

# Dilworth Elementary Character Education

## Caring (December)

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**Pre teach:** Tell the students that you are glad to be back today and that you will be discussing this month's trait caring with them. Ask the following questions and call on different students for answers. Below each question are examples of the type of responses you are looking for. You may need to rephrase the student's answers or guide them along.

(Ask) **What does it mean to be caring?**

1. Showing concern for the well being of others.
2. Using your words and actions to help someone.
3. Giving of yourself without expecting anything in return.

(Ask) **What are some words that describe the character trait of caring?**

1. Kindness
2. Thoughtful
3. Sharing,
4. Helping
5. Understanding

(Ask) **What are some ways we can demonstrate caring?**

1. Give to help others in need. For example: collect canned goods for local food pantries, donate gently used clothing and toys, send a card of encouragement to someone who is sick.
2. Show respect to people, property, animals, and the environment.
3. Be kind to everyone and do not exclude others from activities you are doing.
4. Listen to what others have to say.
5. Be helpful in all situations, at school, home and in your community.

(Ask) **Why is it important to be caring towards others?**

1. To make someone else feel better.
2. Helps us to feel good about ourselves.
3. We learn compassion for other and to look beyond our own needs.
4. May inspire others to be caring too.
5. Makes the world a better place.

**Book:** Read and discuss a book that teaches a lesson about caring.

**Activity:** Complete an activity to go along with your lesson (Activity suggestions attached)

**Closing comment:** What's important in life is how we treat each other. At our school caring is the rule!

**Make just one person happy each day and in forty years you will have made 14,600 people happy for a little time, at least. ~Charles Willey**

## Caring Activities

### The Caring Chair – All Dilworth K Classes

**Materials:** None

Bring a chair up to the front of the classroom and tell the students it will temporarily be known as the “Caring Chair.” Invite students to come up one at a time to sit in the chair and give an example of a way to show caring—at school, at home, or in the community.

### Waves of Kindness – All Dilworth 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Classes

**Materials:** Beach ball

After you have discussed ways to be caring towards others, explain that one of the nicest things about caring for others is that they’re likely to be kind to you in return. Suppose you threw this beach ball into the ocean. The ball would return to you, no matter how hard or far you threw it. The waves would keep rolling in, and before you knew it, the beach ball would come bobbing back to shore. Kind words and action are just like that. You toss them out, and before you know it, someone says or does something to show that he or she cares about you.

**Caring makes the world a better place for everyone.** Throw the beach ball to a student, have them share a caring action, and throw it back to you. (*Being Your Best*, Barbara Lewis)

### The Caring Tree – All Dilworth 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Classes

**Materials:** construction paper leaves – at least two for each student, poster board or large paper, tape or glue stick

Have each student write a “caring” comment or compliment about another classmate on a leaf. For example: Jill was kind to our new student, or Jack cares for our class when he volunteers to pick up trash. Draw a tree on a large piece of butcher block paper or poster board. Have the students take turns reading their leaves and sticking them on the tree. (To ensure that all students are included, you may want to divide the class into small groups and have the group members write a comment for each other.) (*The Best of Character*, D. Hodgins)

### Changing the Flavor – All Dilworth 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Classes

**Materials:** Two clear drinking glasses or cups, about a cup of dirt, milk, chocolate milk mix, and two spoons.

The theme of this activity is: Make the world a better place. Explain to the students that milk tastes good (hold up a glass of milk), but it tastes even better when you turn it into chocolate milk. What if you didn’t have chocolate milk mix, so you decided to add something that looks kind of like chocolate milk mix instead? Like dirt? (Stir in spoonfuls of the dirt until the milk it looks brownish). Ask the class if they think the dirt will make the milk taste better. Of course not! To make something better, we don’t go through the motions. We have to actually add the good stuff. Let’s get rid of this other stuff and add some of the real chocolate mix to our milk. (Take the other glass of milk and add the mix.). Have a sip. Yum...this is delicious! The same way chocolate can make milk taste better, we can make our world better. If we see uncaring actions and don’t say or do anything, is it like simply adding dirt to our milk? When we make sure to show caring, kindness, compassion, helpfulness, and consideration for others, we can make a positive difference. **Remember to add the good flavor of “caring” into our world and make it a better place for everyone.** (*Object Talks*, by Verna Kokmeyer)

## Caring Activities (continued)

### The Color of Caring – All Dilworth 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Classes

**Materials:** Two large clear drinking glasses or cups, blue food coloring, plastic spoon, bleach

Fill one of the glasses about a quarter full of water. Fill the other glass a little more than half with bleach. Put one or two drops of food coloring into the glass of water. Stir the water to distribute the color. Explain that the blue water represents how someone who is hurting, sad, or lonely might feel on the inside. You've probably all heard the phrase "feeling blue." This person is truly feeling sad and blue. But if we take the time to be caring and kind to someone who is sad, we make a difference in their lives. Hold up the glass of bleach and say that this represents "caring." Then pour it into the colored water. By caring for others, look at the difference we can make in how others feel. Watch as the water slowly starts to turn back to clear. (While you wait—it will take about a minute—you might discuss ways we can show caring to others. How can we care for others who are having a tough day, frustrated, sad, or lonely?) **Clearly you can make a difference by caring for others!**

### Caring Acrostic – All Dilworth 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Classes

**Materials:** White board and dry-erase marker

Write this quote on the board: "When you are kind to others, it not only changes you, it changes the world." ~Harold Kushner. Discuss with the class the meaning and personal application of this quote in their lives.

Write the letters C-A-R-I-N-G so the letters run down the left side of the white board. Ask students to come up with caring-related words that begin with C-, A-, etc. (Possibilities: Compassion, Consideration, Cooperation, Comfort, Acceptance, Affection, Respect, Readiness, Interest, Interacting, Involvement, Inviting, Nurturing, Giving, etc.) Look over the many options for your acrostic. These are the many caring ways we each want others to approach us, and how we should aim to treat others in the world.

## Additional Caring Activity Options

### Cards of Caring (Suggested for all grades) – All Dilworth Classes may do this!

**Materials:** None

Have students write notes of appreciation and encouragement to someone in the school (teachers, the principal, cafeteria workers, office staff, bus drivers). Encourage them to suggest who in the school does helpful and caring work and would appreciate being thanked. Arrange with the classroom teacher to have the students personally deliver their caring cards.

### Camille and the Sunflowers (Suggested for grades K–3)

**Materials:** *Camille and the Sunflowers* book, images of van Gogh's Sunflowers series (shown from an art book, online, or another source of your choosing), optional: a yellow construction paper "sunflower petal" for each student; a tall green stem and flower center drawn on butcher paper or poster board; tape or a glue stick.

Vincent Willem van Gogh was a Dutch post-Impressionist painter who lived in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Show images of Van Gogh's sunflowers. Ask: What kind of feeling do the paintings give the students? Do the bright yellows seem happy? Tell the students how the color yellow

represented happiness and friendship to van Gogh.

Read aloud Laurence Anholt's book *Camille and the Sunflowers*. Discuss with the students: How did Camille and his family act when Vincent van Gogh moved to their town? Were they caring and accepting of him, interested in him and in what made him special and different? How did Camille's friends and the rest of the townspeople act toward van Gogh? How did their uncaring actions lead to his eventually moving away? How can we welcome new students and neighbors and show them caring?

Optional: Pass out yellow sunflower petals to the students and ask them to write a caring act that would make a stranger or new friend feel welcome. Ask students to read aloud their caring ideas and attach each one to the sunflower center.

**The Torn Heart** (Suggested for grades K–3)

**Materials:** Large paper heart (or two; see option for rereading and changing the story, below), masking or painter's tape for taping the heart to your chest

Ask students to suggest what they think "self-esteem" means. (What a person thinks of their worth; positive or negative feelings about ourselves; etc.) How do they think self-esteem might be affected by how others treat us, whether kindly or unkindly? Can showing caring to someone boost that person's self-esteem? Hold up the paper heart and explain that every person starts out in life thinking he or she is important—someone who thinks important thoughts, who has important feelings, someone who matters. This whole heart is the heart of someone who feels cared for and important. Now tape the paper heart to your chest and tell students you will tell them a story about a day in the life of a young person about their age.

Read the story "The Torn Heart." Each time you hear an uncaring statement in the story, dramatically rip a piece off the heart off your chest and drop it to the ground. You may ask the students to cue you about when to tear the heart by giving you a thumbs-down sign when something uncaring happens in the story.

### THE TORN HEART

One Tuesday morning, when the alarm clock rang, Pedro didn't feel well and did not get out of bed.

Twenty minutes later, his older brother Carlos pounded loudly on his door. "You're such a lazy lump," he said. *RIP* "Get up. You'll be late for school again."

"But I'm sick," Pedro said.

"Why do you always act like a baby?" Carlos said. *RIP* "Get out of bed! The bus will be here any minute."

Pedro quickly put on his clothes—reaching for the first thing he could find—and went to the kitchen to grab something to eat. "Grab an apple and go," his mother said. "If you weren't so lazy *RIP* you could have had a decent breakfast. Sometimes I think your father is right; you'll never amount to anything." *RIP*

Carlos stormed around the kitchen, grumbling about how Pedro always caused him trouble. *RIP*

"Wait for Pedro," their mother said.

"I don't want to even be seen with him. Do you see what he's wearing?" Carlos asked. *RIP*

The boys made it to the bus just in time, with Pedro following behind his older brother. But as the doors of the bus closed and it started rolling, Pedro remembered he had left his homework in his bedroom.

Pedro asked the bus driver if he would wait while he went back to get his homework. "What are you, kid,

crazy? *RIP* This isn't a taxi. Anyway, that's what you get for being late." *RIP*

When Pedro got to school, he told his English teacher that he had left his homework at home. She said, "Have you really done your work? I'm beginning to think you're lying. *RIP* I had your sister in my class and she was a better student than you are." *RIP*

Pedro liked to play sports but he hated gym class, where he was the smallest of all the boys. And to make it worse, in his rush in the morning he had forgotten his gym clothes, so he had to wear something from the lost and found box. That day, they were supposed to play basketball, which was Pedro's very worst sport of all. The teacher asked the kids to divide themselves into two teams, the Lions and the Tigers. Within a few minutes, there were ten boys on each team, with only Pedro left. *RIP*

The captain of the Lions team said: "We don't want him—he's no good." *RIP*

"He's no Tiger. He's more like a scaredy cat," *RIP* said the captain of the Tigers. And the other boys laughed and meowed. *RIP* "Look, he doesn't even have real gym clothes," another boy said. *RIP* "Yeah (sarcastically), you're looking mighty fine, Pedro. NOT." And everyone laughed again.

Finally, the teacher assigned Pedro to a team, the Lions. But he sat on the bench for the whole time because the captain never put him in the game. *RIP*

Ask the students how much of Pedro's heart—his self-esteem and good feelings about himself—is left after just one day of others being uncaring toward him. Then reread all or part of the story, identifying alternative ways and caring ways others could act toward Pedro that would keep his heart intact. How differently would Pedro feel after a day when others were simply more caring and supportive of him? (If you have brought a second heart, bring it out before the alternate reading, so students can see that their caring changes keep the heart in one piece.) Ask the students to think of simple but important ways to care for and support others, keeping their hearts in one piece. Ask: Might those around us be more likely to show *us* caring when we need it, if we have shown them kindness and support?

(Adapted from: Roerden, L. P. (2000). *Don't laugh at me. Teachers guide: Grades 6-8. Creating a ridicule-free classroom. Educators for Social Responsibility*, New York, NY, 20-21.)

**Caring Hands** (Suggested for grades 3–5)

**Materials:** One quarter, a very cold empty glass bottle (small soda bottles work well—bring two so you can do the demonstration twice)

Begin by explaining to the class that when people feel lonely or are hurting they may feel cold and sad on the inside, just like your bottle friend here. (Set your bottle on the table and give it a name. Wet the top of the bottle and place the coin on it, so there are not any gaps.) But when we reach out to them with caring and kindness (place your hands on the bottle to begin warming it) by using our hands to offer help or to share what we have with them, we can make them feel better. They will most likely show their appreciation and say thank you.

Tell the students to listen as your bottle friend wants to say thanks for your caring hands that warmed him/her up. (The bottle will make clicking noises as your hands warm the glass, which causes the expanding air to force its way out and push past the coin. The coin drops down with a click after each blip of air. Readjust coin as needed to prevent gaps.) **Caring hands are helping hands!**

**Unless otherwise noted, lessons above came from *The Parent/Community Connection in the Classroom: Connecting your classroom to parents, community, and character education*, Julie L. Gaines, 2005 (Reproduction is permissible for school use only).**