

# Lesson Two

## The Right Character Produces Positive Outcomes

### PURPOSE/OBJECTIVE

Students will learn the meaning of character and why positive character is important. They will learn the difference between character and personality. They will be able to determine the difference between right and wrong character. They will also learn the benefits that can come from maintaining a positive character as well as the consequences that come as a result of assuming a negative character.

### MATERIALS

- R Copies of pages 13-14, 17
- R Writing paper and pen/pencil

### PROCEDURE

1. Review Lesson One entitled “**Heads Up**” by asking students to share what they learned from that lesson. (*Answers will vary.*) Remind students of the purpose of the PSCEP found in procedure 11 of Lesson One. Tell students that today’s lesson will focus on how to develop positive character and to recognize the difference between right and wrong behavior. Explain to students that in order to understand how to develop positive character, they need to learn about personality as well because personality and character can be easily confused.
2. Ask students to define **character**. **Character** is *the combined traits, qualities, characteristics, and behavior that form the unique nature of a person*. It is the means by which we distinguish between right and wrong. It defines who you are and the type of future you will have. It is the combination of morals and beliefs that dictates how we treat others, our environment, and ourselves. It is the basis on which every thought, action and decision is made.

3. Explain to students that a person's character is his profile, describing the kind of person he truly is. Positive character is a guide or code of conduct to live by. Tell them that positive character will promote a lifestyle free of fear, violence, hatred, and crime. Improvements made in their personal character will enhance their quality of life. It will better enable them to cope with prison life. It will help them to solve problems and conflicts without violence. In fact, positive character will stop them from committing crimes or acts of violence ever again. It will keep them out of prison.

4. Ask students to discuss examples of both right/positive and wrong/negative character traits. Give them a copy of the handouts on pages 13-14 and discuss why these could lead to a positive or negative character.

5. Ask students to define **personality**. *Personality is the combination of our personal preferences, social skills, attitude, and the sum total of our likes and dislikes.* It helps us to relate to others. Ask students how character compares to personality. Read "**How Does Character Compare To Personality?**," found on pages 15-16. Give students a copy of the "**Personality Evaluation**" found on page 17 and allow them time to take the evaluation.

6. Explain to students that moral principles separate and distinguish character from personality. Moral principles clearly separate right from wrong. They are the foundation of positive character. Define **morals** as *principles or beliefs that govern the way people think and behave.* Tell students that morality is broken down into three categories of behavior and attitude towards:

- a. All life— understanding that it is valuable.
- b. The environment—how we care for it.
- c. The property of others—recognizing that everyone owns things and that there are inherent rights of ownership.

7. Ask students what some factors that shape personality are. (*Answers should include: heredity, values—principles or qualities that one considers to be important or worthwhile, environment—culture, family, up-bringing, customs, and community.*)

8. **Activity #1**—Divide the students into small groups and have them brainstorm some consequences of negative or bad character in prison.

Provide the following topics to be discussed.

- a. Negative peer pressure
- b. Extortion of personal and/or commissary items
- c. Contractual hits, murders arranged by gangs
- d. Drug possession and trafficking
- e. Being physically aggressive towards others
- f. Disrespect for authority
- g. Lack of self-control
- h. Rape

Discuss how these consequences affect others including the inmates and the prison operation.

9. Tell students that the very first step to producing positive character in a person is self-examination and evaluation.

- a. They must examine their own life histories as they relate to their upbringing, quality of life, environment, level of education, situations pertaining to abuse, neglect, addictions, and associations.
- b. Identify and define character flaws, weaknesses and strengths. Discuss possible causes as well as reasons why the flaws continue to exist.
- c. Have students replace negative character traits with positive ones (character strengths). This can be accomplished by controlling desires, destructive habits, negative attitudes, emotions, and thoughts. For example, being easily angered could be replaced with thinking about the other person's circumstances and how you would like to be treated if you were in his position.

10. **Activity #2**—Have students make their own list of character strengths and weaknesses. This will make the students become aware of what behaviors they need to improve.

11. Ask students to identify some of the benefits of using positive character in prison. (*Answers may include: possible early release from prison for great behavior, entitled to more privileges, more opportunities to participate in prison progress, ability to avoid or resolve conflicts without violence, will have more self-control, reduced prison violence and be better able to cope with it, and reduced recidivism.*)

12. **Activity #3**—Read the scenario found on **pages 18-19**. Have students identify character strengths and weaknesses. Ask students what changes

in Joe's character would they make to produce a more peaceful, positive outcome.

13. Conclude the lesson by reminding students what it means to have a positive character and the benefits of having a right character.

# Positive Character Traits

The following is a list of positive character traits. Read them carefully. Check column A if they are part of your character. Check column B if you would like to develop these traits.

| Positive Trait       | Definition   | A | B |
|----------------------|--|---|---|
| Educated             | Getting all the facts and making sure they are correct before making a decision.   |   |   |
| Responsible          | Always doing what is necessary to complete the task.   |   |   |
| Reliable             | Can be depended on in word and deed.   |   |   |
| Honest/Trustworthy   | Being fair, straightforward, sincere and keeping your promises.  |   |   |
| Patient              | Demonstrating self-control and remaining calm through setbacks.  |   |   |
| Steadfast/Persistent | When you are determined not to give up or change what you have set out to accomplish.  |   |   |
| Courageous           | The act of doing what needs to be done even when you are afraid.   |   |   |
| Disciplined          | Using self-control to behave in a proper way.  |   |   |
| Respectful           | To value others as important as yourself and to allow that to show through your actions and attitudes.   |   |   |
| Compassionate        | To care about the needs of others.   |   |   |
| Merciful             | To show leniency or tolerance even when others have behaved in a manner where they deserved to be given a consequence.                           |   |   |
| Forgiving            | To refrain from holding anger or resentment towards someone who has wronged you.   |   |   |
| Generous             | When you are kind enough to give of what you have in order to help someone else. This also includes giving of your time.                         |   |   |
| Humble               | Not proud or arrogant.   |   |   |
| Optimistic           | The ability to look on the bright side of things, and to find what is positive in a situation or event; to anticipate the best possible outcome. |   |   |
| Thankful             | To be appreciative of the benefits that you have received.   |   |   |
| Considerate          | Having regard for another's feelings.  |   |   |
| Modesty              | Not given to conceit. Showing decency in behavior, dress and speech.   |   |   |
| Loyalty              | Sincerity, faithfulness, devotion and a commitment to a person or cause.   |   |   |
| Self-control         | Not yielding to impulsive thoughts and actions.  |   |   |
| Decisive             | Able to come to a decision, make up one's mind and remain firm on the matter.  |   |   |

# Negative Character Traits

In contrast to the positive, beneficial character traits we just reviewed, negative character traits such as hatefulness, aggression, and disrespect are harmful to the individual and those around him. These traits promote immoral principles that negatively affect others and their possessions.

**The following is a list of negative character traits. Become familiar with them in order to eliminate them from your character.**

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Uneducated              | Making a decision without getting all the facts.   |
| Inconsiderate           | Thoughtless or insensitive towards the feelings and needs of others.   |
| Indifferent/Unconcerned | Uncaring and unsympathetic.  |
| Envious                 | To resent what someone has, at the same time wanting what he or she possesses.   |
| Impatient               | To be restless or short-tempered and easily aggravated.  |
| Uncompassionate         | A lack of concern for the needs of others.   |
| Hateful                 | An intense emotion that results in extreme dislike and hostility. Hate is derived from fear, anger, or perceived injury. |
| Unforgiving             | Unable to forgive others for wrongdoings. Cold-hearted.  |
| Revengeful              | To seek retaliation or to desire to get even.  |
| Deceitful               | To purposely mislead.  |
| Disrespectful           | Lacking courtesy, esteem or honor.   |
| Aggressive              | Hostile, violent behavior that can be both physical and verbal.  |
| Unreliable              | Cannot be depended on.   |
| Disloyal                | Unfaithful and uncommitted to a person or cause. Treacherous and deceitful.  |
| Dishonest/Untrustworthy | Unable to be trusted.  |
| Pessimistic             | Unable to see the positive side of a situation. Always thinking negatively.  |
| Indecisive              | Unable to commit to a decision.  |
| Irresponsible           | Not completing duties or tasks. Not accountable for one's actions.   |
| Arrogant                | Proud, overbearing, not humble.  |

# How Does Character Compare To Personality?

**N**ow that you have learned what character is and how it is developed, let's look at personality. Personality is what accounts for our individuality. Keep in mind that your personality style is made up of many different qualities, some of which are inherited, while others are learned. For example, have you ever noticed how even very young children can be very outgoing and outspoken, while others are very shy? These personality traits are inherited. On the other hand, people who spend time together can begin exhibiting similar mannerisms, likes and dislikes. The music you like best, the foods you like to eat, even what you like to do in your spare time are choices that help to define your personality. Many of these choices will be based on learned behavior.



Personality also helps us to relate to others and it is the basis on which we interact. When you initially meet someone you can either be attracted to or repelled by his personality. Consider for a moment what you notice about someone when you are first introduced. Is it their smile or choice in clothes? Does he seem cheerful and kind? Did you start a conversation and realize that you had many things in common, or was it simply his mannerisms that seemed appealing? After your first meeting, did you think to yourself, "He seemed like a really nice person"?

Personality is the combination of qualities in others that help us determine what type of relationship we are inclined to pursue. We may be automatically drawn to others with personalities that are compatible with ours. But what can personality tell us about someone's character? The fact that someone is comical and likes the color blue does not indicate if this person will uphold moral principles by respecting others and caring for their property.

Keep in mind that the combination of both personality and character paints an accurate picture of who we are and what we stand for. Individuals may have similar personalities, but opposite moral principles. For example, you and your next-door neighbor both like swimming, barbecues and playing Monopoly. However, the other day you saw him take a pack of gum from the gas station. When you confronted him he nonchalantly said, "What's the big deal? It's just a pack of gum, they won't go bankrupt." You were surprised at his answer, because stealing is something you would never do. Here is another example of how personality and character can be different. You and your friend may be honest, responsible and considerate but you like the color blue, she likes green. You are more laid-back, she is really adventurous.

# Personality Evaluation

Just what is your personality style and what personality traits do you prefer in others? Take the following evaluation to find out.

Read the following list of personality traits and circle the ones that best describe your personality. Check the ones that best describe the personality traits that you want in your friends.

## COMMON PERSONALITY TRAITS

|               |            |             |               |            |              |
|---------------|------------|-------------|---------------|------------|--------------|
| Funny         | Personable | Thoughtless | Careless      | Bold       | Lovable      |
| Adventurous   | Quiet      | Cute        | Down to earth | Adorable   | Conceited    |
| Humorous      | Rude       | Pleasant    | Amusing       | Appealing  | Sweet        |
| Sarcastic     | Kind       | Intelligent | Clever        | Smart      | Affectionate |
| Talkative     | Outgoing   | Reserved    | Nice          | Spiteful   | Boring       |
| Serious       | Organized  | Cunning     | Sly           | Nonchalant | Friendly     |
| Sophisticated | Sloppy     | Timid       | Crafty        | Cool       | Agreeable    |
| Spoiled       | Attractive | Talented    | Competitive   | Laid back  | Shy          |
| Cheerful      | Thoughtful | Sneaky      | Malicious     | Comical    | Hardworking  |

1. What did you learn about your own personality and the personality traits that you prefer in others? Do you choose friends who have the same or different personalities? Use the lines below to explain your answers.

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2. Along with the personality traits that you prefer in a friend, what character traits do you want in a friend and why? Use the lines below to explain your answer.

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# Scenario

Joe was serving a two to four year prison term in a minimum security classification housing unit. At no time during Joe's incarceration was he ever involved in any kind of altercation nor had he committed any violations. Prison officials thought that Joe was a model prisoner and was usually very cooperative. His living quarters were always clean and neat.

One day, Joe received a letter from his brother Tom, who informed him that his mother was hospitalized for an unknown illness and that she was in critical condition. In the letter, Tom asked Joe to call him for more information and a status update.

Joe's brother and mother lived in another state. Prison rules require a prisoner to submit an interview slip to social services for long distance calls. The letter was received Saturday evening and social services would not be opened until Monday morning. At that point, Joe became concerned about his mother's condition and seemed depressed over the matter. Joe did not want to wait until Monday to make his phone call, so, he asked the assigned Corrections Officers who worked his housing unit on Saturday evening and Sunday for their assistance. All the assigned Corrections Officers told Joe to wait until Monday and submit an interview slip to social services detailing his concerns. Joe, though not in agreement with the officers' responses, decided to leave the matter alone and wait until Monday. In the meantime, Joe became more concerned and frustrated about the situation.

On Monday morning, Joe asked the on-duty Corrections Officer for permission to go to social services to make a long distance phone call. At the time of Joe's request, the on-duty C.O. was on the phone and didn't acknowledge Joe's request. At that point, Joe became upset with the officer because his request was ignored. Once again, Joe interrupted the officer on the phone and asked to go to social services.

The officer placed the caller on hold, and told Joe, "No, not at this time. However, you can fill out an interview slip and return it to me when you're done and I'll see what I can do."

Joe yelled out, "I already filled one out!"

The officer responded, "All right, calm down! As soon as I finish this phone call I'll handle your situation."

Suddenly, Joe replied, in a harsh tone, "Say what? You don't understand, I need to go to social services now, or else!"

The Corrections Officer appeared unmoved with Joe's comments and continued his phone conversation. Joe lost control of himself and shouted obscenities at the officer. Joe also demanded to speak with a superior officer. The assigned Corrections Officer ignored his request. Joe then became irate and began cursing, and throwing the chairs all around the dayroom.

One of the chairs, thrown by Joe, accidentally hit inmate José in the arm. In retaliation, José began a fist-fight with Joe. José was known by Corrections Officials to be a leader of one of the prison's most notorious gangs. As the struggle ensued, an unidentified inmate came up from behind Joe and slashed him on the left side of his face with a razor type metallic object. Joe needed twenty sutures and was placed in protective custody. Joe then realized that his safety in prison was at jeopardy. He would always have a fear of retaliation by José and his gang members.