

# Dilworth Elementary Character Education

## Hope (May)

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**Pre-teach:** Greet the students and tell them that today you will be discussing the trait hope. Ask the following questions and call on different students for answers. Listed below each question are examples of potential responses. You may need to rephrase the students' answers or guide them along.

(Ask) **What does it mean to have hope?**

1. Believing you will be successful.
2. Believing that what you desire is possible.
3. Being optimistic and positive about your future.

(Ask) **How can you demonstrate hope?**

1. Having a positive attitude, even when facing difficult situations.
2. Being willing to work hard and always doing your best.
3. Pursuing your goals and following your dreams.
4. Helping and encouraging others when they are down.
5. Practicing your faith or beliefs.

(Ask) **Who are some people we know who show hope?**

1. Your parents, grandparents, schoolteachers, and staff.
2. Friends or family members who are dealing with illness or a difficult situation.
3. Helen Keller, Henry Ford, Anne Frank, Martin Luther King Jr., Thomas Edison, Harriet Tubman, Mother Teresa, and others.

**Book:** Read and discuss a story that teaches a lesson about the trait hope.

**Activity:** Complete an activity to go along with your lesson. (Activity suggestions are attached.) You can incorporate your activity into the lesson at any time.

**Closing comment:** Read the following poem:

Hope is believing your dreams will come true,  
It's knowing you'll be successful in all that you do.  
You will need to work hard and have patience too,  
But when you have hope each day is brand new.  
Have hope for your tomorrow!

**"Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadow. It's what sunflowers do."  
—Helen Keller**

## Hope Activities

### **Do What the Sunflowers Do—Dilworth Kindergarten Classes**

**Materials:** A paper plate, scissors, crayons or markers, green construction paper, glue, and popsicle sticks

Refer back to the Helen Keller quote on page one of this packet and ask the students how sunflowers can remind us to be positive. As they grow, do they face the sun? You may want to talk about sun-related sayings about positivity and hope, like “having a sunny personality” and “walking on the sunny side of the street.” Ask the students how they might try to be positive and have hope even on a cloudy day. How can we be like sunflowers even when we aren’t having our happiest day?

Ask students to decorate a paper plate to look like a sunflower and then attach it to a popsicle stick. The students can also cut out small leaves to glue on the sides of the popsicle stick.

### **Lighten Up!—Dilworth 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Classes**

**Materials:** Dark sunglasses

If possible, begin by entering the classroom wearing the sunglasses. Exclaim that it is really dark in here. Everything is so dark, even the walls, desks, and students look dark. I wonder why that is? (Someone will likely state that you have on dark glasses.) Your response: “Oh, I guess that’s true. I don’t really need glasses in here. I just left them on because it was easier than taking them off.”

Take off the glasses and exclaim over more clearly seeing all of the students’ smiling faces, their bright classroom, etc. Ask if they have ever known someone who talked as if they always had on dark glasses. Someone who always looks on the dark side of everything isn’t much fun to be around. Instead of being happy with the sunshine, she is worried because it might rain tomorrow. Instead of being glad to be at school today, he is stressed about an upcoming assignment or whether or not he will win the game tonight. For some people, it’s easier to be unhappy than it is to be happy.

Try to recognize if you feel yourself having a moment or a day where you’re “wearing dark glasses.” (Try on the glasses again.) If you have on dark glasses, you may not be able to see all the good things in your future.

We demonstrate the character trait of hope by keeping a positive outlook and believing that we will be successful. Everyone has a problem from time to time, some big, some small. Don’t let problems keep you from feeling the joy that hope can bring, not only to yourself, but to others around you. If you take off your dark glasses, you can be a ray of hope and sunshine to yourself and everyone around you!

(Kokmeyer, Verna. (2001). *Object Talks for Any Day*. Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing.)

### **Finding the Bright Side—Dilworth 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Classes**

**Materials:** None

Ask the students: Is there a bright side to every problem? Ask them for a few examples of a problem with a bright side. (You broke your arm and couldn’t play your favorite sport, but because you needed to rest, you found a book you loved? A camping trip was canceled, but you spent a rainy weekend playing games you had forgotten about with your family and had unexpected fun?) Remind the students that sometimes you may have to work to find something happy and hopeful when a bad thing happens or when things are rough.

## Hope Activities, continued

Tell them: Let's work together to find the bright side of a problem. You accidentally broke your family's TV set. What are three good things that might happen as a result? (Your family might spend more time doing things together, like playing games; you might do something constructive or creative instead like build, draw, play music, or read; you could learn how to earn money to help pay for the repairs and feel proud of your hard work mowing lawns or selling lemonade.)

What are things you can do when you just aren't feeling hopeful or optimistic? (Talk to a guidance counselor, a friend, or a parent; rely on faith if you are religious; remind yourself of other hard times you came through; take deep breaths and allow time to pass; don't give up.)

(Adapted from: Mannix, Darlene. *Character Building Activities for Kids*. (2002) San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.)

### **The Top Ten Reasons for Hope—Dilworth 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Classes**

**Materials:** Poster board, marker

Work together as a class to come up with ten (or more) reasons why it is important and helpful to have hope. (Explore ideas such as your effect on others, the way you wake up in the morning and how optimism or pessimism changes your day, and how hope can help you do your best.) Write them on a poster board and display them in the classroom. Example: Our Top Ten Reasons For Hope Are...

1. It makes you a stronger person.
  2. You help and encourage others.
  3. You will accomplish more in life.
- Etc.

(Adapted from: Dotson, Anne C. and Karen D. Dotson. (1997). *Teaching Character: Teacher's Idea Book*. Chapel Hill, NC: Character Development Group, Inc.)

### **Keeping Up Hope Even When It's Tough—Dilworth 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Classes**

**Materials:** None

Ask the students to talk about what optimism, hope, and positivity mean to them. Are they sometimes connected to perseverance and inner strength? How?

Then ask: Does every bad situation have a good side to it? Has anything bad ever happened, then something unexpectedly good happened as a result? Ask students to share examples. Then ask: Is the bright side of a problem sometimes the fact that you're able to overcome or get through the problem, and you learn how strong you are?

Share with the students: It often takes time and some effort to find a good or hopeful part of a *tragic* situation—something truly awful, a death, or a serious illness. And sometimes the only hopeful side is realizing your own strength after sadness or disappointment. When you face something that's really tough, after a time you find that you can be happy and glad again, or you can be proud that you're moving on. Realizing this can help you keep up hope the next time you face a big problem.

Ask the class to think of people who kept up their hope after either a small setback or a life-altering tragedy. (Civil rights workers after the death of Martin Luther King, Jr.; someone who has lost a parent or loved one; a student who failed the first test but was able to bounce back and do her best; or a baseball player who didn't get a hit all season until the very last game.) Ask them to share what the hope of those people can teach *us* about optimism and believing better things will come.

**Listen Up! —Dilworth 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Classes**

**Materials:** Current popular kids' music and a method to play it: phone, iPod, or other music player

Check into the music kids are listening to lately and find examples of optimistic and hopeful lyrics and others without them. Bring in the music and play it for the class. Have the students listen to and discuss the lyrics. Determine whether or not they offer a message of hope. Discuss how words in the music we listen to can influence our thoughts and actions.

## Additional Hope Activity Options

Feel free to add one of these activities to your lesson or replace your grade's assigned lesson with one below.

**Hopeful Situations** (Suggested for all grades)

**Materials:** None

Ask the students to consider the situations below and to think of a hopeful or optimistic response or two for each situation. You may pose the situations to groups of students or to the class as a whole. You may also want to ask students to suggest additional challenges or tough situations and provide hopeful responses or reactions.

1. Your family is moving to a new city. (You will meet new friends; you will have new experiences.)
2. The movie you wanted to see is sold out. (You can do something else together.)
3. Your team is going to play a tough game this week. (You can try harder than ever to play your best; you can be proud of working hard, whether you win or lose.)
4. You need to save \$100 to go to camp. (You can open a lemonade stand, organize a yard sale of your toys, water a neighbor's plants, or do other work that makes you proud and earns money.)
5. Your teacher asked you to redo a report that you didn't do correctly. (You get a second chance; you can make the report better than ever; you can improve your grade.)

**Act It Out!** (Suggested for all grades)

**Materials:** None

Have the students work in small groups and role play situations where *they* demonstrate giving hope to *others*. Examples of some situations to explore are: another student does poorly on a test, someone has to move away, another student has a mom who is sick, another student may be afraid to give a speech in class, or another student did not make the team. Have the groups each act out their situations in front of the class.

Older students might also enjoy discussing the meaning of the following quote from an unknown author: When the world says "Give up!" hope whispers, "Try it one more time." Discuss how hope can be transformed into action and achieving goals. When you hope for something, you're wishing for it to happen. Ask the students: How does hoping for something make it more likely that it will happen? (When you hope, you may try harder or longer to make it happen; you might look for more chances to reach your goal; you might be friendlier and therefore others may offer to help you reach your goal; etc.)