATION in your town, city, or state. Check with organizations that sponsor immigrants to find out where people are coming from. If possible, arrange to meet with and interview recent immigrants. (You might need translators to accompany you.) Ask about the beliefs and customs they have brought with them to their new home. Try to empathize with their feelings and needs. Afterward, present your findings to your class or school. You might want to create a choral reading using different "voices" to tell about the immigrant experience and the beliefs and customs of the people.

START AN INTERNATIONAL CLUB at your school.⁵ Post flyers announcing the club. Your goal should be to attract as many people as possible, preferably from a wide variety of ethnic groups and backgrounds. Talk about common concerns and problems, special needs, and times when you need support and

⁵ See "Leadership," pages 160–161, for tips and a resource on how to start a club.

understanding. Get to know each other. Really listen to each other. Empathize. Decide on common goals and ways to achieve them.

Variations: Hold an International Fair with exhibits and presentations. Or have an International Talent Show, Music Show, Fashion Show, Food Festival, or Arts & Crafts Show. Invite students (and parents) to participate, perform, and share information about their lives and cultures.

CHECK IT OUT



Skipping Stones Magazine

PO Box 3939

Eugene, OR 97403

(541) 342-4956

www.skippingstones.org

This international multicultural children's magazine encourages an understanding of different cultures and languages. Ages 8–18.

Kids Meeting Kids Can Make a Difference

380 Riverside Drive, Box 8H

New York, NY 10025

www.kidsmeetingkids.org

This international organization promotes multicultural understanding, peace, fairness, and children's rights. Programs include pen-pal and peace exchanges, workshops, and a newsletter.

Yahoo! Kids

kids.yahoo.com/reference/world-factbook

A site of links that celebrate cross-cultural communications. Learn about cuisines, currencies, gestures, holidays, languages, religions, and more.

CREATE A POSTER COLLAGE showing different types of ethnic clothing. If you can't find pictures in magazines, visit your library and look for books on costumes and fashions. Then draw pictures based on what you find. If you hold an International Fashion Show, take photographs of the show and use them to make your collage. Imagine how people's lives might be affected by the types of clothing they wear.

MAKE A JIGSAW PUZZLE (with cardboard or wood backing) showing different people. You might show men, women, and children; people from different ethnic or racial groups; people of different ages; people working at different types of jobs, or engaged in various kinds of recreational activities; etc. Donate your puzzle to a class of younger kids.

LEARN EMPATHY THROUGH MUSIC. Play different types of ethnic music over your school PA system each morning for 5–10 minutes to increase understanding and appreciation of various cultures. Ask students to bring in examples of music to play, and/or gather examples from your school or local library.

PRACTICE EMPATHY IN SPORTS. When someone on your team makes a mistake, pat him or her on the back or offer encouragement. When you compete with another team, try to imagine how they feel if they win or lose. Shake hands at the end no matter who wins. Help a teammate or competitor who falls. Develop concern for your teammates and competitors. Keep track of how this changes your attitude toward and feelings about sports. How does it affect your performance?

PLAY A "GUESS WHAT I'M FEELING" GAME. Divide into pairs. Face each other. Player A tells about an experience he or she had. Player B watches for facial expressions and concentrates on listening and understanding. Then Player A says "Guess what I'm feeling." Player B tries to identify the emotion the first player felt during the experience just described—happiness, sadness, anger, joy, fear, hurt, relief, frustration, etc. Then Player B tries to repeat what Player A said about the experience—as closely as possible, and empathizing with Player A's feeling. Afterward, the players switch roles and Player B tells about an experience.

READ STORIES ABOUT EMPATHY. Look for these books:

Belle Prater's Boy by Ruth White (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc., 1996). Woodrow moves in with his grandparents after his mother mysteriously disappears. There he befriends his cousin, and together they learn to face the losses in their lives. Ages 12 & up.

Blubber by Judy Blume (New York: Simon & Schuster Children's Books, 1982). Jill doesn't worry much about the grief that she and her classmates cause a fellow student—until Jill becomes a target herself. Ages 9–12.

Pink and Say by Patricia Polacco (New York: The Putnam Publishing Group, 1994). Say Curtis describes his meeting with Pinkus Aylee, a black soldier, during the Civil War, and their capture by Confederate troops. Ages 9–13.

Forgiveness

Pardon, absolution, leniency, mercy, grace

"And throughout all eternity
I forgive you, you forgive me."
William Blake

There's an old Zen story that tells of two monks who were walking along the banks of an overflowing river. They saw a young woman who was afraid to cross. Although the monks had taken vows never to touch a woman, the older monk picked her up and carried her to the other side of the river. The younger monk seethed in anger all day. The two didn't speak until sunset, when they were allowed to break their vow of silence. Then the younger monk, enraged, accused the older monk of defiling himself and the whole order. The older monk simply answered "I put the woman down on the other side of the river early this morning. It is only you who have been carting her around throughout the day."

You're not going to get through life without people stepping on your toes and sometimes even stealing your shoes. You've probably already experienced people lying about you, cheating you, betraying you, taking your friends, homework, or possessions, telling you you're stupid, and worse. You may have suffered physical pain, injury, or abuse from people you love. These things should never happen . . . but they happen.

What should you do? What's best for you. Drop your anger and desire for revenge like a hot potato, because if you don't, the person who wronged you will hurt you twice. *Example:* Your brother takes your bike without asking, ruins the gear shifter, then dumps the evidence in the trash behind a store.

Okay, he's hurt you once. If you seethe in anger like the younger monk, you'll put a stop to your own personal growth and probably hurt your health, too. Wham! Your brother has hurt you twice—and you still don't have your bike.

"Hate is like acid. It can damage the vessel
in which it is stored as well as destroy the
object on which it is poured."
Ann Landers

Here's the secret of forgiveness: When you forgive others or yourself, *you stop being a victim*. You stop suffering. You can turn your pain into strength. You can improve your health, your sense of peace, and your happiness.

"Great," you might say, "but forgiveness is easier said than done." And you'd be right. Developing positive character traits isn't for wimps, and forgiveness is one of the hardest of all traits to form. You can do it, though. Here's how.

How to Forgive Others

1. **Acknowledge and accept what was done to you.** Don't ignore it or bury it. Buried things rot. Life isn't fair, bad things happen to good people, and wrongdoers aren't always punished. This doesn't mean you should give up or give in.
2. **Report the offense.** If the other person broke the law, report him or her to the police. If the person

broke a school rule, report it to your teacher or principal. If the person broke a family rule, tell your parents. You're not being a tattletale. Offenders should be held accountable for what they do.

3. Let your feelings out. Go ahead; get mad. Yell and cry if you want to. Let your anger out in a non-violent way. Anger held inside can make you sick. Jog, run, throw a football, pound the floor, pound your pillow, or wad up your dirty socks and throw them at the wall.

4. Talk with a caring, understanding adult or friend. Explain what happened and how you feel. Get professional help if you need it.¹

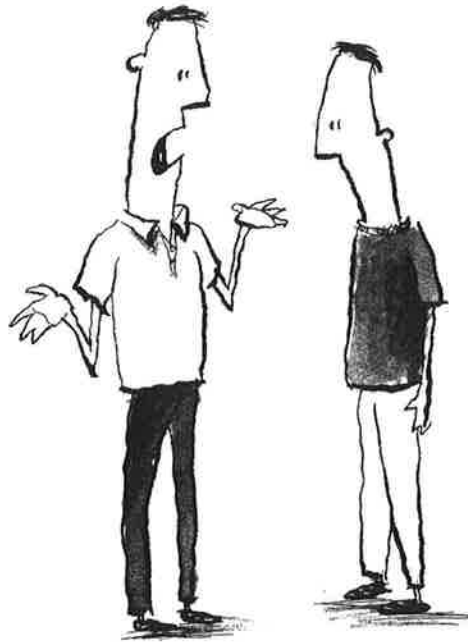
5. Write about your feelings in your journal.² Let them out. Or pound out your feelings on a piano or other musical instrument. Or draw your feelings. Do whatever works for you.

6. Tell the offender how you feel. Sometimes other people aren't aware that they've hurt you. Focus on the problem, not the person. Explain, don't blame. *Example:* You might say "I needed that bike to get to my job. Now I either have to walk or lose my job. This is a real hardship for me, and I don't know what to do." Don't say "You idiot! You stole my bike and ruined it. You're a thief and a liar. I hate you!" The first approach might turn your brother into an ally—someone who sympathizes with your problem. The second approach will put him on the defensive.

7. Ask the offender to make things right. Ask the person to return what was taken or fix what was broken. *Example:* "Will you help me repair my bike? Will you help me pay for the parts I need?" Sometimes this is possible, sometimes it isn't.

8. If this is appropriate for you, talk with God or another Higher Being/Higher Power you have faith in. Ask to be relieved of your anger and desire for revenge. Ask to be healed of your hurt. Ask for the ability to understand what's happened and put it behind you. Ask for the strength to forgive.

9. Forgive the offender. Take charge of your own attitudes, reactions, and feelings. Anger is a choice, revenge is a choice, hatred is a choice—



"I really NEED a bike. What am I going to do?"

and forgiveness is a choice.³ When you're ready, say "I forgive you." If you're sincere, you should feel a sense of calm and relief. Your body and spirit will be healthier. Don't worry about justice; leave that to the law, to the offender's own conscience, or to a Higher Power.

"It is by forgiving that one is forgiven."
Mother Teresa

10. Find a way to serve the offender. "WHAT?" you might ask. Yes, you read it right! This step is not for the faint of heart. Only the truly courageous can take it. But this is where you grow the most and gain the most—and that's why it's worth a try.

For this step, focus on the *person*, not the problem. See the human being complete with faults, weaknesses, worries, doubts, deficiencies, and insecurities. Then ask yourself "How can I serve this person? How can I help him or her? What can I do to make his or her life better—without expecting anything in return?" An answer will come to you. You might even do a "secret service" or a random act of kindness.⁴

¹ See "Endurance," pages 87 and 88, for crisis hotlines.

² See "Endurance," pages 88, 89, and 92, for journaling resources.

³ See "Choice and Accountability," pages 28–34.

⁴ See "Caring," page 24.

Serving someone who hurt you can be very healing. When you do this, you defeat the wrong that was done to you. You're free. You win!

11. Repeat any of these steps as often as you need to until they stick. Be patient with yourself. Forgiveness takes time.

How to Forgive Yourself

"If you haven't forgiven yourself something, how can you forgive others?"

Dolores Huerta

What if you're the person who committed the offense? Who hurt someone else? Who behaved badly? You can hope that the other person will forgive you, but that's not something you can control. What you *can* control is how you treat yourself.

You can't change the past. You can't go back in time and undo the wrong you did. But you can do good in the present. And you can start by forgiving yourself. Here's how.

1. Admit what you did. Take responsibility for your actions. You can't forgive yourself until you acknowledge that you did something wrong. Maybe you made a mistake; everybody does from time to time. Or maybe you deliberately hurt someone. Either way, *you* did it, and *you* need to admit it.

Think of your wrong or mistake as the first link in a chain that imprisons you. Each time you lie

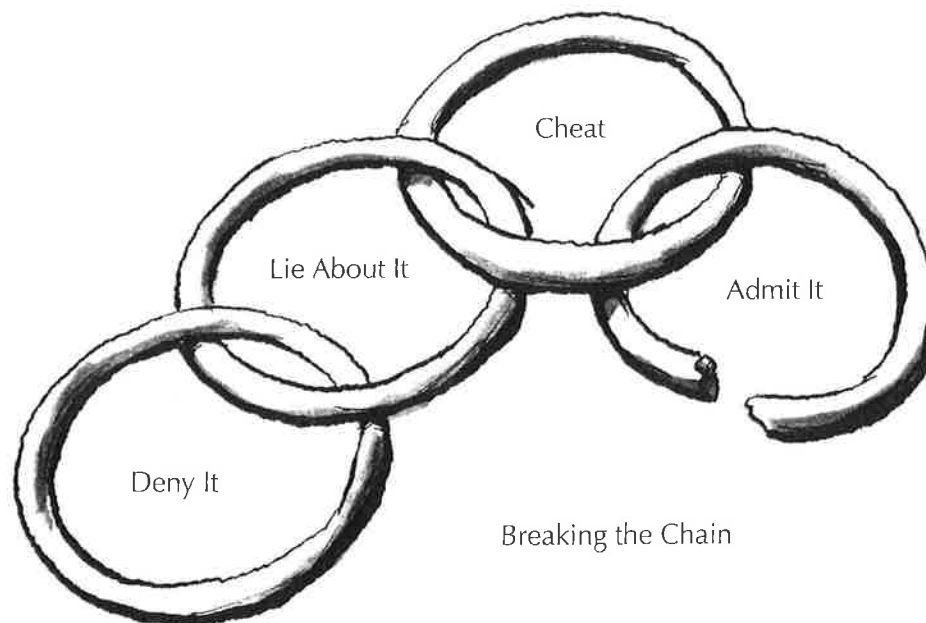
about or deny what you did, you're adding another link. Admitting it breaks the chain.

2. Let yourself feel guilty. But be aware of what kind of guilt you feel. If your guilt leads you to look in the mirror, admit what you did, and feel sorry for it, you'll grow from your experience. If your guilt makes you turn away from the mirror in shame and self-loathing, get help.

3. Talk with a caring, understanding adult or friend. Explain what happened and how you feel. Get professional help if you need it. Talking about wrongs and mistakes can be healing. You might ask for advice, if that seems appropriate. Then do what you think is best.

4. Say you're sorry and ask the person you wronged to forgive you. Be sincere. And be prepared; the person might throw a tomato in your face. It's not your problem if the person doesn't accept your apology. You can't control what he or she says, does, or feels. You can only control what *you* say, do, or feel. Try not to get angry if the person doesn't immediately respond the way you'd like. Forgiveness takes time. However, most people will soften if you ask for forgiveness and really mean it.

5. Accept the consequences of what you did—unless they seem unjust. Then you have the right to be assertive and work for a better solution. *Example:* You steal \$10 from the cash register in the school cafeteria. Someone sees you and reports you to the



Breaking the Chain

Principal, who calls you into his office and confronts you. You say "What I did was wrong. I'm really sorry, and I'll pay it back. Please forgive me. I won't ever do it again." The principal gives you a date by which he expects you to pay back the money. He also gives you a month's worth of detentions. And you know that you've lost his trust and respect and will have to earn them back—if you can. Those consequences are fair.

But what if the principal makes you pay the money back *and* expels you from school for the rest of the year? Those consequences aren't fair. Ask a parent, teacher, or counselor for help. If you're convicted of breaking the law, get a lawyer. If you can't afford to pay for a lawyer, ask the court to appoint one for you. You have the right to expect fair and just consequences for what you did.

6. Do what you can to make things right. Give back the money. Paint over the graffiti. Tell the truth about a friend. Admit that you cheated, then take the test over—or accept a failing grade.

7. Try to find a way to serve the person you hurt. If this isn't possible, do kindnesses for other people.

If you have a faith tradition that encourages you to look to a higher power, ask that higher power for forgiveness. Ask for the strength not to repeat the wrong or mistake. Ask for patience if the person you hurt hasn't forgiven you.

9. Forgive yourself. Don't bad-mouth yourself or carry around a load of guilt. This can make you sick in your mind and your body. Sometimes it's easier to forgive others than it is to forgive yourself. When you forgive yourself, you can learn from your actions and mistakes. You're free to use your energy to keep growing and becoming the kind of person you want to be.

Character Dilemmas

For journaling or writing essays, discussion, debate, role-playing, reflection

Suppose that . . .

1 Your sister steals money from your room. You go through all the steps of forgiving others, but she won't cooperate. She just keeps stealing from your room. What might you do?

2 You're jealous of a big guy on the football team, and you want to replace him on first string. So you lie and tell the coach and everyone else that he's muscular because he uses steroids. He gets dropped from the team, and you feel terrible about it. You finally go to him, tell him what you did, and ask his forgiveness. He punches your lights out. What might you do? Fight back? Tell the coach? Let it go? Try to make things right? Predict and evaluate the results of each action.

3 A man is mistakenly identified as a murderer and sent to prison for life. He knows he's innocent, and the real killer is still on the loose. What might the man do with his life? Is it possible for him to get justice? How can he free himself from his own anger and the injustice committed against him?

4 Your best friend is driving home from school one day when she's broadsided by a drunk driver. As a result of the accident, she loses the use of her legs and must spend the rest of her life in a wheelchair. What are some specific things you might do to help your friend overcome the anger and hatred she feels for the drunk driver?

5 You're taking a math test when you happen to gaze to your right. You're lost in thought, and you're not even aware that your head is turning; in fact, you don't even see anything. But your teacher notices, walks over to your desk, looks at your paper, looks at the paper of the person sitting on your right, and accuses you of cheating because your answers happen to match. You tell the truth—you weren't cheating—but she doesn't believe you. She tears up your paper in front of the class and announces that you'll be getting an F. What might you do to release yourself from the anger you feel toward your teacher?

6 An elderly widow in your neighborhood has just lost her home. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has taken it because, they claim, her husband didn't pay income taxes for 20 years. How might she handle her anger toward the IRS—and her dead husband? What might she do? In your opinion, were the IRS's actions fair and just?

7 One of your friends is shot in the arm by a gang member for warning the police about a gang fight. The police can't prove that the gang member