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# Strengths Building, Resilience, and the Bible: A Story-Based Curriculum for Adolescents Around the World

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# Strengths Building, Resilience, and the Bible: A Story-Based Curriculum for Adolescents Around the World

## **Abstract**

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Depression is the leading cause of illness and disability in adolescents worldwide. Resilience training, founded on principles of positive psychology, is correlated with lower depression and substance misuse in U.S. adolescents and military personnel. However, resilience training has focused primarily on secular interventions using western material. Religion is strongly correlated with lower depression and also with well-being in developing countries. Ninety percent of adolescents live in developing countries, and at least two-thirds are oral learners who prefer learning through stories and drama. This paper proposes a Bible story based curriculum that trains students in problem solving skills, character strengths, and both spiritual and secular research-tested principles for resilience and well-being. The Bible is available by audio recording in 751 languages and offers a broad base of archetypal stories for teaching resilience. The program is easily reproducible, culturally adaptable, respectful of all religions, and specifically crafted for oral learners. Through audio recordings to maintain fidelity, train the trainer programs for dissemination and support of national and community leaders, the proposed curriculum for Global Resilience Oral Workshops (GROW) has potential to lower depression and lift well-being in adolescents around the world.

## **Keywords**

Key words: resilience, religion, storytelling, character strengths, depression, adolescents, well-being, storytelling, GROW, global, oral, workshops, spirituality

## **Disciplines**

Curriculum and Instruction | Education | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Strengths Building, Resilience, and the Bible: A Story-Based Curriculum for Adolescents  
Around the World

Dana McDaniel Seale

University of Pennsylvania

A Capstone Project Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Applied Positive Psychology

Advisor: Dr. Daniel J. Tomasulo

August 1, 2014

Strengths Building, Resilience, and the Bible: A Story-Based Curriculum for Adolescents  
Around the World

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## Strengths Building, Resilience, and the Bible: A Story-Based Curriculum for Adolescents

### Around the World

In November of 2013, a remote indigenous community in Northern Brazil sent out a cry for help to government health workers. Suicide was taking place at epidemic proportions among their adolescents and, try as they might, they had no idea of how to stop it. As a result, the government brought in a physician, a psychologist, a sociologist, and a linguist who had once lived in the village. Together they dialogued with community leaders to try to come up with a solution. Professional recommendations were made, yet community leaders were ambivalent. Ultimately, the team that had been flown in flew back out with no solution set in motion (personal communication, March 30, 2014). To say the least, it was complicated.

Depression in general is complicated. Cross-cultural help for depression is more complicated. And, cross-cultural help for depression in extremely remote areas of the world is even more complicated. However, the need for help with depression in adolescents around the world is critical as depression is now the number one cause of illness in that population and suicide is the number three cause of death (WHO, 2014). Ninety percent of adolescents in the world live in developing countries, and more than two-thirds of these adolescents are oral learners (International Orality Network, 2014). Without programs adapted to their learning style and culture, these adolescents may never learn the very principles that could help them develop the resilience needed to prevent depression. This paper presents a global resilience program that is specifically designed to accommodate adolescent oral learners. It is culturally adaptable and incorporates principles that will enhance the spiritual and emotional well-being of participants in non-Western settings. The program is based on principles of positive psychology (Lopez,

Snyder, Magyar-Moe, Edwards, Pedrotti, Janowski, Turner, & Pressgrove, 2004; Seligman, 2011) and incorporates strategies for resilience training that have been tested and shown to lower depression and increase well-being and resilience in adolescents and adults (Reivich & Shatté, 2002).

The proposed curriculum is taught through active participation in storytelling and drama (Madinger, Eggers, & McClellan, 2007), open-ended questions, physical exercise, and ongoing practice of character strengths. Stories of archetypal resilience are taken from the Bible, a book that is widely respected at an international level and is available in over 751 languages in the world by audio recording.

Because religion and spirituality are highly correlated with well-being and lower depression (Newport, Witters, & Agrawal, 2012a), the program will add positive spiritual interventions to positive secular interventions to explore the impact that a combined effort might have in regard to resilience in an adolescent population. The proposed program is respectful of all religions and invites dialogue and brainstorming about the best ways to incorporate positive interventions within each given cultural context. Implementation will begin by using the presented curriculum (see Appendix A) with Brazilian adolescents in the city of Manaus, Brazil.

In order to offer a background of understanding of resilience training, the paper first offers an introduction to the history of Western secular positive psychology. It then discusses the study of human flourishing, resilience, and character strengths, and the increasing adaptation of these principles in schools around the world. Religion is discussed as a data-driven intervention for well-being and lower depression. The paper reviews the current pandemic of adolescent depression, the unique needs of oral learners, the rationale for teaching through stories and drama, and the availability of the Bible as a curriculum resource. Ultimately, the paper

recommends a “train the trainer” model and suggests that fidelity would be best facilitated through audio recordings of the stories. Also included is a complete 26-week curriculum for trainers (see Appendix A to view the lessons).

### **Introduction to Western Positive Psychology**

The GROW program that is presented in this curriculum is based on a strong foundation of positive psychology principles. Positive psychology, in turn, is deeply grounded in traditional psychology. An overview of traditional psychology and positive psychology will offer a clearer understanding of the progression of events that have taken place to lay the ground work for a new more comprehensive form of positive psychology. This new field of study takes a holistic approach to well-being, one that includes the importance of spiritual well-being (Pargament, Mahoney, Shafranske, Exline, & Jones, 2013).

“Psychology”, the “study of the ‘soul’ (spirit, life, breath),” was first coined by Melancthon of Germany in 1653 (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2014). At its core is the study of the mind and behavior. Over the centuries, the field has been built by researchers and therapists who have made significant contributions to a greater understanding of mental and emotional health. To name a few, German philosopher Wilhelm Wundt, also known as the father of psychology, was the first to designate psychology as an academic field of study (Blumenthal, 1980). American psychologist B. F. Skinner (1960) promoted the importance of treating the study of psychology as a field of science. Theories, he demonstrated through his work in laboratories, needed to be based on verifiable data through experimentation. Behavior, he believed, could be influenced through the use of positive and negative reinforcements. Abraham Maslow (1978) followed Skinner with studies on the positive potential of human growth. An individual’s highest need, he believed, was to self-actualize or to maximize personal

human capacity. Carl Rogers (2008) followed Maslow, introducing the importance of character in the healing process. He also believed in the importance of self-actualization, but believed that it was best facilitated through the relationship between the therapist and the client. Congruent or healthy clients were considered to be clients who were authentic and genuine. Good therapists were empathetic listeners who showed unconditional positive regard. Albert Ellis (1962) followed Rogers, introducing Rational Emotive Therapy. Through his therapy he showed the impact that beliefs had on emotions. Adversities, he showed, were activating events that ignited a belief about the problem, and the belief then led to emotional consequences. In order to counter this downward spiral of depression, he employed interventions such as thought disputation, problem solving, skills training, the use of powerful coping strategies, role playing, humor, and words of encouragement. Aaron Beck (1979) followed Ellis with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. While Beck believed that it was important for the therapist to show unconditional positive regard, as Rogers had, he also believed that the therapist should be more proactive. Rather than primarily offering empathy, the role of the therapist was to help the client identify erroneous thinking and replace it with alternative, more realistic ways of thinking.

Each of these progressive stages of development was important in helping Martin Seligman, the founding father of positive psychology, lay a foundation for the new study of human flourishing that he would come to call positive psychology (Seligman, 2011). Additionally, he and his colleagues would draw from the works of both Beck and Ellis in their work with resilience (Gillham, Reivich, Freres, Chaplin, Shatté, Samuels, & Seligman, 2007).

As president of the American Psychological Association (APA) in 1998, Seligman was very acquainted with the work of Skinner, Rogers, Beck and Ellis. At the same time, he was curious about a new approach to research. Rather than solely learning from what was going



wrong in life, he was interested in taking a more holistic approach in his research. Great life skills, he felt, could be learned from people who were truly thriving in life. How, he wondered, could people with an okay life learn to attain a great life? What could take them from a zero all the way to a ten? What made a life worth living? And what were the enabling conditions that led to a life of well-being (Seligman, 2011)? Out of these questions, he chose to focus his research for positive psychology in three different areas: principles of human flourishing (Seligman, 2011), principles of resilience against depression (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins 2009), and principles of well-being based on the identification and implementation of character strengths (Seligman, 2004). These will be discussed at length.

### **Principles of Human Flourishing: PERMA**

In his early years of research regarding positive psychology, Seligman focused on the concept of happiness. His primary goal was to study measurable pathways such as positive emotions, engagement, and meaning as potential variables that might increase happiness or life satisfaction (Seligman, 2002). Over time, however he discovered that “happiness” was tied too closely to mood. People in a cheerful mood, for instance, might score themselves highly on an assessment tool for life satisfaction while people in a negative or bad mood on a “not so good” day might score themselves very low in terms of satisfaction (Seligman, 2011). Ultimately, the pursuit of happiness was too elusive for Seligman. At the same time, the topic of human flourishing still fascinated him. As a result, he shifted his focus to a broader study of well-being.

Well-being is thought to consist of two dimensions: hedonic and eudaimonic (Park, 2013). Hedonic well-being refers to subjective well-being, or the part of well-being that is characterized by feeling good. In essence, hedonic well-being has high levels of positive emotions such as joy, elation, and excitement and low levels of negative emotions such as

sadness, or fear or anger. It also includes an overall sense of life satisfaction or “happiness” (Park, 2013). Eudaimonic well-being is the experience of good functioning (Park, 2013). It includes having a sense of purpose or meaning, practicing character strengths and virtues such as self-control and kindness, and is often derived from reaching high levels of mental engagement in work and play (Park, 2013). While hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being are different, they are also highly correlated and inter-related. Positive affect, for instance, is directly correlated to a sense of meaning and purpose (King, Hicks, Krull, & Del Gaiso, 2006). When people feel happy they also tend to feel a greater sense of meaning and purpose, and when people have a greater sense of meaning and purpose, they feel happier. In other words, practicing goodness leads to emotional feelings of goodness. In essence, “feeling” good and “doing” good have reciprocal impacts on each other.

Positive interventions are intentional exercises that have been shown to increase well-being (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009) and reduce depressive symptoms (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005; Seligman, 1992; 2002; 2011; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). One example of a positive intervention might be an exercise of gratitude, in which people think back at the end of the day about three things that went well and what caused each of them to go so well. Such positive interventions may lead to positive changes that have the potential to reach a critical mass or tipping point that in turn leads to a positive spiral (Fredrickson, 1998; 2000; 2001; 2004; 2009; Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002; Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008). In essence, they have the potential to initiate a positive cycle that may be self-sustaining over time (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005; Fredrickson et al., 2008,). In a more general sense, positive interventions have the potential to create a sort of well-being capital. In the same way that a

bank account grows through monetary deposits, a personal well-being account is able to grow through positive intervention deposits.

Seligman's fascination with a study of well-being began to attract other psychologists, and by the early 2000's, positive psychology was well on its way to becoming an important branch of the field of psychology (Seligman, 2011). Well-known leaders in the field, such as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990), Barbara Fredrickson (2001) and Ed Diener (Diener & Seligman, 2002), began to come alongside Seligman. Respect for this new field of science grew even stronger.

By integrating his own research with the work of others, Seligman created a construct for well-being. He selected five variables that could be enhanced through positive interventions. Putting them together, he created a concept he called PERMA (Seligman, 2011). PERMA is an acronym that stands for (P)ositive emotions, (E)ngagement, (R)elationships, (M)eaning, and (A)chievement. Also important to Seligman's construct was the fact that each of these selected variables could be studied and measured (Seligman, 2011). In line with Skinner's influence of experimental research (Skinner, 1938), testing and measurement of data were priorities for the new field, so each element of PERMA was repeatedly tested and measured.

### **Positive Emotions**

Positive emotions include joy, love and serenity. Researchers discovered that positive emotions have great benefits and are highly correlated with well-being. While depression may be viewed as a downward spiral of negative emotions, well-being offers just the opposite: an upward spiral of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2009). In some ways, positive emotions are like construction blocks for a flourishing life. Joy, love and serenity, for instance, broaden and build human thinking (Fredrickson, 2009). Joy sparks the urge to be creative and to play.

Interest sparks an urge to explore and learn. Positive emotions such as peace and serenity facilitate adaptivity to environments. Adaptivity, in turn, creates greater learning opportunities and accrual of resources and ultimately opens the possibility to future well-being. In essence, when people are in a good mood, they are more open to new possibilities and ideas (Fredrickson, 1998; 2001). The broadening function of positive emotions builds personal resources. These personal resources become important when encountering future challenges. For example, an adolescent who is joyful may have the urge to play soccer (broadened action), and so he engages in a game with his friend. As he plays soccer, he builds both physical resources (i.e., strong muscles, skills in falling, eye to hand coordination) and social resources (i.e. bonding with friends). These physical and social resources offer him greater opportunities in the future (i.e., more soccer games, better skills, and more friends.) And thus, an upward positive cycle is set in motion (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). Additionally, positive emotions have other benefits: students with greater positive emotions are more engaged in the classroom and have stronger coping strategies (Reschly, Huebner, Appleton, & Antaramian, 2008). Stronger coping strategies lead to greater resilience (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). Resilience helps prevent depression (Seligman et al., 2009). With these benefits in mind, the question then becomes: How can a person acquire more of these positive building blocks of emotion?

The list of exercises and habits in life that spawn positive emotions, though not exhaustive, is lengthy. Studies show, for instance, that an exercise as simple as taking time to imagine one's best self generates positive emotion (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Counting blessings versus burdens is correlated with positive emotions (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Humor creates positive emotions (Hughes, 2008). Although it would be too lengthy a discussion to elaborate on all the positive interventions that are being studied in regard to positive emotion,

significant attention in this section will be given to four: savoring, gratitude, physical exercise, and forgiveness. These interventions have been shown to be correlated with lowering depression and will be included in the proposed curriculum.

**Savoring increases positive emotions.** Savoring is the act of allowing goodness to be fully absorbed (see Appendix B for examples) and is highly correlated with positive emotions (Bryant & Veroff, 2005) and with lowered depression when used in positive psychotherapy (Seligman, Rashid & Parks, 2006). Savoring may come from being truly mindful of past, present, or future experiences (Bryant, 1989). Anticipatory savoring, for instance, is the experience of looking forward to a future joy, such as a good meal or an upcoming vacation. Savoring in the moment is the heightening of one's attention in the present in order to enjoy a pleasure, such as the beauty and experience of a sunset or the aroma of baking bread. Reminiscent savoring involves reflecting on positive moments from the past, such as a previous vacation or special event. However, taking time to smell the roses, write a thank-you note, or plan a vacation has more impact than just creating positive emotions. Savoring is also correlated with greater self-confidence, a greater tendency to be outgoing in relationships, a greater sense of gratification, less hopelessness, and less neuroticism (Lyubomirsky, 2008).

Practicing savoring in everyday life often includes at least four different forms: basking, luxuriating, thanksgiving, and awe (Bryant, 1989). Basking and luxuriating are inwardly focused forms of savoring, while thanksgiving and awe are externally focused forms of savoring.

One inward form of savoring, basking, is pausing to enjoy the warmth and energy that come from achievement. In the same way that a person might bask in the sun on a spring day, allowing warmth to seep in deeply, so a person is able to bask in accomplishments by soaking in the joy of hearing his or her name called on a day of graduation, or hearing a boss give praise for

work well-done. Basking may come in the celebration of a victory, the acceptance of an award, or in the appreciation of a compliment, to name a few examples. Similarly, luxuriating is an inward form of savoring that involves the sensuous enveloping of oneself in the moment. It is enhanced through fully focusing and isolating one sense at a time. For example, it is sometimes experienced by closing one's eyes when inhaling a fragrance or listening to music. It comes from being fully present in the moment to experience the heightening of a sensual pleasure.

In terms of outwardly-focused savoring, thanksgiving is the reflection and appreciation of goodness. Savoring through thanksgiving often happens in prayers of thanksgiving, the writing of thank you notes, and journaling. It comes from an awareness of blessing and an attitude of gratefulness. Awe is the appreciation and sense of reverence for the vast and marvelous. This form of savoring is sometimes experienced when sitting in silence while staring at a beautiful view, such as the stars on a cloudless, dark night. It may also be experienced in reverence toward God in a worship experience. Awe is correlated with a sense of elevation (Haidt, 2006).

**Exercise increases positive emotions.** Physical activity is strongly correlated with psychological well-being and is an important positive intervention to help prevent depression (Mutrie & Faulkner, 2004). Exercise is also effective at improving mild to moderate symptoms of ongoing depression (Chu, Buckworth, Kirby, & Emery, 2009), and it is associated with reduced symptoms of anxiety, irritability, low vigor, and pain (Herring, Jacob, Suveg, & O'Connor, 2011). Progressive success in physical exercise may improve a sense of competency, autonomy, optimism, and self-esteem, which all are linked to well-being (Mutrie & Faulkner, 2004). It also promotes physical self-worth and other important physical self-perceptions such as positive body image (Mutrie & Faulkner, 2004). Exercise is particularly important for

adolescents; the World Health Organization recommends at least one hour a day of moderate to vigorous exercise for adolescents and states that only one in four adolescents in the world gets enough exercise. In some countries, one out of three is obese (WHO, 2014).

**Gratitude increases positive emotions.** Gratitude, a positive experience of thankfulness for the receiving of personal benefits (Kashdan, Uswatte, & Julian, 2006), is strongly correlated with positive affect (Kashdan et al., 2006; McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002) and self-esteem (Kashdan et al., 2006). Even after controlling for extraversion/positive affectivity, neuroticism/negative affectivity and agreeableness, gratitude is still highly correlated with well-being, pro-social behaviors, and spirituality. Gratitude seems to be experienced in various levels; while gratitude at a secular level leads to an overall sense of well-being, expressions of gratitude to God by people who are deeply religious show an even greater impact on well-being (Rosemarin, Pirutinsky, Cohen, Galler, & Krumrei, 2011). A two-week spiritually-integrated treatment program involving religious gratitude exercises showed dramatic decreases in stress, worry, and depression in a large religious sample (Rosmarin, Pargament, & Pirutinsky, 2010). Additionally, gratitude is correlated with lower depression (Stoeckel, 2013; Seligman et al., 2006) and highly correlated with satisfaction with life (Wood, Joseph, & Maltby, 2008). Taking time to offer thanksgiving for a meal, express appreciation to a co-worker, or text a note of appreciation to a friend are all acts that may have the potential to do as much emotionally for the giver as for the receiver.

**Forgiveness increases positive emotions.** Forgiveness is described as having four components: taking less personal offense, blaming the offender less, offering more personal and situational understanding of the offender, and offering more understanding toward oneself (Harris, Luskin, Benisovich, Standard, Bruning, Evans, & Thoresen, 2006). Studies show that

increases in forgiveness lead to increases in psychological well-being through a greater satisfaction with life, more positive mood, less negative mood, and fewer physical symptoms (Bono, Mc Culough, & Root, 2008).

Religion plays an important role in forgiveness. In a structural equation analysis of a national survey that included 1,629 participants, religiosity was correlated with greater forgiveness. Greater forgiveness was correlated with lower hostility, which in turn was correlated with better subjective health (Lutjen, Silton, & Flannelly, 2012). In one study of 146 Arab adolescents in Israel, half of the students were given a forgiveness intervention and half were not. Students in the forgiveness intervention condition reported increased empathy and greater reductions in endorsement of aggression, revenge, avoidance, and hostility than students in the control condition (Shechtman, Wade, & Khoury, 2009). In the Stanford Forgiveness Project, participants who were part of a forgiveness intervention experienced a decrease in feelings of hurt, a reduction in the physical symptoms of stress, including backache, muscle aches, dizziness, and upset stomach, an increase in optimism, and a reduction in long-term experience of anger (Harris et al., 2006).

### **Engagement**

Engagement, the second element of PERMA, is correlated with well-being. It is often referred to in the field of psychology as “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), an intrinsically rewarding and highly absorbing state in which an individual loses a sense of time and the awareness of self (Walker, 2010). It is the state of

“being completely involved in an activity for its own sake.

The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement,

and thought follows (follows or flows?) inevitably from the previous one.



Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990 p.1).

Although joy may not be experienced during the time period that a person is in a state of flow, joy and elation follow a state of flow or even the recall of the experience of flow. During flow, a person often functions at highest capacity (Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura, 2010). An individual typically reaches a state of flow when his/her skills adequately match the challenge of the task, i.e., when skillful and successful action become effortless, even when a great deal of physical or mental energy is being used (Csikszentmihalyi & Shernoff, 2008). In other words, when a task is not so easy that it is boring and not so complex that it is overwhelming, people in a state of flow stretch their skills to their limits to meet the challenging goal. In addition to the positive emotions generated by a sense of flow, engagement increases greater recall of information (Renninger, 2000) and is correlated with higher grades and greater test-taking skills (Csikszentmihalyi & Shernoff, 2008).

Flow is self-perpetuating in the sense that once people experience a sense of flow in their lives, they often crave it. Again, this initiation of positive emotional experiences can ignite an upward positive spiral (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002; Fredrickson, 2001). Setting positive cycles in motion is particularly important because these cycles may have the potential to counteract depression's downward pull and may constitute the essence of what makes positive change sustainable (Frederickson, 2001). Flow may be experienced both in a solitary manner and a social manner (Walker, 2010). Solitary experiences of flow include activities such as singing alone, running alone at sunset, or creating a watercolor painting. Social experiences of flow may be co-active (experiences that take place in a group) or interactive (experiences that cause participants to be actively dependent on one another to accomplish a task). Examples of co-

active flow include singing together, playing music together, walking together, and brainstorming together. Examples of interactive flow might be playing a soccer game, performing a drama, or dancing in interactive flow. People who are interacting are dependent on one another to reach a goal. Studies show that all three forms of flow offer joy (Walker, 2010). Joy, however, is greater when flow is experienced in a social context, and it is often maximized when interdependent activities are part of the experience. In addition, it is enhanced even more when conversation is at a high level (Walker, 2010).

### **Relationships**

Strong, loving relationships are highly correlated with well-being and human flourishing. They offer mutual understanding and validation (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008) and are correlated with life satisfaction (Peterson, 2006; Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). Happiness, in fact, is more highly correlated with good social relationships than it is with intelligence, school grades, or status (Diener & Seligman, 2002). Students who have strong relationships with peers and teachers also typically show stronger school adjustment (Benard, 2009). In a 30+ year longitudinal study conducted with more than 12,000 people who were all part of a single interconnected social network, Harvard researchers found that the odds of being happy were increased by 15 per cent if the individual's network was happy. In other words, having direct and frequent social contact with others who have high well-being dramatically increases the chances of being personally happy (Rath & Harter, 2010). The effect is tiered in the sense that indirect connections also influence well-being. For instance, if a friend of your friend is happy, then their happiness goes up by 15 percent and your happiness goes up by 10 percent, even if you don't know or interact with this secondhand connection. This connection goes to yet another

degree of separation: if the friend's friend's friend is happy, it still contributes with a 6 percent increase to your happiness (Rath & Harter, 2010).

Studies show that the amount of time spent with others matters. When a person get six hours of social time a day , it raises their well-being and reduces stress and worries (Rath & Harter, 2010). People who have three or four very close friends are healthier, have higher well-being and are more engaged in their jobs than those who do not (Rath & Harter, 2010). In other words, living in community, especially a happy one, makes a positive difference in the area of human flourishing.

### **Meaning**

A strong sense of meaning is correlated with well-being. Meaning can be described as a combination of comprehension and purpose. Comprehension is the ability to recognize patterns, consistency and significance in life. It is the ability to select out experiences and events that are salient, important and motivating. Purpose refers to highly motivating, long-term goals about which one is passionate (Steger, 2009). In order for people to have a strong sense of meaning, they must have a clear sense of what their existence is about and what they are seeking to do with their lives (Steger, 2009). People who have a strong sense of meaning self-report life satisfaction, control over their lives, and feel more engaged in their work (Steger et al., 2008). They also report less negative affect, depression, anxiety, workaholism, suicidal ideation, substance abuse, and less need for therapy. People who have dedicated their lives to an important cause or an ideal that transcends more mundane concerns report higher levels of meaning than other people (Steger, 2009). Various studies done with the following groups reported high levels of meaning: Anglican and Dominican nuns, Protestant ministers, and recently-converted Christians (Steger, 2009). In essence, meaning is the extent to which people

comprehend, make sense of, or see significance in their lives, accompanied by the degree to which they perceive themselves to have a purpose, mission, or overarching aim in life (Steger, 2009). In this sense, meaning is often connected to spirituality (Park & Peterson, 2009).

### **Achievement**

Achievement is highly correlated with well-being, specifically in the area of goal setting and hope. Intentional goal-setting propels a person's life toward both achievement and hope (Locke, 1996). "Hope theory" teaches that genuine hope is characterized by goals, agency, and pathways (Lopez et al., 2004). Hope is enhanced by visualizing goals, creating action plans, activating them, gathering resources that sustain motivation and reframing obstacles as challenges to overcome. Each bit of confidence gained from a past success gives the ability to spiral forward and set new goals. Tiny pieces of hope can be enhanced by positive interventions such as narrative therapy (the telling of a personal story of hope), hope bonding (relationships with others who are so full of hope that they transfer it to others), and hope enhancers. Hope enhancers are exercises that augment hope through exemplary storytelling, role-plays, hope language and games that teach goal setting in fun settings (Lopez et al., 2004). Researchers are learning more and more specifics about goal setting. The more difficult a goal, for instance, the greater the achievement. Goal setting allows individuals to accomplish more than they might have without the goal. The more specific the goal, the more inclined the goal is to be met (Locke, 1996). Strongly connected to goal setting is the character trait of "grit," which is a combination of perseverance and passion in the area of goal setting. Grit is strongly correlated with high performance and achievement and is even more important than conscientiousness or intellect when it comes to high achievement (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007; Seligman, 2011).

### **Principles of Resilience**

The construct of PERMA is helpful for people who are trying to move from zero to 10 on the scale of human flourishing. But, what about those who are at negative ten and need to get to zero? They, Seligman and colleagues believe, need different sorts of interventions (Seligman, 2011). They need interventions that will heal depression and possibly even prevent it in the first place. They need a protective armor against depression. They need resilience.

Resilience refers to the ability to rebound in life, to bounce back after a pressing difficulty, and to persevere and adapt when things go awry (Ryff & Singer, 2003). Resilient individuals overcome obstacles, navigate through unexpected setbacks, and reach forward to the future toward new possibilities. Additionally, resilience is a trait that can be identified, measured, learned, and strengthened (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). It is characterized by emotion regulation, impulse control, empathy, optimism, causal analysis, self-efficacy, and reaching out (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). Learning to be resilient and coach others to be resilient is a process that takes time, but with practice it can be learned.

Resilience training was first born out of some of Seligman's earliest research with dogs (Seligman, 1975). Through a series of experiments, he demonstrated that when dogs were shocked without an opportunity to escape the pain, most gave up and quit trying. He hypothesized that a perceived inability to control the outcome of a condition or situation could activate a sense of learned helplessness, which in turn could lead to depression (Seligman, 1975). About one-third of dogs, however, avoided becoming helpless. This unexplainable resilience piqued Seligman's curiosity. Although the resilient dogs experienced the same stressors as the other two-thirds, they persevered and found ways to overcome their circumstances. To a

researcher, this offered hope and raised a question: if a dog could learn helplessness, could it learn optimism as well? Behind this major research question lurked an even greater one: do humans learn helplessness, and if so, how might they learn to overcome it?

With a team of brainstorming researchers, Seligman set about developing a series of resiliency interventions that were combined to create a school-based resilience training program for adolescents. The Penn Resiliency Program (PRP), founded on principles of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, treatments for depression, and research on adolescent development, bore proof to his theory (Gillham, Jaycox, Reivich, Seligman, & Silver, 1990). The goal of the PRP program was to increase a student's ability to handle every day stresses; to teach assertiveness, creative brainstorming and other problem solving skills; and to provide youth with skills such as problem solving, decision-making, and thought processing that would help them navigate the risks of adolescence and avoid depression (Seligman et al., 2009; Brunwasser, Gillham, & Kim, 2009; (see Appendix E).

Over 20 studies conducted with more than 5,000 participants have shown that the PRP reduces and prevents depression, improves explanatory style (level of optimism or pessimism, this will be explained at length in the next section), reduces hopelessness and improves health and well-being (Reivich & Gillham, 2010). It also reduces and prevents anxiety, increases enjoyment of school and achievement, is correlated with greater engagement in learning and improves social skills such as empathy, cooperation, assertiveness and self-control (Seligman et al., 2009). Importantly, the PRP works equally well for children of different racial ethnic backgrounds, increases enjoyment of school and achievement, is correlated with greater engagement in learning, and improves social skills such as empathy, cooperation, assertiveness

and self-control (Seligman et al., 2009). The PRP is one of the most widely researched programs to prevent depression in adolescents in the world (Seligman et al., 2009).

In 2008, the United States Army partnered with Seligman through the University of Pennsylvania to create a program similar to the PRP, this time for military recruits. The new project was called the Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness program, designed to help prepare soldiers and their families for the stresses of deployment. The Master Resilience Training (MRT) program is ongoing in the training of trainers for military leaders and includes basic skills in resilience similar but not limited to those taught in the PRP. Studies regarding the effectiveness of the MRT are continuing. To date, data suggest that the program assists in improving the resilience and psychological health of soldiers, which, in turn, appears to reduce the odds of developing diagnosable mental health issues and substance abuse (Lester et al., 2011). At the same time, the program has come under fire by critics for questionable data analysis regarding outcomes and the heavy price tag that is being charged to the U.S. government (Timmons, 2013). Since leaders in the field of positive psychology are committed to building a program of excellence, accountability like this from the academic community will help ensure that the field continues to maintain integrity and accuracy in the years to come. Ongoing research should provide a clearer picture of the program's true impact and effectiveness.

The PRP and the MRT are both founded on cognitive behavioral therapy principles from Beck (1979), rational emotive therapy principles from Ellis (1962), and positive psychology interventions (Gillham et al., 2007). The following are some of the basic principles for resilience that are employed in the training programs.

Beliefs are linked to consequences (Ellis, 1993). In Ellis's ABC model, "A" stands for Adversity (trials, problems or activating event), "B" stands for **B**eliefs that are held about the adversity, and "C" stands for **C**onsequences (emotions and behavior). An example of Ellis's ABC model for an adolescent might be an event of being ignored. When a friend walks by but does not acknowledge his or her presence, the belief that follows may be, "He (or she) doesn't like me." The consequence might be sadness and even tears. The first step for learning resilience from the ABC's is to learn to recognize the connection between beliefs and consequences. Sadness, for instance, can be traced back to a certain belief. In this case, the adolescent who is feeling ignored may learn to make the connection: "Why do I feel so sad? I feel sad because I believe that people are ignoring me because they don't like me." By stopping to evaluate a belief and check the evidence, an adolescent may see that he or she has control over whether or not to choose the belief. By rethinking or changing the belief through an alternative explanation ("He was busy and therefore he probably didn't notice me"), the consequences may go away as well. (See Appendix C for more examples of beliefs and consequences.)

A second principle is recognizing and avoiding thinking traps. Maladaptive beliefs ("thinking traps") are transformed by identifying them, calling them into question, and opening the mind to other ways of thinking (see Appendix D). Reivich and Shatté (2002) describe eight thinking traps to avoid:

- **Jumping to Conclusions:** Making assumptions without substantial information
- **Tunnel Vision:** Seeing only the negative or the positive with disregard to a complete set of facts
- **Magnifying and Minimizing:** Overvaluing the negative and undervaluing the positive
- **Personalizing:** A reflex tendency to blame oneself for problems



- Externalizing: A reflex tendency to blame others
- Overgeneralizing: Assassination of the character of others (e.g., “It’s because they are lazy.”)
- Mind reading: The assumption that you know what others are thinking or that they know what you are thinking
- Emotional reasoning: Drawing false conclusions, either negative or positive, that are based on mood rather than evidence

A third principle is the importance of identifying and dispelling icebergs. The iceberg concept teaches that when emotional reactions are out of proportion to an activating event, it is a good indication that below the surface there is a much deeper and more powerful underlying belief about how the world should be run and how people should be treated. These deeper thoughts are called “icebergs,” (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). Icebergs often fit in one of three categories: achievement (“I must be successful at all costs”), acceptance (“I must please people and be loved at all costs”), and control (“I must maintain control at all costs”). These core beliefs are often protected with great emotion. Negative default-mode beliefs close thinking off to possible solutions. Once the mind is set, even contrary evidence is often seen as support for longstanding beliefs. Reivich and Shatté (2002) refer to this as “Velcro-Teflon thinking”. Individuals are like Velcro for evidence that supports their beliefs (this evidence sticks to them), and they are like Teflon for evidence that contradicts them (this evidence slides off of them) (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). A “confirmation bias” (Reivich & Shatté, 2002) is a way of viewing and using all experiences as evidence to support the validity of a certain belief, even if it is not true.

A hypothetical example might be the story of Tita. Tita is an adolescent who has an iceberg of fear of loss of acceptance. She believes that when people really get to know her, they will not like her any more. As she opens up emotionally in an intimate relationship, she feels vulnerable. She and Nuno have become very close, but one day she sees Nuno talking with another girl. Tita becomes angry and feels regretful that she ever opened up to Nuno. She now feels confirmed that Nuno has rejected her because he knows her too well. The iceberg emerges. In reality, Nuno was assigned to work with the other girl for a project in school. But the Velcro is sticky. No amount of explaining may be enough to convince Tita that Nuno really does still like her. Negative default modes of thinking (icebergs) must be replaced with productive ones. Biases are reduced by opening the mind to new possibilities through rebuttal questions that challenge the default belief. Questions that help identify icebergs and get to the bottom of an emotional or intense response often begin with “what”: What does that mean to me? What is the worst part of that for me? What does that say about me? In this case, by asking questions such as, “What is the worst thing about Nuno talking to another girl? What made me so worried that I cried?”, Tita may be able to identify the deep underlying fear or insecurity that she is dealing with.

A fourth principle is that problems should be solved by seeking solutions. Problem solving comes by challenging beliefs through a process (Reivich & Shatté,2002): identify the ABC’s (What is the adversity? What is the belief? What are the consequences or emotions that are a result of the belief?). A helpful question to trace is “Why?” What were all the reasons that the event happened in the first place?

A fifth principle is that it is important to identify one’s own personal explanatory style. In order to understand explanatory style, clients are encouraged to ask questions such as: “Do I

usually opt for a pessimistic style of explanation that assumes ‘Me, always, everything’ (It’s my fault, bad things always happen to me, and everything in the world is against me)? Or, do I choose an optimistic style that believes ‘Not me, not always, not everything’ (It’s not my fault, bad things don’t always happen, and everything in the world is not against me)?”

While people with positive, optimistic explanatory styles remain more resilient and depression free (bounce back quicker after the loss of an athletic competition, get higher grades in college, make more sales than colleagues), unrealistic optimism can have drawbacks as well. Unrealistic optimism can lead to missed warning signals (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). For example, extremely optimistic students actually get lower grades in college than mildly optimistic students. If they believe for instance that they can skip class and not do homework and still come out with an A for a grade, they may be operating under unrealistic optimism.

A sixth principle is that it is important to be flexible and evidence-based when it comes to explanatory style. In other words, clients should always check for accurate evidence of what they believe to be the problem. They should evaluate both the evidence that supports their “why” beliefs as well as the evidence that negates it. Then they must throw out the why beliefs that do not have supporting evidence, so that they can identify the true heart of the problem through process of elimination (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). Ultimately, they are able to seek a new solution by brainstorming various possible options (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). In other words, a person should ask himself what the problem is and why he thinks it happened. He should then consider what the evidence is to support the reason he thinks it happened, and throw it out if it doesn’t make sense. When he has gone through all the whys that don’t make sense, he will find himself at the heart of the matter. Once he has identified the true problem, the evidence-based cause, he is ready to start brainstorming for a solution.

An example might be seen in a hypothetical story of Keni. Both of Keni's parents died when she was five. She lives with other children in a group home. On Keni's birthday, no one remembered her birthday, and by evening she was very sad. In the past, she would have cried herself to sleep, but this time she decided to practice challenging her beliefs. She checked her ABC's and asked herself why she felt like crying (consequences) and decided that it was because she believed that her friends had forgotten her birthday. This made her think that no one loved her (belief). This, she told herself, was how it had always been. She was born unlucky. No one ever remembered her, and they never would (explanatory style). She thought back through the day and then asked herself all the reasons why no one may have remembered her birthday. She decided that one reason was that they just didn't want to be her friend. Another reason was that she had not told anyone that it was her birthday. After thinking about it, she remembered the hug she had gotten from her teacher that day and the lunch that one of her friends shared with her. She remembered the compliment that a friend had given her about a picture she had painted. There was not enough evidence to support the idea that no one loved her. Once she decided that the real problem was not that her friends didn't love her but that they had been busy and had forgotten, she began to brainstorm solutions. One solution was to celebrate her birthday by doing something nice for herself like sitting outside to watch the sunset. Another solution was to celebrate the year by thinking of good things that she was grateful for from the past year. Another was to plan her own party, invite friends to come and play a game and give each person a piece of candy. In the end, she did all three.

A seventh principle is that it is important to put things in perspective. This process teaches an individual how to avoid the problem of "What if?" concerns. One way to do this is by choosing to anchor into reality and focus on the immediate problems at hand. This is done by

thinking through what the worst case outcome might be, followed by thinking through the absolute best case scenario, followed by what the most likely scenario would be (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). A hypothetical adolescent case example might be Lili's situation. Her boyfriend broke up with her. These were her thoughts:

Worst-case scenario: I will never find anyone I love that much. I will never marry. I will never have children. I will die alone.

Best-case scenario: I will find someone I love even more. He will be a prince from a far-away kingdom. He will sweep me away to his kingdom. We will grow old together and, even in our old age, he will tell me that he loves more and more every year.

Most likely scenario: It will take time to heal, but eventually I will find someone I love in life. He may not be a prince but he will be very special to me and together we will create a long life together. For now, as I heal, I will anticipate that in the same way that I found love in the past, I will be able to find it in the future. I will keep my eyes out for new relationships.

An eighth principle is to learn to take control of your response to stress by staying calm, cool and collected. Although there are many stressors that cannot be controlled in life, the manner in which they are responded to can be. It may not be possible to change circumstances, but it may be possible to change the body's response to them. For instance, when the body is under stress, breathing patterns become shallow and rapid. By simply being intentional about taking control over the breathing pattern, relaxation can be enhanced. Slowing the rate, deepening the breath, and breathing through the diaphragm all help calm the body's response to stress (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). Progressive muscular relaxation is also helpful for staying calm when under pressure. This may be facilitated through finding a comfortable spot to stretch out in a restful pose and coordinating deep breathing with systematic tensing and releasing of muscles

throughout the body. Serenity is heightened even more when positive imagery is introduced (e.g., imagining oneself in a lovely and peaceful environment; Reivich & Shatté, 2002).

A ninth principle is to practice capitalizing and offering an active constructive response. Capitalizing is the personal sharing of good news (Langston, 1994). Oftentimes when people care about each other, they share successes and victories. This simple act of sharing of good news with close friends or a spouse has the potential to bond the relationship and help maintain close ties (Gable et al., 2006). It is not only the sharing of good news, however. It is the manner in which it is shared and received that matters. Studies done with married couples show that when close relationship partners regularly respond positively to the sharing of good news with each other, the one who is doing the sharing reports feeling closer, more intimate, and more satisfied overall in the relationship. When a partner is less emotionally supportive, the person who is sharing feels less intimate and satisfied in the relationship (Gable, Reiss, Impett, & Asher, 2004).

An active constructive response is a way of affirming and rejoicing with those who are rejoicing. When others celebrate with those who are sharing good news, the relationship is made stronger. There is a sense of feeling understood, validated and cared for. One study showed that women feel this sense of bonding both in positive and negative event sharing. It also showed that men feel this validation to a greater extent when the event they are sharing is positive (Gable et al., 2006).

When an individual capitalizes, others may respond with one of four responses: active constructive, active destructive, passive constructive, or passive destructive (see Appendix E for greater detail on examples of all four responses). The most positive is an active constructive response, in which the respondent affirms and rejoices with those who are rejoicing. This

response encourages and affirms others as they share good news, allowing and encouraging them to relive details of their positive event. An example might be, “I got a raise today!”

(capitalizing). An active constructive response would be: “That’s fantastic! Please tell me every detail!”

A tenth principle is that it is important to take negative thoughts captive. Unwanted negative thoughts can oftentimes occur over and over. Self proposed open-ended questions, games, songs, lyrics and stories can all replace the negative thoughts. In other words, a person can replace a negative thought with a positive thought or even a positive story (Reivich & Shatté, 2002).

In summary, the tools listed above are examples of positive interventions that may be practiced to increase resilience. In addition to interventions for human flourishing and greater resilience, the field of positive psychology is also studying the impact of identifying and implementing core character strengths.

### **Principles of Identifying and Implementing Character Strengths**

The importance of identifying and implementing signature character strengths and virtues is a foundational concept of positive psychology. Implementation of character strengths has been shown to have significant positive impacts on the psychological well-being of children (Froh, Seffick, & Emmons, 2008; Seligman et al., 2009; Toner, Haslam, & Williams, 2012).

Additionally, character strengths of hope, kindness, social intelligence, self-regulation and perspective have been shown to buffer against the negative impacts of stress and trauma (Park & Peterson, 2009). A strengths-based approach to recovery from trauma has been shown to be a valid and effective intervention for dealing with loss (Fazio & Fazio, 2005). Specifically, the approach encourages people to view pain and struggles as an integral aspect of the healing

process and invites them to understand and utilize their trauma for personal character growth (Fazio et al., 2008). In essence, it encourages people to view difficulties in life as important facilitators for character growth, which is positive and life-giving.

Strengths that build connections to people and purposes larger than one's self predict a future sense of well-being (Gilham, Adams-Deutsch, Werner, Reivich, Coulter-Heindl, Linkins, & Seligman, 2011). Academically, character strength assessments and interventions improve students' skills, enjoyment, and engagement in school, thus indirectly contributing to children's life satisfaction and well-being (Seligman et al., 2009). Strengths-based interventions also improve physical health. Adolescent students who "count blessings" (practice the character strength of gratitude) report fewer negative physical symptoms along with higher levels of optimism and life satisfaction and less negative affect (Froh et al., 2008).

The Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA), an online assessment tool that is used for the identification of core character strengths (Park, Peterson, Seligman, 2004), was developed through the work of 55 leading scientists and three years of research. This inventory of 24 universal strengths of character was created from the opinions of moral philosophers, religious thinkers and other leading authorities around the world. Cultures studied were varied, including the Inughuit of Greenland and the Maasai of Kenya (Peterson, 2006; Neimiec, 2013; Dahlsgaard, Peterson & Seligman, 2005). Following the identification of international core virtues, researchers identified candidate character strengths by reviewing literature from psychiatry, youth development, and character education. Ultimately, they determined the following criteria for deciding what counted as a character strength and a virtue (Seligman, 2004):

- It is ubiquitous: widely recognized across cultures.



- It is fulfilling or contributes to one's individual fulfillment, satisfaction, and happiness broadly construed.
- It is morally valued or valued in its own right and not for tangible outcomes that it may produce.
- It does not diminish others: elevates others who witness it, producing admiration or jealousy.
- It has a nonfelicitous opposite: has obvious antonyms that are "negative".
- It is trait-like or is an individual difference with demonstrable generality and stability.
- It is measurable: has been successfully measured by researchers as an individual difference.
- It is distinct: is not redundant with other character strengths (conceptually or empirically).
- It has paragons or is strikingly embodied in some individuals.
- It has prodigies or is precociously shown by some children or youth.
- It can be selectively absent or missing altogether in some individuals.
- It has enabling institutions or is a deliberate target of societal practices and rituals that try to cultivate it.

Six core virtues that emerged with near universal recognition and praise are wisdom, courage, transcendence, humanity, temperance, and justice (Peterson & Seligman, 2005).

Virtues are broad categories of moral and universal values that encompass a person's capacity for helping one's self and others, and they are also values that produce positive effects on the person who is using them (www.viacharacter, 2014).

Character strengths fall into families of one of these six virtues. The virtue of wisdom and knowledge, for instance, includes cognitive strengths that revolve around the acquisition and use of knowledge. These strengths are creativity, curiosity, judgment, love of learning and perspective. The virtue of courage includes emotional strengths that involve an exercise of the will in the accomplishing of goals even in the face of difficulty: bravery, perseverance, honesty, and zest. The virtue of humanity includes interpersonal strengths that revolve around the nurturing of relationships. These strengths include: love, kindness and social intelligence. The virtue of justice centers around civic strengths that support a healthy community life. Included in this category are: teamwork, fairness and leadership. The virtue of temperance includes strengths that guard against excess. Included under the virtue of temperance are character strengths of forgiveness, humility, prudence, and self-regulation. And ultimately, the virtue of transcendence is described as encompassing strengths that create connections to the larger universe and provide a sense of meaning. These strengths include appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, and spirituality ([www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org)).

“Signature strengths” are core character strengths that resonate deep within an individual (Peterson, 2006), and the regular use of them, especially in service to others, cultivates well-being (Seligman, 2002; Peterson, 2006). Although the VIA signature strengths may be identified through a self-report inventory online ([www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org)), they may also be identified through strength-spotting exercises in which others are encouraged to observe character strengths and affirm them. One well-tested positive intervention is to pick a signature strength and use it in a new way every day (Peterson, 2006; Seligman et al., 2005). The strengths of hope, zest, gratitude, curiosity, and love have the strongest link to life satisfaction (Park et al., 2004).

Additionally, and very importantly, the identification and implementation of character strengths have been very highly correlated with lowering depression when used in positive psychotherapy. In order to test the impact of character strengths on depression, Seligman and colleague Tayyab Rashid created a whole new form of psychotherapy which they named Positive Psychotherapy, or PPT (Seligman et al., 2006; Seligman, 2011). Their findings showed that positive emotions, engagement, and meaning correlated with lowered depression (Seligman et al., 2006). Although PPT is only in its early stages of development, results are promising. One study that reviewed remission rates of depression found that PPT out-performed remission rates in the “treatment as usual” group as well as the “treatment as usual with medication” group (Seligman, 2011). The following techniques are some of the interventions that were employed in the new therapy.

In one technique, clients used short stories they had written about a time when they were at their best to identify their character strengths, and they took a character strength inventory online to get a broader, more comprehensive understanding of their personal strengths. In another, clients were asked to keep a “blessing journal” in which they recorded at least three good things that happened each day (Seligman, 2011, p. 41). They were also asked to write about their depression and what they might be doing to actually feed it. A next step was to write a forgiveness letter (but not deliver it). Forgiveness letters were followed by letters of gratitude that were written, hand delivered, and read aloud to the recipients. Clients were also taught the importance of allowing themselves to be “satisficers” (having an acceptance attitude of “this is good enough”) as opposed to maximizers (having a high standard of perfection), since satisficing is more highly correlated with well-being (Schwartz, 2004). Another therapeutic strategy was strength spotting (or learning to recognize character strengths) in their close relationships with

other people. Clients were also encouraged to set aside a significant amount of time to use one of their character strengths to serve others. They were also taught to practice a skill set in savoring (this will be discussed at length later) and in recognizing an optimistic vs. pessimistic outlook on life.

Another study, the Strath Haven project, tested character strengths as an intervention for well-being in adolescents (Seligman et al., 2009). In this study, 347 14- and 15-year-olds were randomly assigned to one of two different language arts classes. Half received a positive psychology curriculum that integrated academics with a focus on character strengths, while the other half remained in their regular curriculum language arts classes. Central to the process was narrative journaling, sharing stories, and reading literature through the lens of character strength and resilience. Enjoyment and engagement in school were enhanced, and character traits such as empathy, cooperation, assertiveness and self-control were strengthened with the positive psychology group. While the study of character strengths showed that identifying and practicing core character strengths increased joy in learning and strengthened character qualities, it did not reduce depression or anxiety (Seligman et al., 2009). This suggested that for a positive psychology program to truly be beneficial against depression, it would be helpful to offer it in conjunction with principles for resilience as taught in the PRP (Seligman et al., 2009).

### **Cultural Adaptations to Resilience Programs Around the World**

As a result of these successful findings, school systems around the world have begun reaching out to the field of positive psychology for help in integrating resilience principles into their curricula. Wellington College in the U.K., Geelong Grammar School in Australia, and St Peter's College in Australia have all reengineered their curricula to build positive psychology principles into their educational models (Positive Psychology and Education, 2014). The field is

ever evolving. What Strath Haven did for the integration of academics with positive psychology, the Geelong Grammar School Project of Australia is doing for the integration of academics with faith, religion and spirituality (Seligman et al., 2009). Similar to Strath Haven, it uses the process of observing and analyzing character strengths and resilience in literary figures in English literature. Additionally, however, Geelong uses spiritual interventions as well. Daily religious services highlight Bible verses that reinforce character strengths discussed elsewhere in the curriculum; Biblical stories of resilience are used to teach positive psychology (Seligman et al., 2009; Seligman, 2011). In essence, Geelong has integrated the curriculum into the entire culture of the school. The impact that positive psychology has made on the school is impressive. In many ways, the school shines like a poster child for what positive psychology principles can do to transform an academic setting (Seligman, 2011). The cultural adaptation process that Geelong Grammar School has taken raises many questions for the rest of the world. For one, do spiritual interventions have a significant impact on increasing well-being and building resilience?

### **Religion and Spirituality as They Relate to Human Flourishing and Resilience**

Traditionally, psychology as a field has been slow to embrace religion and spirituality. Appeals to the supernatural for help have often been considered off limits (Pargament, et al., 2013). Although psychologists tend to be secularists, the general American population has stronger spiritual leanings. According to the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, 58 % of Americans report that they pray daily, 74% believe in life after death, 68% believe in angels and demons, 59% believe in hell and 57% agree that is necessary to believe in God to be moral and have good values (Pargament et al., 2013). While 90% of the American population professes to believe in God, only 24% of clinical and counseling psychologists do (Pargament et al., 2013). Sentiment toward religious practices, however, is changing. Psychologists are gradually

beginning to acknowledge and study spiritual practices of forgiveness, gratitude, and meditation. Some psychologists are even moving toward the study of religion and spirituality as an empirically-based, applied field. They are acknowledging that skepticism, antagonism, and spiritual illiteracy are not appropriate qualities for a practice with individuals, families, institutions, and communities that attach deep values to the matters of their faith (Pargament et al., 2013).

Positive psychology, as a field, is also moving in the direction of greater openness to the importance of religion and spirituality. Spirituality is classified as a character strength and is described in the *VIA Classification of Strengths of Positive Psychology* as “religiousness, faith and purpose--having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose, the meaning of life and the meaning of the universe” (Park et al., 2004).

Religion and spirituality are correlated with a sense of meaning and purpose. Studies in well-being show that those who have dedicated their lives to an important cause or an ideal that transcends more mundane concerns report higher levels of meaning and that a sense of meaning is correlated to well-being (Steger, 2009). This is especially important in addressing suicide and depression issues in adolescents since lack of meaning is correlated with suicidal ideation and substance use (Kinnier, Metha, Keim, & Okey, 1994).

Religion and spirituality are correlated with overall well-being. According to a 2012 Gallup poll of 676,000 interviewees, deeply religious Americans of all major faiths have higher overall well-being than do their respective counterparts who are moderately religious or nonreligious (Newport et al., 2012a). This relationship, based on an analysis of the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index, was statistically significant after controlling for major demographic and regional variables (Newport et al., 2012a).

Religion and spirituality are also correlated with greater positive emotions. Americans who attend a church, synagogue, or mosque regularly report greater positive emotions, especially on Sundays (Lim, 2012). Religion is correlated with strong positive relationships as well. Friendship in church is more strongly correlated with life satisfaction than friendships in other contexts such as the workplace or a book club. Not only do church-goers socialize on Sundays, but they also spend time with co-religionists who may boost their mood (Lim, 2012).

Religion and spirituality are correlated with a greater sense of joy from gratitude. Gratitude may also contribute to a sense of well-being among the religious. Positive effects of gratitude are strengthened when subjects direct and focus their attitude toward God (Rosmarin et al., 2011). Specifically, the effect goes up with the level of religious commitment. In other words, the degree to which a person is religiously committed enhances the effect of the gratitude. Using a linear regression, researchers found that the interaction between religious commitment *and* religious gratitude produced a more significant prediction of well-being beyond what general gratitude would create. This work suggests that gratefulness to God, when combined with religious commitment may possibly enhance psychological benefits in greater ways than even conventional gratitude (Rosmarin et al., 2011).

Religion and spirituality are correlated with lower depression. Of significant importance to this proposed study is the impact that religion has on depression. Very religious people are 24% less likely to be diagnosed with depression than those who are moderately religious and 17% less likely to be diagnosed with depression than those who are nonreligious (Newport, Agrawal, & Witters, 2010). According to these data, a spiritually-based resilience training program has potential to offer even greater resilience against depression in adolescents than a secular one.

Religion and spirituality are correlated with greater enjoyment of life and more positive emotions in developing countries. Gallup Polls in 143 countries reveal that among countries where average annual incomes are \$2,000 or less, 92% of residents say religion is an important part of their daily lives (Crabtree & Pelham, 2009) (see Appendix F). In the past, researchers assumed that people in poorer societies live with much greater vulnerability to forces that threaten their existence and because of this vulnerability are more likely than those in developed nations to rely on religion for hope. In 2008, however, Gallup studied 32 countries with average annual incomes of \$2,000 or less in order to document the extent to which religiosity appeared to affect emotional health. They found that religious individuals are more likely than those in the less religious group to say they experienced enjoyment the previous day, and they are less likely to have experienced a range of negative emotions (Crabtree & Pelham, 2009). In other words, religion offered more than emotional support against everyday threats, it offered joy and less negative emotions. This finding is significant in countering depression in adolescents because the addition of positive emotions has the potential to create an upward self-sustaining positive spiral (Fredrickson, 2009)

Although positive psychology is not a religion, many of the variables that it studies as pathways to well-being are found in religion. Positive emotions are found in worship through elevating experiences of awe (Haidt, 2006). Engagement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) is found through flow and transcendence which often accompany prayer and meditation. Relationships are found in religious communities and these relationships help in the prevention of problems, the healing of problems, and the empowerment over problems (Maton & Wells, 1995). Additionally, individuals are given pastoral support in the community through the ministry of a priest, minister, Rabbi, or spiritual leader. Religion also offers many opportunities for team



working in short term mission work (Offutt, 2011). In a very important sense, relationship is also found in a deep connection with God, and in this connection is found a sense of well-being (Poloma & Pendleton, 1990). Meaning can be found through a sense of purpose in a relationship with God (Hamilton, Powe, Pollard III, Lee, & Felton, 2007), by serving something greater than oneself. Achievement comes through setting goals and seeking to accomplish them (Seligman 2011). In many ways religion calls people to set spiritual goals in all areas of life (Emmons, 2005).

Although different religions focus on different character strengths, some religions focus on specific character qualities that are highly correlated with well-being. For instance, all twenty-four of the VIA character strengths (Park & Peterson, 2009) can be taught through Biblical role models (see Appendix A). The five character strengths most highly related to life satisfaction are hope, zest, gratitude, curiosity, and love (Park et al., 2004). Each of these character strengths are taught in the Bible and will be correlated with spiritual and secular positive interventions in the proposed curriculum (see appendix A).

Religion and spirituality are strongly correlated with well-being in Americans and in many other people around the world. There is a significantly strong correlation between religion and well-being in developing countries (Crabtree & Pelham, 2009). There is also a strong correlation between religion and lowered depression (Newport, et al., 2010). These findings suggest the importance of integrating spiritual interventions along with secular interventions in a resilience-training program, and more specifically, one that is designed to counter depression.

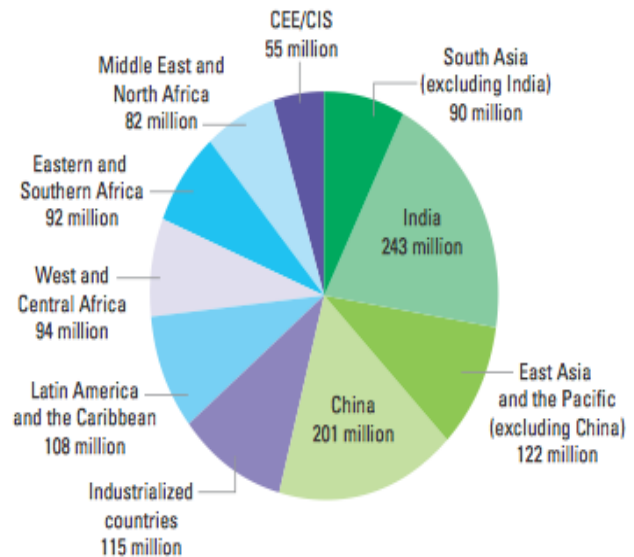
### **The Need for Resilience/Well-being Training Around the World**

If there was ever a need for resilience training in adolescents, it is now. In 2012, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) released an update on the status of adolescents around the world. See chart (UNICEF, 2012).

The numbers alone are staggering: there are 1.2 billion adolescents in the world, with 90 percent of them living in developing countries and half of them living in Asia. India is home to more adolescents (around 243 million) than any other country. Sub-Saharan Africa, however, is the region

**More than half of the world’s adolescents live in Asia**

Population of adolescents 10–19 years old by region, 2010

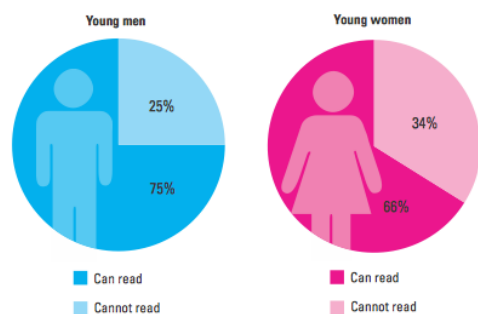


where adolescents make up the greatest proportion of the population, with fully 23 percent of the region’s population aged 10–19. The two countries with the highest proportion of adolescents in the world (26 percent) are Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

Seventy-one million of those of lower middle school age are not attending school; 127

**In least developed countries, a quarter of young men and a third of young women cannot read**

Literacy rate of youth 15–24 years old in least developed countries



million youth between 15 and 24 years are illiterate and most of them are in Southeast Asia and the Sub-Sahara.

In the least developed countries, 25% of all boys cannot read and 30% of all adolescent girls cannot read. See chart (UNICEF, 2012). Approximately 2.2 million adolescents are living with HIV and 60 percent of those are girls.

Note: Estimates were produced using the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) Global Age-specific Literacy Projections Model (GALP).  
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2011. Based on data from national population censuses and household surveys. Data refer to 2009 or latest year available.

More than 1/3 of young women living in developing countries are married before they turn 18. This raises the risk for domestic violence as well as early childbirth, which is the number one killer of adolescent girls (UNICEF, 2012). It is thus no wonder that the World Health Organization (WHO) recently sent out a global alert on the problems of adolescent depression.

According to the World Health Organization, depression is the primary cause of illness and disability for both boys and girls aged 10 to 19 years, with suicide listed among the top three causes of adolescent deaths globally (WHO, 2014). Studies show that half of all people who develop mental disorders have their first symptoms by the age of 14 (WHO, 2014). Added to the complexity of this global issue is the fact that causes of adolescent depression vary from country to country. For instance, in Africa, hundreds of thousands of children, as young as age 8, serve in armed government forces or rebel groups in various countries (Human Rights Watch, 2008). As “child soldiers,” these youth are uniquely vulnerable and are prime targets for military recruitment because of their emotional and physical immaturity. Since 2001, it is estimated that child soldiers have been recruited in 21 different armed conflicts globally (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

Children and adolescents who have experienced or participated in conflict often lack adequate tools and techniques to process and cope with trauma. Adolescence is a time period for forming personal identity (Erikson, 1959/1980), and it is a time for developing the full range of emotional and cognitive abilities needed to understand unexpected and difficult events that happen in life. Since these strengths are not yet fully developed, adolescents are particularly susceptible to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD; Singer, 2006). In war-torn countries around the world, children who are refugees deal with depression as well. Not only do they suffer from traumatic experiences from the past, but they also face ongoing stressors within the

host countries as well. They are often subject to increased prejudice and discrimination. Additionally, they often face uncertainties, fear of deportation, and frequent re-housing (Verhulst, 2006).

Bullying is also a difficult problem that adolescents face around the world. In Chile, a total of 8,131 middle school students participated in a study on bullying. The results showed that 47 percent of students reported having been bullied in the past month, and 30 percent reported having been sad and hopeless for two or more weeks in the past year. Students in the seventh and eighth grades were more likely to report having been bullied in the past month than students in ninth grade. Even so, ninth grade students reported higher levels of loneliness, difficulty sleeping, and suicidal thoughts than students in the seventh and eighth grades. Boys were more likely than girls to report being bullied in the past month, but girls were more likely than boys to report symptoms of depression such as prolonged feelings of sadness and hopelessness, loneliness, difficulty sleeping, and suicidal thoughts. Students who reported being bullied in the past month were more likely than non-bullied students to report symptoms of depression. A higher number of days of being bullied in the past month was associated with a statistically significant increase in reported rates of sadness and hopelessness ( $p < .001$ ). This finding is consistent with studies of bullying and depression in adolescents from other parts of the world as well (Fleming & Jacobsen, 2009).

While the causes of depression differ around the world, the symptoms do not. Sadness, hopelessness, difficulty with sleeping and suicidal ideation are all serious symptoms that are correlated with depression (Fleming & Jacobsen, 2009). Depressed children and adolescents are more likely than their non-depressed peers to abuse drugs and alcohol (Kinnier et al., 1994;

Riggs, Baker, Mikulich, & Young, 1995). Depressed children are less competent academically (Chen, Rubin, & Li, 1995).

Taking hope to an adolescent population in remote areas of developing countries is no small task. With so many different cultures, languages, and low literacy rates, what would a cross-cultural curriculum for resilience look like?

### **The Importance of a Curriculum for Oral Learners**

Although much of the western world's academic information is disseminated through written literature, much of the world's population prefers an oral style of learning. There are approximately 5.7 billion oral learners around the globe. In essence, this is approximately two-thirds of the world's population. This includes three billion adults, 900 million very young children and 450 million children between the ages of eight and fifteen, all of whom have below basic literacy skills (International Orality Network, 2014). Oral learners are people who either cannot read or prefer to learn through means of oral teaching. Approximately 127 million of the world's adolescents are not just oral learners by preference but are truly illiterate. Nearly 90 per cent of those who are illiterate live in South Asia (65 million) and sub-Saharan Africa (47 million). In the least developed countries, one-fourth of young men aged 15 to 24 and one-third of the young women aged 15 to 24 are illiterate (UNICEF, 2012). Seventy-one million of those of lower middle school age are not attending school; 127 million youth between 15 and 24 years are illiterate and most of them are in Southeast Asia and the Sub-Sahara. In the least developed countries, 25% of all boys cannot read and 30% of all adolescent girls cannot read.

In order for resilience training and education on human flourishing to have an impact on the world at large, a curriculum must be developed that can accommodate oral learners.

Seligman (2011) has set a hopeful goal for fifty-one percent of the world to be flourishing by the

year 2051. In order for this goal to be accomplished, there will need to be a curriculum developed that is culturally adaptive and geared specifically for oral learners. Additionally, the curriculum will need to be presented in a culturally sensitive manner.

T4Global, a non-profit group of “orality” specialists (people who facilitate effective transfer of training to oral learners) suggest several important principles for the process of translating written material into material that will be understood and accepted by oral learners (Madinger et al., 2007). The first is that all material must be translated culturally and orally into forms of communication that can be received, remembered and replicated. Those forms might include: music, drama, folktales, proverbs, drums, etc. The material must be presented through trusted leaders for it to be collectively embraced. In addition, techniques must be explored for ensuring the fidelity of important information. Messages can only be consistently guaranteed when they remain exactly the same. Technology platforms provide a potential pathway for delivering messages that everyone hears without message degeneration or atrophy. While technology provides assurance of 100 percent fidelity of delivery of material, orality experts also advise that there is no exchange for a personal relationship in the delivery when it comes to the transformation of lives (Madinger et al., 2007). The following are recommended practices when seeking to introduce new learning material into a community of oral learners (Madinger et al., 2007):

Curricula should be inaugurated and embraced by political leaders. In other words, both political leaders at the top and community-wide gate keepers at a local level of a given country would need to feel that an adolescent resiliency curriculum would meet a felt need among their population. In addition, indigenous partners should drive the content development process. One

way of looking at this is to see the creator of the curricula as an expert on resilience and the cultural informant who is the trainer as the expert on application of the material in context.

The message should be contextual and perceived as relevant, offering a positive solution to a felt need. In other words, the interpretation of the principles should be made at a local level and will be most strongly received if they are solicited by (and not imposed upon) national and local leaders. Respectful open-ended questions can facilitate the contextualization of the principles.

Programs should embark on a multi-phased strategy that begins with community outreach, so that the community feels that the program is being offered as a way of helping the entire community. Although the program may begin with adolescents, a second phase might be to teach adults in the communities or to teach the principles to family units. Very importantly, it should be relationally received. A time-tested model for transferring information is through a trainer of trainers program. In the GROW model, resilience coaches would train local leaders in resilience principles so that they might in turn train participants in their workshops. Small group discussions where information is discussed peer to peer seems to have the most effect on community beliefs, values, and behaviors. This, also, is the format that the GROW model proposes. While technology can assist the consistency of the training material, nothing can take the place of one person leading another into life change (Madinger et al., 2007). One of the primary goals of the GROW program is to create a community of loving supportive relationships within the context of the classes.

Messages being taught should be frequently repeated. Oral learners like repetition because it helps them to remember better. Education and training that make a listener part of the story significantly increase the probability of behavior change.

Program leaders should seek to gain the support of the community at large. The process of congealing community solidarity usually follows a logical sequence: First, new ideas are presented to a community (innovation). Then, word spreads from village to village through family ties (communication channels). Third, a minimum of 60 days is recommended to allow the new idea to be internalized and ownership be accepted in a community (time). Finally, (if the program is endorsed), individual, political (and community) leaders take action to initiate the new program (social system). Overall, the poor of the world often feel powerless. They are victims of wars, corruption that drives up prices and often times the loss of family members to diseases. Therefore, it is no surprise that fatalism is often pervasive. However, when a community benefits from a program the word is often passed to others and a cascading event begins.

### **The Benefit of Using Stories to Teach Resilience to Oral Learners**

Stories provide a powerful tool for teaching oral learners because they do not require a pencil, paper or even a working knowledge of an alphabet. A story-based curriculum is particularly ideal in an oral learners community because it does not require literacy. Additionally, stories offer a window into how other people feel and think. They impart information, and at the same time the listener is able to identify with the theme and character of the story and to experience another person's way of thinking (Butcher, 2006).

A story-based curriculum may set the stage for learning through inspiring examples. Tal Ben-Shahar, a professor in the Harvard psychology department, sees stories as essential to the teaching of positive psychology:



“Stories form an important part of every class when teaching positive psychology topics, regardless of whether they are personal stories or stories about other people. Each of the topics discussed in the course includes presenting a story as an introduction to research on the topic, followed by an application. In other words, the story ‘sets the stage’ for a study or a theory, which in turn leads to action—the implications of the ideas presented and how they can be implemented in ‘real-life.’ It is important to tell stories that will inspire the students, move them and enable them to better remember the material. Stories can also bring research to life” (Russo-Netzer & Ben-Shahar, 2011, p. 472).

Stories provide a moral compass for life choices. Many times, stories are about people or creatures like the listener, allowing the listener to measure up against the character. The listener knows the character’s thoughts, morals, defeats and victories. Through engagement with the characters, a listener is able to vicariously live a portion of his or her life and help construct the person he or she desires to become (Ryan, 1991).

Robert Coles (1989/ 2000), a Harvard psychiatrist and Pulitzer Prize winner, places great value on narratives in understanding the human condition. In the *Call of Stories* (Coles, 1989) he posits that humans learn almost all moral lessons through personal stories and literature. Characters in stories become like friends to the reader or listener offering direction, wisdom for moral dilemmas, and help for making important choices. In the *Moral Life of Children* (1986/2000) he notes that it is the stories children tell each other that provides them with a moral compass. It is by listening to each other that they decide what is right and wrong (Tomasulo & Pawelski, 2010).

Stories offer meaning and allow abstract concepts like character traits to come alive in context. In many ways, stories offer more than maxims or rules because they give meaning as

they illustrate the concept. They help make sense of the world and offer a way to connect individual experiences to universal truths (Ganzel, 1999). In doing so, they offer structure and order helping the listener to sort out what is important and what is not (Ganzel, 1999).

In a very important way they speak to the heart as well as to the mind. The listener may fall in love with a character and be inspired. Alternatively, the listener may be repelled by a character, dreading that he or she should ever end up living that way (Ryan, 1991). In this way, an individual is self-motivated for change with out a need for scolding or counsel from others.

In regard to resilience, stories allow people to see new and creative ways for problem solving. Through stories, listeners are able not only to see how other people think but also how they solve problems. Creative options for problem solving help show the listener that there are many ways to solve problems (Ganzel, 1999). They also show that problem solving is a part of life. Problem solving is an important part of resilience training (Reivich & Shatté, 2002).

Personal narratives help people integrate their lives by allowing them to see where they have been in life, where they are in the present and where they would like to be. These stories that people tell about themselves help create structure and even a philosophical position about life (Brunner, 2002). They also offer a great sense of meaning (Steger, 2009).

One way that a story-based curriculum uses personal narratives is by encouraging people to envision their best self and then tell about it in the context of a story. In doing so the story offers a potential pathway into the future (Tomasulo & Pawelski, 2012, p.1193). Through stories of role models, a person is able to imagine possibilities that they may have never been exposed to in their every day lives. In this way, they are able to broaden their vision to include a higher level of thinking for their future. When an adolescent is asked, “How will you practice

kindness this week?” he or she is given the opportunity to imagine his or her best self-employing that quality.

A story-based curriculum changes brain chemistry and behavior of the listener through empathetic responses to a narrative. As listeners connect deeply with a story, cortisol and oxytocin are produced in the brain (Zak, 2013). Cortisol produces a distress and focus response in the brain while oxytocin releases an empathetic response. Studies show that the presence of these two chemicals which are released in the brain predicts sequential acts of generosity. The greater the amount of cortisol and oxytocin released, the greater the amount of generosity exhibited (Zak, 2013). In this way, empathy generated through story telling is directly correlated with a behavior change of kindness. Acts of kindness are correlated with a greater sense of well-being (Tomasulo & Pawelski, 2012).

### **The Bible as an International Text for Teaching Archetypal Stories of Resilience**

Stories provide an excellent tool for teaching resilience to oral learners. But what stories? What source would provide a universal tool that could be tested across cultures and continents and language barriers? The Bible offers an excellent source for stories that could be used for an international curriculum in resilience for oral learners. At first glance, the Bible may appear to be too Western in thought. In reality, however, while the Bible has dramatically shaped Western thought, it was not born out of Western thought at all. In fact, it is the very first book to ever be printed in the world and is actually a compendium of 66 books that were written by 40 different authors, on three different continents (Asia, Africa, Europe), in three different languages (Hebrew Aramaic, Greek) (Maccabaeus, 2011). It was written over a time period of some 1500 years (1400 B.C.-100 A.D.), amounting to about 40 different generations (Maccabaeus, 2011).

Additionally, the Bible is recorded in a historical format, allowing the reader or listener to see where he or she fits in history.

In many ways, the Bible offers a multi-cultural variety of stories. The authors of the books of the Bible are from approximately 20 different professions and backgrounds, including shepherds, kings, prime ministers, tax collectors, military leaders and fishermen. The books were written in 10 different countries, spanning a distance of about 6000 miles (Maccabaeus, 2011). In this regard, the book is multicultural in background and offers multi-perspectives on life as well. It also has archetypal character stories of resilience that can be used to accompany each of the 24 VIA character strengths.

In many ways it offers a time-tested source of universal truths. It is timeless in relevance; the same stories have been told to teach character and bring about spiritual transformation over and over to generation after generation for thousands of years without the truths becoming outdated or obsolete. It is also a book that is internationally respected. Over 6 billion Bibles have been printed (Statistic Brain, 2013). And yet, every year it still remains the number one all-time best seller. Approximately 50 Bibles are sold per minute (Maccabaeus, 2011). Portions of the Bible have been translated into more than 2,800 of 6,918 currently used languages. In fact, it has been translated into more languages than any other book in the world. At least 4.9 billion of the more than seven billion people in the world have the potential to access a Bible that is recorded in their first language (Wycliffe Global Alliance, 2013).

Of great importance in regard to operationalizing a resilience training program is the fact that the Bible is already available in audio recordings. More specifically, it has been translated into 751 distinct languages in audio recordings (Wycliffe Global Alliance, 2013). An audio format that is already translated into a given language would expedite the implementation of a story based resilience program.

An audio format is important for guarding fidelity both in implementation and also in testing of the training program. It is also important in a train the trainer model of oral learners as it allows the story to be played over and over until it is understood and often times memorized.

### **Training the Trainer Program**

It is hard to overstate the importance that a good trainer can make in the implementation of a resilience program, and this is especially true for children who experience chronic adversity. Studies show that these children fare better or recover more successfully when they have a positive relationship with a competent adult (Masten, Best and Garmezy, 1990). Critical to the success of any program is a strong relationship between the teacher and the students.

While the results from initial studies with the PRP in the United States were positive, the same program presented in the UK did not have the same promising results. One of the primary differences was the amount of training given to the instructors (Park, 2013). It is important to train teachers in resilience materials and curricula, and at the same time it is also important to train them in how to create and maintain high quality connections with their students. Four important elements that help create these kinds of desirable connections are: task enabling, respectful engagement, trust and play (Stephens, 2011).

Task enabling is the process of equipping a student for the learning of a new skill. In this case, the teacher is empowering the student with skills of resilience. In essence, the trainer is helping equip the student for life. Building a strong interpersonal relationship with the student is very important. Several practices help facilitate the building of a relationship of this depth. The first is that interpersonal sharing in the relationship should be mutual. By sharing at an interpersonal level, as well as offering support and resources, the relationship has an opportunity

to build into a more caring one. Studies verify that when trainers or teachers offer support, resources, fairness, dignity and respect students respond more positively (Stephens, 2011). The benefits of task enabling go not only to the students but also to the trainers. Those who help with the task enabling of others experience a heightened sense of personal worth (Yeo, 2011). Greater self worth leads to greater efforts to build connection. A sense of pride becomes a motivating force (Yeo, 2011).

Respectful engagement is the process of offering dignity and worth to the student. Respect is often communicated through gestures, talk and bodily postures (Stephens, 2011). Since different cultures demonstrate respect in different ways, it is best that the resilience trainer be a member of the community or very knowledgeable about non-verbal communication in the given culture. The overall goal of respectful engagement is to offer an affirming sense of presence through a sense of unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1951). Gratitude also helps foster this kind of relationship (Stephens, 2011) When there is positive regard in the relationship between the student and the teacher, the student will have a sense of feeling known and loved, or being respected and cared for. When the relationship is truly high quality this feeling will be mutual (Stephens, 2011).

Trust is an important component of creating high quality connections. Trust is built through mutuality. It is built through the sharing of resources, ideas, and influence (Yeo, 2011). In demonstrating trust a teacher conveys the idea that he or she believes that the student will be able to do what is expected and that the student will be dependable (Yeo, 2011). How trust is demonstrated may be different from culture to culture and for this reason teachers may be trained in the concept trust and at the same time encouraged to explore how trust is demonstrated or manifested best in their own culture.

The role of play is very important in a learning environment. Studies show that when play is introduced into a relationship, stress is reduced as people are taken outside of their normal roles and behaviors. And, as they are taken out of these customary roles, they are allowed to see each other differently (Stephens, 2011). Additionally, play encourages more interpersonal risk-taking, and a loss of self-consciousness. During play, people develop a concern for both self and others. They are able to be fully present in the moment and experience a sense of freedom and happiness. These positive feelings help open people up to connecting with others they may otherwise not know (Stephens, 2011).

### **Conclusion**

Positive psychology has opened a window of hope to the world through the study of what brings about human flourishing. The PRP and the MRT programs are western models of resilience that show positive results in offering resilience to adolescents and soldiers and their families (Seligman, 2011). Depression in adolescents around the world is growing and the World Health Organization has named depression as the leading cause of illness and disability in adolescents around the world (WHO, 2014). It is this author's hope that principles of positive psychology may also be used to reach oral-learner adolescents around the world.

Religion is highly correlated with a higher sense of well-being (Newport et al., 2012a). It is also correlated with greater positive emotion and positive relationships (Lim, 2012). Most importantly, it is correlated with lower depression (Newport et al., 2010). Ninety percent of the world's adolescents live in developing countries (UNICEF, 2012). Religion is highly correlated with well-being in developing countries, specifically those with an annual income of less than \$2000 (Crabtree & Pelham, 2009). For this reason, the proposed curriculum suggests using religion in a resilience training curriculum to help depressed adolescents.

A large percentage of adolescents in developing countries are oral learners (UNICEF, 2012). Oral learners learn best through curricula based on stories, songs, and drama (Madinger et al., 2007). The proposed methodology suggests using stories in resilience training for adolescents, and specifically recommends Bible stories. The Bible is a multi-cultural internationally respected piece of literature that has archetypal stories of resilience (See Appendix A) to correlate with each of the VIA strengths (Park & Peterson, 2009) and is immediately available in more languages than any other book in the world. Approximately 517 languages have a complete Bible in their language and 2,817 have portions of the Bible translated into their language (Wycliff Global Alliance, 2013). The Bible is also in audio format in 751 languages (Wycliff Global Alliance, 2013) making it a readily available tool for global implementation of resilience training.

To date, limited research has been done to determine the effectiveness of Western positive interventions for resilience among oral learners in non-Western environments. Little, if any, research has been done to test spiritual resilience interventions among adolescents around the world. Existing programs in schools have thus far been focused on either building resilience (e.g. Penn Resiliency Program) (Seligman, 2011) or building character strengths and well-being (e.g. High School Positive Psychology Program) (Seligman et al., 2009); as yet, there is a need for model programs that integrate both approaches with an added spiritual dimension. This program integrates principles of resilience, PERMA (Seligman, 2011), character strengths (Park & Peterson, 2009) and spirituality (Pargament et al., 2013) in a format that can be used with oral learners across the globe.

In order to facilitate reproducibility, lessons have been formatted in a manner that is in keeping with oral learning principles (Madinger et al., 2007) simple, repetitive, and easy to



remember (See Appendix 1 for the rationale and curriculum). And, at the same time, lessons are based on the VIA strengths (Park & Peterson, 2009) and are structured with tested interventions for resilience (Gillham et al., 2007; Reivich & Shatté, 2002).

If this program is given endorsement from high-level national leaders in participating countries, has trainers who have been given adequate training through a train the trainer model, and is welcomed, supported and viewed as a solution for a felt need at a local level, it will have potential to transform the next generation of adolescents by lowering depression, increasing well-being and increasing human flourishing.

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## Appendix A

### Part I

#### Rationale and Methodology for Global Resilience Oral Workshops (GROW)

As the world is studying well-being and resilience, two interventions are yet to be explored. First, what difference if any would spiritual interventions have on well-being in adolescents? Second, how can resilience principles be adapted for adolescents who are oral learners in cross-cultural settings? In order to address these two questions, the author presents a character-based resilience curriculum that uses archetypal stories of resilience from the Bible. The name of this proposed program is Global Resilience Oral Workshops (GROW).

#### **Rationale and Methodology**

**Objectives:** The objectives of this study are fourfold: to use GROW curriculum's spiritual and non-spiritual positive interventions 1) to increase resilience against depression, 2) to increase an overall sense of human flourishing, 3) to build character, and 4) to increase hope and happiness in adolescents in non-western settings around the world.

- I. Use positive interventions to build resilience against depression through the following skills:
  - A. Building strong interpersonal relationships (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Rath & Harter, 2010) through capitalizing and active constructive response (Gable et al., 2004)
  - B. Connecting thoughts and feelings through a basic understanding of the relationship between belief and consequences (Ellis, 2010; Reivich & Shatté, 2002).

- C. Building self efficacy and self-esteem through problem solving (Reivich & Shatté, 2002), use of Bible story analysis (Jonassen & Hernandez-Serrano, 2002), and group brainstorming (Parnes, 1959; Heller, Keith, & Anderson, 1992; Mc Murray, 1994)
- II. Use positive interventions (PERMA construct, Seligman, 2011) to build a sense of human flourishing through:
- A. Positive Emotions
    - 1. Demonstrating gratitude (Kashdan et al., 2006; McCullough et al., 2002).
    - 2. Gratitude in prayer (Rosmarin et al., 2011).
    - 3. Savoring (Bryant & Veroff, 2005)
    - 4. Creating hope enhancers through activities such as music, play, and drama (Lopez et al., 2004)
    - 5. Exercising (Mutrie & Faulkner, 2004.)
    - 6. Creating experiences of awe in collective singing (Haidt, 2006)
    - 7. Practicing forgiveness (Shechtman et al., 2009)
  - B. Engagement (flow) (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)
    - 1. Singing (Walker, 2010)
    - 2. Telling stories (Walker, 2010)
    - 3. Acting in dramas (Walker, 2010)
    - 4. Brainstorming (Walker, 2010; Mc Murray, 1994)
    - 5. Praying (Penman, Oliver, & Harrington, 2009)
  - C. Relationships (Rath & Harter, 2010)
    - 1. Team working in pairs with accountability/encouragement partners
    - 2. Capitalizing and practicing active constructive response (Gable et al., 2004).

3. Team working through brainstorming (Masten et al., 1990)

D. Meaning

1. Praying (Paloma & Pendleton, 1991)
2. Worshipping (Ellison, 1991)
3. Sharing personal narratives (Tomasulo & Pawelski, 2012)

E. Achievement

1. Goal setting (Lopez et al., 2004) in practicing positive interventions
2. Memorizing of character definitions and corresponding Bible verses (Gander et al., 2013)
3. Certificate of completion for the course.

III. Use positive interventions to increase satisfaction with life through the study of character strengths (Park & Peterson, 2009).

- A. Studying the meaning of character definitions
- B. Spotting character strengths in story characters and friends (Seligman, 2011)
- C. Identifying personal character strengths (Seligman, 2011)
- D. Practicing positive interventions using character strengths (Seligman, 2011)

IV. Use pre- and post-assessment measures to evaluate the effect of the GROW intervention on the hope and happiness of the adolescents completing the program.

**Hypothesis:** Students who participate in a 26-week program of 90-minute weekly sessions using a Bible story-based character and resilience curriculum designed for oral learners will show increased happiness and hope.

**Setting:** This program will be offered for use by organizations and individuals who work with adolescents, including schools, community organizations, non-governmental

organizations, drug and alcohol prevention programs, community health projects, churches, group homes, correctional facilities, and other venues. An initial pilot project will be administered in Manaus, Brazil, in the spring of 2015, by co-investigator and sociologist/linguist, Lenita Assis. Assis will present the material to a group comprised of adolescents from various indigenous groups from Northern Brazil.

**Intervention:** The instructor will present the material in the proposed curriculum. The initial session will provide an introduction to the course and baseline testing of perceived happiness, using the single question happiness scale (Abdel-Khalek, 2006) and hope, using the Children's Hope Scale (Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2004). Twenty-four lessons will follow, using one story per week. The final class session will be used for conducting strength spotting in order to allow all people in the class to know their core strengths. A game about character strengths will be played as a review of all character strengths. Students will be re-tested with the single question happiness scale (Abdel-Khalek, 2006) and the Children's Hope Scale (Valle et al., 2004).

**Content, structure and rationale for the curriculum:** Each 90-minute lesson will follow the same basic format.

1. Start with a group song. Collective group singing ignites what Jonathan Haidt refers to as a "hive experience," or an elevated experience of transcendence in which a group melds into oneness and a sense of being one (Haidt, 2013). Music helps create a happy atmosphere by the release of positive emotions through flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). More specifically, adding a worship focus to the song may assist in creating sacred moments. Worship is an expression of spirituality. Spirituality is correlated to a sense of meaning in life (Fry, 2000). Elevation is created through collective awe (Haidt, (2006).

2. Collectively recite the past week's character definition and Bible verse in unison.

Transcendence, awe, and a sense of community are built through collective actions that solidify a group of voices into a single voice (Haidt, 2006). Repetition is an important teaching tool for oral learners (International Orality Network, 2014).

3. Share three good things that have come from the past week's positive intervention practice. This exercise gives students a chance to capitalize and practice giving and receiving active constructive response (Gable et al., 2004). Students will have an opportunity to do this in the large group and in partnership with another student who is their accountability/encouragement partner for the week. Partnerships such as these allow the character trait of honesty to be built through authentic relationships ([www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org)), and a smaller group may have the potential to foster greater authenticity. Partners will walk and talk in teams for 15 minutes as they review the good things that happened in their homework assignment. While walking and talking, encouragement partners will also have an opportunity to develop the character quality of team work by taking an open-minded and curious view in understanding their partners' points of view ([www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org)). The character strength zest involves increasing energy. Walking (health permitting) is a way to increase zest ([www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org)) as well as increase positive emotion (Mutrie & Faulkner, 2004).

4. Define the character strength for the week. Defining the character strength provides a clearer understanding of the meaning of the character quality, which may be particularly necessary when working with other languages and cultures.

5. Read or listen to the story. This allows students to do strength spotting within the characters of the story and also acts as a hope enhancer (Lopez et al., 2004).

6. Ask a volunteer to tell the story. After the story, the teacher will ask listeners

to do strength spotting in which they identify the focused character quality in one of the characters. This creates a greater sense of meaning through story telling (Ganzel,1999).

It also teaches character strengths (McCullough et al., 2002) and creates engagement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

7. Discuss these questions:

- a. What does this story teach about the given character strength? (Identification of character strengths) (McCullough et al., 2002)
  - b. Tell a story about yourself or someone you know who is very strong in this character trait. What shows strength of character? This question provides integration of the self through personal narrative (Tomasulo & Pawelski, 2012). It may also give opportunity for capitalizing and for active constructive response (Gable et al., 2004).
  - c. What stories do you have from your family or community about this character trait This question helps build a stronger positive relationship by offering respectful recognition (Stephens, 2011) of local, cultural and religious values. It also gives opportunity for integration of the self through a personal narrative (Tomasulo &Pawelski, 2012), and it provides meaning through the personal narrative (Ganzel, 1999).
8. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone who is showing the selected character quality. Drama provides a chance for play (Stephens, 2011) and interactive flow (Walker, 2010). Story telling is a hope enhancer (Lopez et al., 2004).
9. Recite the memory verse. Students will be asked to memorize a Bible verse that

- correlates with the character strength. They will then recite this as a group the following week. Oral learners learn best through memorization and a verse gives a simple reminder for the greater truth. (Goal setting) (Locke, 1996)
10. Solve the Problem: In this section the student will seek to identify the problem that the main character of the story faced, the cause of the problem and the solution that the character used to solve the problem. In some stories, students will identify beliefs and consequences (Ellis, 1962; Reivich & Shatté, 2002).
  11. Brainstorm a solution. As a group, students will brainstorm as many possible situations as possible that call for the selected character strength . They will discuss what they believe builds the character strength. They will also offer advice that they would give to a friend who wants to grow in that strength, and they will suggest self talk that a person might use to stay strong or grow in a certain character strengths. Brainstorming boosts creativity ([www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org)) through divergent thinking and allows for creative solutions (Masten et al., 1990), as well as allowing for the application to be contextually driven.
  12. Set a Goal. Students are asked to set a goal of practicing the selected character strength in a different way each day of the week. The class will be divided into dyads that become accountability/encouragement partners for the coming week. The dyad partners will walk for 15 minutes as they discuss the way that they plan to use the character strength. They will also practice affirmation of each other and pray for each other. In the following session, they will share the experiences that they had in practicing the character strength. This exercise offers positive interventions in the areas of: the building of relationships (Rath & Harter, 2010), goal setting (Locke,



1996), practicing of character strengths (Park & Peterson, 2009) and physical exercise (Mutrie & Faulkner, 2004).

13. Take time to savor. Students will be asked to take two minutes to sit in silence.

During this time they will silently consider something good that has happened that day, in class, or before arriving. They will reflect on what went well and what caused it to go so well (Bryant, 1989).

14. Practice forgiveness. Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps? (Schechtman et al., 2009)

15. Practice gratitude. Class members are asked to thank other class members for something that they have said or done in class that day. The session will close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to develop the selected character strength (Rosmarin et al., 2011).

**Evaluation:** Prior to the first lesson in the GROW curriculum, all adolescents who have agreed to participate in the program and who have signed an informed consent form will be asked to take a pre-test on the single question happiness scale (Abdel-Khalek, 2006) and the Children's Hope Scale (Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2004). During the last session, participants will be asked to re-take these two measures, and paired t-tests will be used to examine changes in participants' level of happiness and hope before and after participation in GROW. Settings that have concerns about alcohol and substance misuse will also include pre and post measures of the Single

Alcohol Screening Question (Williams & Vinson, 2001) and the Single Drug Screening Question (Smith, Schmidt, Allensworth-Davies, & Saitz, 2010).

## Appendix A

## Part II

## Curriculum for Global Resilience Oral Workshops (GROW)

**LESSON 1: Perseverance: Noah and the Ark****Genesis 6.9-8:22**

1. Start with a song.
2. Share three good things about last week's homework: Allow students to practice capitalizing (sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with three students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other in pairs, sharing three good things with their partner as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.
3. Define the character strength: "Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles, 'getting it out the door', taking pleasure in completing tasks."
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of perseverance in the characters: Perseverance: Genesis 6.9-8:22. (Noah and the Ark)
5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words. (In order to get the most accurate story possible, it may be important to allow more than one person tell the story.)
6. Discuss the story using discussion questions.
  - A. What does this story teach about perseverance?
  - B. Tell about a time when you or someone you know showed perseverance.
  - C. What tells you that Noah persevered?

D. What stories do you have from your family or community about showing perseverance?

7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing perseverance.

8. Memory Verse: But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint (New International Version, Isaiah 40.31)

9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that Noah and his family faced? What was the cause of problem? What did God tell Noah to do to solve the problem? How did perseverance help Noah solve the problem?

10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for showing perseverance. Discuss what helps a person be persevering. What are ways to show perseverance? What could you say to encourage a friend who wants to develop stronger skills in perseverance? What can they tell themselves?

11. Set a Goal: Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners. As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to practice this new character strength each day of the coming week in a different way. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing perseverance.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group: Form a circle. Ask class members to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary persevere.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 2: Humor: Abraham and Sarah**

#### **Genesis 12.1-3; 15.1-6; 17.15-19; 21.1-7**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share 3 good things about last week's homework: Allow students to practice capitalizing (sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with 3 students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing 3 good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.
3. Define the character strength: "Humor: playfulness; liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; making (not necessarily telling) jokes."
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of humor in the characters: Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-6; 17:15-19; 21:1-7.

5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words.
6. Discuss the story using discussion questions:
  - A. What does this story say about laughter?
  - B. Tell about a story that makes you laugh. Who is someone you know who has a good sense of humor? What makes them funny? .
  - C. What did God do in this story that shows he has a sense of humor? What did Abraham and Sarah do that shows that they had a sense of humor?
  - D. What stories do you have from your family or community about humor?
7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about something humorous.
8. Memory Verse: A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones (Proverbs 17. 22).
9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that Abraham and Sarah faced? What was God's solution? What made Abraham laugh? In what ways did his sense of humor help him accept the news of having a newborn at 100 years old?
10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that it helps to have a sense of humor. Discuss what helps a person learn to laugh and not take life so seriously. What could you tell a friend who wants ideas on how to learn to laugh and see life from a lighter perspective? What can they tell themselves?
11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week think of something that makes you laugh and ways that you can make others laugh. Look for an opportunity to visit a friend who makes you laugh. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their

experiences were in adding humor to their lives in a new way.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group: Form a circle. Offer an opportunity for class members to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to celebrate life with humor.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 3: Prudence: Abraham's Servant**

#### **Genesis 24**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share 3 good things about last week's homework. Allow students to practice capitalizing (sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing. The teacher will model this first with 3 students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing 3 good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.

3. Define the character strength: “Prudence: Being careful about one’s choices; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.”
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of prudence in the characters: Genesis 24. Abraham’s servant seeks a wife for Abraham.
5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words. (In order to get the most accurate story possible, it may be important to allow more than one person tell the story.)
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story teach about prudence?
  - B. Tell about a time when you or someone you know showed prudence.
  - C. What tells you that Abraham’s servant was showing prudence?
  - D. What stories do you have from your family or community about prudence?
7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing prudence.
8. Memory Verse: The simple believe anything but the prudent gives thought to his steps (Proverbs14.15).
9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that Abraham’s servant faced? What was the cause of his problem? What was the solution that he found? In what ways did he use prudence when solving his problem?
10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for showing prudence. Discuss what helps a person be prudent? What are ways to show prudence? What could you say to encourage a friend who wants to develop stronger skills becoming more prudent? What can they tell themselves?
11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice using prudence in a different way.



(Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing prudence.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group: Form a circle. Class members are asked to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to have prudence or good judgment.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 4: Forgiveness: Jacob and Esau**

#### **Genesis 27; 28.1-5; 32.1-21; 33.1-18**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share 3 good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing (sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with 3 students in

front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing 3 good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.

3. Define the character strength: "Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful."
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of forgiveness in the characters: Genesis 27; 28.1-5; 32: 1-21; 33.1-18. Jacob seeks Esau's forgiveness and Esau grants it.
5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words. (Since this is a long story, it may be best to have different people tell it in parts).
6. Discuss the story
  - A. What does this story teach about forgiveness?
  - B. Tell about a time when you or someone you know asked for or gave forgiveness.
  - C. What tells you that Esau forgave Jacob?
  - D. What stories do you have from your family or community about showing forgiveness? Was there ever a time when you asked for forgiveness from God or someone else and were forgiven?
7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing forgiveness, and someone asking for forgiveness.
8. Memory Verse: Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Ephesians 4.32).
9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that Jacob faced? What was the cause? What was his solution? What was the problem that Esau faced? What was the cause? What was the solution? What did Jacob believe that he needed to do when he met his brother? How do you

think he felt when he knew his brother was getting nearer? What did Esau believe about his meeting with Jacob? How did the character strength of forgiveness help Esau solve his problem?

10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for asking for or giving forgiveness. Discuss what helps a person be a forgiving person. What are ways to show forgiveness? What could you say to encourage a friend who wants to truly learn to forgive? What can they tell themselves?

11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice forgiveness toward others and ask for forgiveness from those you may have hurt. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing forgiveness.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Class members are asked to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to be more forgiving.

**GROW**

**LESSON 5: Perspective: Joseph****Genesis 39**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share three good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing--sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with three students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing three good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.
3. Define the character strength Perspective: (wisdom) Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of making sense to the world that make sense to oneself and to other people.
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of perspective in the characters:

Genesis 39—Joseph shows perspective on temptation

(optional additional stories include: Story two--Genesis 40, 41--- perspective on the importance of gaining wisdom from God. Story three--Genesis 42-45---perspective on forgiveness and why bad things happen in life. Story four-- Genesis 46-47---perspective on the importance of caring for family.)

5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words. (In order to get the most accurate story possible, it may be important to allow more than one person tell the story.)
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story teach about perspective?
  - B. Tell a story about a time when you or someone you know showed perspective.
  - C. What tells you that Joseph used the character strength of perspective?

D. What stories do you have from your family or community about demonstrating or using perspective?

7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone demonstrating perspective.

8. Memory Verse: Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm (Proverbs 13.20).

9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that Joseph faced? What was the cause of his problem? What were his solutions? What did Joseph believe about having sex with his employer's wife? How did he feel when she tempted him? How did he use perspective to help solve his problem?

10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for showing perspective (wisdom). Discuss what helps a person attain perspective. What are ways to show wisdom/perspective? What could you say to encourage a friend who wants to develop stronger skills in being wise? What can they tell themselves?

11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice using wisdom in a different way. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing perspective or wisdom.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Class members are asked to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to have perspective or to be wise.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 6: Creativity: Moses's Family**

#### **Exodus 1.1-2.10**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share three good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing--sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with three students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing three good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.
3. Define the character strength creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of creativity in the characters: Exodus 1-2.10. Moses's sister finds a creative way to save her brother from being killed.

5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words. (In order to get the most accurate story possible, it may be important to allow more than one person tell the story.)
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story teach about creativity?
  - B. Tell a story about a time when you or someone you know showed creativity.
  - C. What tells you that Moses's sister was being creative in the way that she worked to keep him alive?
  - D. What stories do you have from your family or community about being creative?
7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing creativity.
8. Memory Verse: Do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings; they will not serve before officials of low rank. (Proverbs 22. 29)
9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that Moses's sister faced? What was the cause of her problem? What were the solutions that she found? In what ways did she use creativity when solving his problem? Many of the Hebrew families in Egypt believed that there was no way to protect their baby sons. What did Moses's sister believe? What did Moses's sister feel because of her beliefs?
10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for showing creativity. Discuss what helps a person be creative? What are ways to show creativity? What could you say to encourage a friend who wants to develop creativity? What can they tell themselves?
11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice using creativity in a different way. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they

walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing creativity.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group: Form a circle. Class members are asked to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to be very creative.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 7: Humility: Moses at the Burning Bush**

#### **Exodus 3**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share three good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing--sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with



three students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing three good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.

3. Define the character strength humility: Modest. Allows accomplishments to speak for themselves; focuses on others.
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of humility in the characters: Exodus 3. Moses meets God at the burning bush.
5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words.
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story teach about humility?
  - B. Tell about a time when you or someone you know was humble.
  - C. What did Moses say or do that showed that he was humble?
  - D. What stories do you have from your family or community about showing humility?
7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing humility.
8. Memory Verse: When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom (Proverbs 11.2).
9. Solve the Problem: What did Moses hear from the burning bush? What problem did God ask Moses to solve? What did Moses believe about his worthiness to lead the Israelites out of Egypt? What do you think Moses was feeling? What did God believe about Moses's ability to do the job? What did God say that he would do to help Moses do this big project? What were God's solutions for the problem?
10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for

humility. Discuss what helps a person be humble. What are ways to show humility? What could you say to encourage a friend who wants to truly learn to be humble? What can they tell themselves? Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice humility in a new and different

11. Set a goal: Each day of the coming week practice humility in a new and different way.

(Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing humility.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Class members are asked to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to be more humble.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 8: Hope: Joshua and Caleb**

#### **Numbers 13.1–14.24**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.

2. Share three good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing--sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with three students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing three good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.
3. Define the character strength hope (optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation): expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something can be brought about.
4. Listen to the story and identify examples of hope in the characters: Numbers 13.1- 14.24 (Joshua and Caleb)
5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words.
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story teach about hope?
  - B. Tell a story about a time when you or someone you know showed hope, even when it may not have been easy.
  - C. What tells you that Joshua and Caleb had hope when others did not?
  - D. What stories do you have from your family or community about hope?
7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing hope.
8. Memory Verse: For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29.11).

9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that the Israelites faced in moving to a new country? What did most of the people believe about the problem? What were their emotions and feelings? What did Joshua and Caleb believe about the problem? In what ways did they use hope when solving the problem?
10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for showing hope. What helps a person to have hope even when it is hard? What are ways to show hope? What could you say to encourage a friend who wants to develop a more positive hopeful attitude? What can they tell themselves?
11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice using hope in a different way. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing hope.
12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?
13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Class members are asked to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.
14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

14. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to have hope.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 9: Love of Beauty and Excellence: Naomi and Ruth**

#### **Ruth 3**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share three good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing - sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with three students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing three good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.
3. Define the character strength love of beauty: Appreciating beauty, excellence, and or skilled performance in various domains of life.
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of love of beauty and excellence in the characters: Ruth 3.
5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words.
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story teach about love of beauty and excellence?
  - B. Tell a story about a time when you or someone you know showed a love for beauty for excellence.
  - C. What shows you that Ruth was a person of excellence?
  - D. What stories do you have from your family or community about the importance of

excellence and beauty?

7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing love for beauty and excellence.

8. Memory Verse: Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things (Philippians 4.8).

9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that Ruth and Naomi faced? What was the cause of the problem? What did Ruth do to be an excellent friend to Naomi? What did Naomi do to be an excellent friend to Ruth? How did Ruth's character strength of excellence help her solve her problems?

10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for a love for beauty and excellence. Discuss what helps a person practice a love for excellence?

What helps a person appreciate beauty? What could you say to encourage a friend who wants to develop a love for beauty and excellence? What can they tell themselves?

11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice using love of beauty and excellence in a different way. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing love of beauty and excellence.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Ask class members to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God’s forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to have a love for beauty and excellence.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 10: Bravery: David and Goliath**

#### **1 Samuel 17**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week’s character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share three good things about last week’s homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing--sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response (Encourage a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with three students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing three good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.
3. Define the character strength: Bravery is voluntarily taking action to help others in spite of significant risks or dangers. Brave individuals seek to do what they believe is important and right to do even though it may cost them personally.
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of bravery in the characters: I Samuel 17.1-51—the story of David and Goliath.

5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words. (In order to get the most accurate story possible, it may be important to allow more than one person tell the story.)
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story teach about bravery?
  - B. Tell about a time when you or someone you know showed bravery.
  - C. What tells you that this was an act of bravery?
  - D. What stories do you have from your family or community about bravery?
7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing bravery.
8. Memory Verse: Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go (Joshua 1.9) Set a goal to memorize this verse this week.
9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that David and his tribe/people group faced? What thinking trap did they fall into? What did the Israelites believe about Goliath? How did this make them feel? What did David believe about Goliath? How did this make him feel? David chose to believe something different than his friends believed. How did his belief in God help him become brave?
10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for bravery. Discuss what helps a person become brave. What could you say to encourage a friend who wants to be brave? What can they tell themselves?
11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice bravery in a different way. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength.



Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing bravery.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Class members are asked to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in Prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to become brave and courageous.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 11: Judgment: Solomon**

#### **1 Kings 3.3-28**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share three good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing--sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with

three students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing three good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.

3. Define the character strength judgment: open mindedness; critical thinking; thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions, but being able to change one's mind in light of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.

4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of judgment in the characters: I Kings 3.3-28. Solomon demonstrates wise judgment.

5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words.

6. Discuss the story:

A. What does this story say about Solomon's judgment?

B. Tell a story about a time when you or someone you know used good judgment.

C. What did Solomon say or do that showed good judgment?

D. What stories do you have from your family or community about judgment?

7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing good judgment.

8. Memory Verse: By justice a king gives a country stability, but those who are greedy for bribes tear it down. (Proverbs 29. 4)

9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that Solomon faced? What caused the problem? What did Solomon believe about the real mother? What was Solomon's solution? What did Solomon say or do that showed that he was using good judgment? In what ways did Solomon use good judgment help him come to a solution?

10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for judgment. Discuss the following questions: What helps a person develop better judgment?

What are ways that people show good judgment? What could you tell a friend who wants ideas on how to become better at showing good judgment? What can they tell themselves?

11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice using good judgment in a new way.

(Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing judgment in a new way.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Give an opportunity for class members to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to develop good judgment.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 12: Fairness: Lepers Outside the Camp**

#### **II Kings 7**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.

2. Share three good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing (sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with three students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing three good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.
3. Define the character strength fairness: Treating all people fairly is one of your abiding principles. You do not let your personal feelings bias your decisions about other people. You give everyone a chance.
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of fairness in the characters:
5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words. II Kings 7. The story of the lepers who found food outside the camp.
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story teach about fairness?
  - B. Tell a story about a time when you or someone you know was fair (even if it was difficult).
  - C. What did the lepers say or do to treat others with fairness?
  - D. What stories do you have from your family or community about showing fairness?
7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing fairness.
8. Memory Verse: Do to others as you would have them do to you. (Luke 6.31)

9. Solve the Problem: What problem did the Israelites face in this story? What did they believe about the problem? What problem did the Israelite lepers face in this story? What did they believe about the problem? What were the ways that the lepers solved their problem of hunger? What did they do to show fairness? In what way did their fairness lead to a solution for the whole city?
10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for fairness. Discuss what helps a person be fair? What are ways to show fairness? What could you say to encourage a friend who wants to learn to be fair? What can they tell themselves?
11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice fairness toward others. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing fairness.
12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?
13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Class members are asked to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.
14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to be more fair.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 13: Self Regulation: Daniel**

#### **Daniel 1**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share 3 good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing (sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with 3 students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing 3 good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.
3. Define the character strength: Self Regulation- You consciously regulate what you feel and do. You are a disciplined person. You are in control of your appetites and emotions, not vice versa.
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of self-regulation in the characters: Daniel 1.

#### **Daniel Asks for a Healthy Diet**

5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words. (In order to get the most accurate story possible, it may be important to allow more than one person tell the story.)
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story teach about self-regulation ?
  - B. Tell about a time when you or someone you know showed self-regulation.
  - C. What tells you that this was an act of self-regulation?

- D. What stories do you have from your family or community about self-regulation?
7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing self-regulation.
  8. Memory Verse: For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid but gives us power, love and self-discipline (II Tim 1.7). Set a goal to memorize this verse this week.
  9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that Daniel and his friends faced? What did Daniel believe about the King's food? What do you think he felt when he ate it? What did the king's guard believe would happen if Daniel did not eat the king's food and drink his alcohol? How did this make the king's guard feel? What did Daniel suggest as a possible solution? How did the character strength of self regulation help Daniel solve his problem?
  10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for self-regulation. Discuss what helps a person make good choices to practice self-discipline. What could you say to encourage a friend who wants to practice self-regulation or self-discipline? What can they tell themselves?
  11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice self-regulation in a different way. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share what their experiences were in practicing self-regulation.
  12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Class members are asked to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in Prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to become self regulated.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 14: Honesty: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego**

#### **Daniel 3**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share 3 good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing (sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with 3 students in front as they walk and talk for 15 minutes; and then students will do this with each other sharing 3 good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.
3. Define the character strength honesty: (Authenticity, integrity): Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions.



4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of honesty in the characters: Daniel 3. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words.
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story teach about honesty?
  - B. Tell about a time when you or someone you know showed honesty.
  - C. What tells you that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were being honest with the king?
  - D. What stories do you have from your family or community about showing honesty?
  - E. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing honesty.
8. Memory Verse: Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out (Proverbs 10. 9).
9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced? What was the cause of problem? What did Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego believe they should do when others were bowing to an idol? How do you think they felt when they were standing and everyone else was bowing? What did they do to solve the problem? In what ways did their honesty help them solve their problem?
10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for honesty. Discuss what helps a person be honest even when it is difficult? What are ways to demonstrate honesty? What is something that you have learned in your life about honesty that might help a friend who wants to become more honest? What can they tell themselves?

11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice using honesty in a different way. As students walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing honesty.
12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently and enjoy thinking about something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?
13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Ask class members to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.
14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?
15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to be honest.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 15: Social Intelligence: Esther**

#### **Esther 2-9**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share 3 good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing (sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and

celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with 3 students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing 3 good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.

3. Define the character strength: Social Intelligence-You are aware of the feelings and motives of other people. You know what to do to fit in with different social situations and you know what to do to put others at ease.
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of social intelligence in the characters: Esther 2-9 – the story of Queen Esther
5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words. (In order to get the most accurate story possible, it may be important to allow more than one person tell the story.)
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story teach about social intelligence?
  - B. Tell about a time when you or someone you know showed social intelligence.
  - C. What tells you that Queen Esther was showing social intelligence?
  - D. What stories do you have from your family or community about showing social intelligence?
7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing social intelligence.
8. Memory Verse: Teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I believe in your commands (Psalm 119.66).
9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that Queen Esther and her people faced? What was the cause of her problem? What did Esther believe should be done to the Israelites? What do you think she felt emotionally when she heard there was a plan to kill them? What did Haman

believe about the Israelites? What do you think he felt as he was planning a way to get rid of them? What were the solutions that Queen Esther came up with? How did she use her social intelligence to help her solve her problems?

10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for showing social intelligence. Discuss the following: What helps a person be a socially intelligent? What are ways to show social intelligence? What could you say to encourage a friend who wants to develop stronger skills in social intelligence? What can they tell themselves?

11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice using social intelligence in a different way. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing social intelligence.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Class members are asked to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to be socially intelligent.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 16: Teamwork: Nehemiah**

#### **Nehemiah 2.1-10; 4.1-23**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share 3 good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing (sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with 3 students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing 3 good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.
3. Define the character strength team working: (citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty) working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of team working in the characters Nehemiah 2.1-10; 4.1-23
5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words.
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does the story teach about teamwork?
  - B. Tell about a team when you were a teamworker or someone else you know was a team worker.
  - C. What did Nehemiah and the other wall builders say or do that showed that they were team workers?

- D. What stories do you have from your family or community about working as a team?
7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing teamworking
  8. Memory Verse: Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up (Ecclesiastes 4. 9-10).
  9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that Nehemiah faced in this story? What did Sanballot and Tobias believe about the ability of the people of Judah to rebuild their city wall? What do you think they felt as a result of this belief? What did Nehemiah believe about the ability of the people of Judah to rebuild the temple? What do you think he felt as a result of his belief? What were the solutions that Nehemiah came up with to rebuild the wall?
  10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for team working. Discuss what helps a person to be a good team worker? What are ways that people enjoy team working? What helpful suggestions could you tell a friend who wants ideas on how to be a better team worker but doesn't know how? What can they tell themselves?
  11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice team working. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing team working.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Class members are asked to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to become a good team worker.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 17: Love of Learning: Jesus**

**Luke 1.26-35; 2.1-20; 41-52.**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share 3 good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing (sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with 3 students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing 3 good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.

3. Define the character strength love of learning: Mastering new skills, topics and bodies of knowledge, whether on one's own or formally.
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of love of learning in the characters: Luke 1.26-35; 2.1-20; 41-52. The birth of Jesus until he was 12 in the temple.
5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words.
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story say about Jesus's love of learning when he was 12?
  - B. Tell about your own love of learning or tell about someone else that you know who loves to learn new things.
  - C. What did Jesus say or do that showed that he loved to learn?
  - D. What stories do you have from your family or community about a love for learning?
7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing a love for learning.
8. Memory Verse: An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge (Proverbs 18.25).
9. Solve the Problem: When Jesus was 12, Mary and Joseph had a problem what was it? What caused the problem? What are ways that they worked to solve the problem? What did Jesus believe the problem was? In what ways did his love of learning help him solve the problem?
10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for love of learning. Discuss what helps a person love to learn? What are ways that people enjoy learning something new? What could you tell a friend who wants ideas on how to enjoy learning? What can they tell themselves?



11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice learning something new and learning it in a new way. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.). As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing learning in a new way.
12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?
13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Class members are asked to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.
14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?
15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to enjoy learning.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 18: Gratitude: The Leper Who was Healed**

#### **Luke 17.11-19**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse
2. Share 3 good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing (sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and

celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with 3 students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing 3 good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.

3. Define the character strength: Gratitude-You are aware of the good things that happen to you and you never take them for granted. Your friends and family members know that you are a grateful person because you always take the time to express your thanks

4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of gratitude in the characters: Luke 17:11-19— the story of 10 lepers who were healed but only one came back to give gratitude.

5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words. (In order to get the most accurate story possible, it may be important to allow more than one person tell the story.)

6. Discuss the story:

A. What does this story teach about gratitude?

B. Tell about a time when you or someone you know showed gratitude.

C. What tells you that this was an act of gratitude?

D. What stories do you have from your family or community about gratitude?

7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing gratitude.

8. Memory Verse: In every thing give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you (I Thess. 5.18 ).

9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that the leper and his friends faced? What did the lepers believe would heal them? After the lepers were healed, one came back to say thank you? What do you think he believed about the importance of saying thank you? What did he do to show gratitude?

10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for showing gratitude. Discuss what helps a person remember to say thank you? What are ways to say thank you? What have you learned about showing gratitude that might help a friend who wants to show more gratitude? What can they say to themselves?

11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice gratitude in a different way. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing gratitude.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Class members are asked to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to show gratitude.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 19: Kindness: The Good Samaritan**

**Luke 10.25-37**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share 3 good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing (sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with 3 students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing 3 good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.
3. Define the character strength: generous to others and you are never too busy to do a favor. You enjoy doing good deeds. You are kind and to others, even if you do not know them well.
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of kindness in the characters: Luke 10.25-37. The story of the good Samaritan.
5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words. (In order to get the most accurate story possible, it may be important to allow more than one person tell the story.).
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story teach about kindness?
  - B. Tell about a time when you or someone you know showed kindness.
  - C. What tells you that the Samaritan man was showing kindness?
  - D. What stories do you have from your family or community about showing kindness?
7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing kindness.
8. Memory Verse: Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4.32).

9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that the man lying beside the road faced? What was the problem that the Samaritan man faced? What did the Samaritan man believe that he should do when he found the stranger beaten up? The Samaritan man was busy. He was on his way to somewhere that he could not take the man who was beaten up. How did he solve this problem?

10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for showing kindness. Discuss what helps a person be kind? What are ways to show kindness? What could you say to encourage a friend who wants to show more kindness? What can they tell themselves?

11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice kindness in a different way. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing kindness.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Class members are asked to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to show kindness.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 20: Love: The Father of the Prodigal Son**

#### **Luke 15.11-32**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share 3 good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing (sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with 3 students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing 3 good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.
3. Define the character strength love: You value close relationships with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated. The people to whom you feel most close also feel most close to you.
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of love in the characters: Luke 15.11-32, The Prodigal Son.
5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words. (In order to get the most accurate story possible, it may be important to allow more than one person tell the story.)
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story teach about love?
  - B. Tell about a time when you or someone you know showed love.

C. What tells you that the father showed love?

D. What stories do you have from your family or community about showing love?

7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing love.

8. Memory Verse: Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres (I Cor. 13.4-7).

9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that the son faced? What was the cause of the problem? What was his solution? What was the problem that the father faced? What was the cause? What was his solution? What was the problem that the older brother faced? What was the cause? What was his solution?

10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for showing love. Discuss what helps a person to be loving even when it is hard? What are ways to show love? What could you say to encourage a friend who wants to develop stronger skills in showing love? What can they tell themselves?

11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice using love in a different way. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing love.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently

consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Ask class members to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to be loving.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 21: Curiosity: Zacchaeus**

#### **Luke 19.1-10**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share 3 good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing (sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with 3 students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing 3 good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.
3. Define the character strength curiosity: (Interest, novelty seeking, openness to experience): Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.



4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of curiosity in the characters: Luke 19.1-10  
Zacchaeus.
5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words.
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story teach about curiosity?
  - B. Tell about a time when you or someone you know showed curiosity.
  - C. What did Zacchaeus do that showed curiosity?
  - D. What stories do you have from your family or community about curiosity?
7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing curiosity.
8. Memory Verse: If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to you (James 1.5).
9. Solve the Problem: What was Zacchaeus curious about? What was the problem that Zacchaeus faced? What was the cause of his problem? What were the solutions that he found? In what ways did curiosity help him solve his problem?
10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for being curious. Discuss what helps a person be curious? What are ways to use curiosity? What could you say to encourage a friend who wants to become more curious about life? What can they tell themselves?
11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice using curiosity in a different way. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their

experiences were in practicing curiosity.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently enjoy remembering something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group: Form a circle. Ask class members to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to be curious.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 22: Spirituality: Nicodemus and Jesus**

#### **John 3.1-21**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse
2. Share 3 good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing (sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with 3 students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing 3 good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.

3. Define the character strength spirituality: Spirituality (religiousness, faith, purpose): Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose, the meaning of life and the meaning of the universe.
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of spirituality in the characters: John 3.1-21. The story of Nicodemus and Jesus.
5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words.
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story teach about spirituality?
  - B. Tell a story about you or someone you know who is a spiritual person.
  - C. What tells you that Jesus is a spiritual person in this story?
  - D. What stories do you have from your family or community about what it means to be spiritual?
7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone who is spiritual.
8. Memory Verse: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3.16).
9. Solve the Problem: What was Nicodemus curious about in this story? What did he do to solve the problem of his unanswered questions? What was Nicodemus's question to Jesus? What was Jesus's answer? What did Nicodemus believe Jesus meant when he said, "You must be born again"? What did Jesus say that he meant by being "born again"? How does asking questions when you have a problem help you to come to a solution or better understanding?
10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for spirituality. Discuss what helps a person choose to be spiritual even when it is

difficult? What are ways to grow spiritually? What is something that you have learned in your life about spirituality that you could tell a friend who wants to grow more spiritually? What can they tell themselves? What can they tell God?

11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice spirituality in a different way. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing spirituality.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently and enjoy thinking about something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Ask class members to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to be spiritual.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 23: Leadership: Jesus**

#### **John 13**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse

2. Share 3 good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing (sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with 3 students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing 3 good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.
3. Define the character strength leadership: encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the same time maintain good relations within the group.
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of leadership in the characters: John 13. Jesus washes the disciples feet.
5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words.
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story teach about leadership?
  - B. Tell a story about a time when you or someone else was a leader.
  - C. What tells you that Jesus was being a leader in this story?
  - D. What stories do you have from your family or community about what it means to be a leader?
7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing leadership.
8. Memory Verse: Whoever wants to become great among you must become your servant (Matthew 20.26).
9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that Jesus was facing in this story? What was the cause of problem? What are the many ways that Jesus chose to serve his followers at this goodbye dinner before he died? What did Jesus want his followers to do for each other after he

was gone? How did he treat everyone in the group even though one of them was going to betray him?

10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for leadership. Discuss what helps a person be a leader even when it is difficult? What is a way that the class might demonstrate leadership by working together on a service leadership project for the community? What are ways to demonstrate leadership? What is something that you have learned in your life about leadership that you could tell a friend who wants to become a better leader? What can they tell themselves?

11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice using leadership in a different way. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing leadership.

12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently and enjoy thinking about something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?

13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Ask class members to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.

14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?

15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to be a good leader.

## **GROW**

### **LESSON 24: Zest: The Man Who was Healed**

#### **Acts 3.1-10**

1. Start with a song, then recitation of last week's character strength and Bible verse.
2. Share 3 good things about last week's homework. (Allow students to practice capitalizing (sharing a blessing or something good that came from the assignment) and then practice active constructive response. (Encourage the student to share a detailed account while affirming and celebrating with the person who is sharing). The teacher will model this first with 3 students in front of the class and then students will do this with each other, sharing 3 good things in groups of two as they walk and talk for 15 minutes.
3. Define the character strength Zest: (zest, enthusiasm, vigor, energy): Approaching life with excitement, and energy; feeling alive and activated.
4. Listen to the story and listen for examples of zest in the characters: Acts 3:1-10. The lame man who was healed.
5. Ask a volunteer to tell the story in his or her own words. (In order to get the most accurate story possible, it may be important to allow more than one person tell the story.).
6. Discuss the story:
  - A. What does this story teach about zest?
  - B. Tell about a time when you or someone you know showed zest.
  - C. What tells you that the lame man who was healed was showing zest?
  - D. What stories do you have from your family or community about showing zest?

7. Ask volunteers to act out the Bible story or another story about someone showing zest.
8. Memory Verse: Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men (Colossians 3.23).
9. Solve the Problem: What was the problem that the lame man faced? What did the lame man believe Peter and John would give him? What did Peter and John do in this story? After the lame man could walk, what do you think he believed that made him feel so happy? What did the man who was healed do to show zest?
10. Brainstorm a solution: As a group, brainstorm as many situations as possible that call for showing zest. Discuss what helps a person be full of zest? What are ways to show zest? What could you say to encourage a friend who wants to show more zest? What can they tell themselves?
11. Set a Goal: Each day of the coming week practice zest in a different way. (Divide the large group into dyads. Each dyad will become encouragement partners.) As they walk and talk for 15 minutes, each partner will share ways that they plan to use this new character strength. Next week, encouragement partners will share with each other what their experiences were in practicing zest.
12. Take time to savor: Take two minutes to sit in silence. Ask students to silently consider something good that has happened in class or before arriving. What went well? What caused it to go so well?
13. Practice gratitude in a large group. Form a circle. Class members are asked to thank other class members and or the teacher for something that they have said or done in class that day.



14. Practice forgiveness: Students are asked to take 2 minutes to reflect in silence on forgiveness. During this time they will silently reflect on the questions: Do I need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything? Do I need to ask others to forgive me? Do I need to forgive anyone for hurting me? What are my next steps?
15. Practice gratitude in prayer: Close in prayer, thanking God for giving all that is necessary to show zest.

### Final Session

In this session, students will be asked to help identify character strengths in their classmates. The class will be divided into groups of 3. Each student will have an opportunity to share three stories of a time when they feel that they were at their best. After sharing these stories, the other two students will tell the student five character qualities that they see in this person through these stories. Students will then play a character strengths identification game.

Following the character identification exercise, and game, students will be retested on the happiness scale (Abdel-Khalek, 2006) for overall happiness and the Children's Hope Scale (Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2004) for overall hope.



## Appendix B

Ten Strategies for Savoring (Salzberg & Reivich, MAPP 708 Lecture, April 26, 2014)

- Sharing with Others – Bring a friend along to share the moment or the memory!
- Memory Building -Take a mental picture.
- Self-Congratulation – Admit to yourself how well you did
- Comparing – Notice when it is so much better than it was.
- Sensory-Perceptual Sharpening – Hone in on every detail of the experience. (Use all of your senses.)
- Absorption – Go all in – block out everything else.
- Behavioral Expression – Celebrate like no one is looking!
- Temporal Awareness – Recognize that it will not last forever.
- Counting Blessings – Recognize your gratitude for the experience.
- Avoiding Kill-Joy Thinking – Don't think about what else you should be doing or who does it better.

## Appendix C

Common Belief-Consequence Connections (Reivich &amp; Shatté, 2002; Saltzberg, 2014)

| <b>BELIEFS</b>                     | <b>EMOTIONAL CONSEQUENCES</b>    |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Loss                               | Sadness/Withdrawal               |
| Danger/Threat                      | Anxiety/Agitation                |
| Trespassed Against/Harmed/Violated | Anger/Aggression                 |
| Caused Harm                        | Guilt/Apologizing                |
| Negative Comparison to Others      | Embarrassment/Hiding             |
| Positive Contribution              | Pride/Sharing                    |
| Appreciating/Received              | Gratitude/Paying Back or Forward |
| Positive Future                    | Hope/Energized to Take Action    |

## Appendix D

## Thinking Traps (Reivich &amp; Shatté, 2002)

| <b>Thinking Trap</b>  | <b>Cues</b>                     | <b>Questions</b>  |
|---|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Jumping to Conclusions-</b><br>Making assumptions without substantial information                        | <b>Slow Down!</b>               | What is the evidence for and against this conclusion?     |
| <b>Tunnel Vision-</b> Seeing only the negative or the positive without a complete set of facts.             | <b>Include More Information</b> | What salient info did I miss?                             |
| <b>Personalizing-</b> Reflex response to blame one's self.  | <b>Look Outward</b>             | How did others or circumstances contribute?               |
| <b>Externalizing-</b> Reflex response to blame someone else or something else.                              | <b>Look Inward</b>              | How did I contribute?                                     |
| <b>Mind Reading-</b> Assuming others know what you are thinking. Assuming you know what others are thinking | <b>Speak Up</b>                 | Did I express myself? Did I ask for information?          |
| <b>Over-Generalizing-</b><br>Assassinates the character of others by blaming                                | <b>Look at Behavior</b>         | Is there a specific behavior that explains the situation? |

Appendix E

Active Constructive Response Guide (Retrieved from <http://www.gostrengths.com/what-is-active-and-constructive-responding/> July 7, 2014).



Retrieved from <http://www.gostrengths.com/what-is-active-and-constructive-responding/> July 7, 2014.

Appendix F

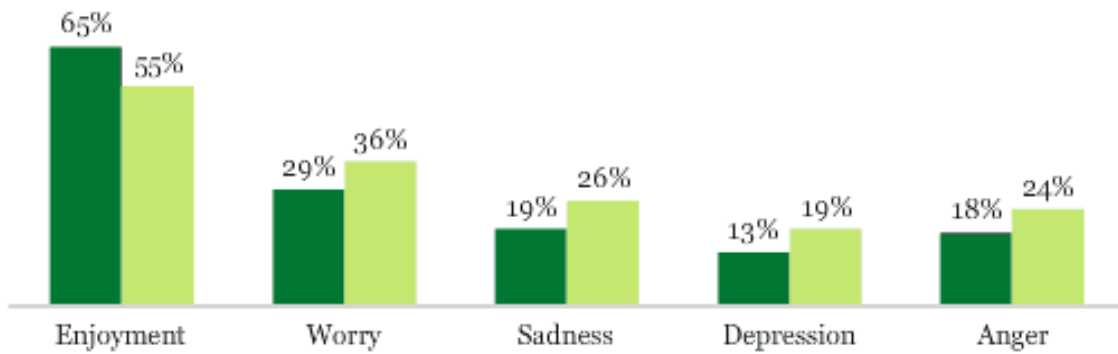
Gallup Poll of Correlation between Well-being and Religion (Retrieved from:

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/116449/religion-provides-emotional-boost-world-poor.aspx>)

*Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday?*

Percentage who say “yes” in countries with average annual incomes of \$2,000 or less

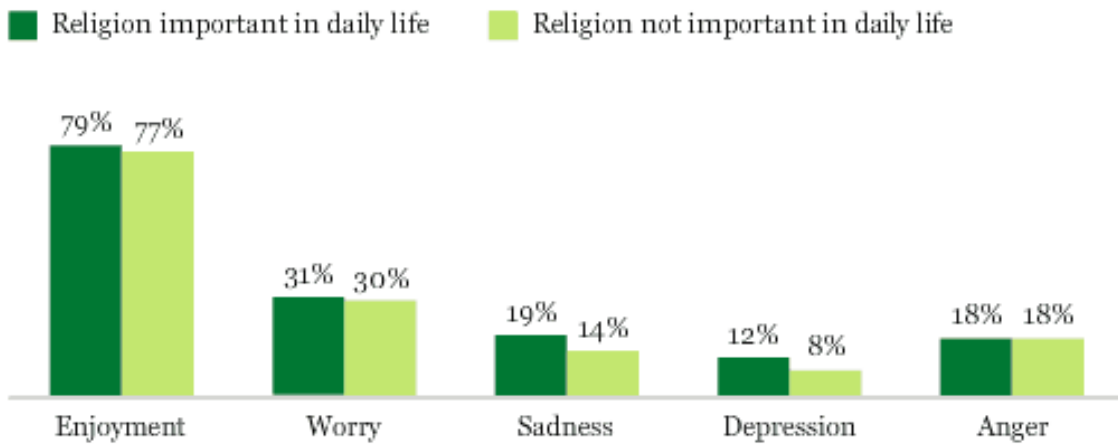
■ Religion important in daily life    ■ Religion not important in daily life



GALLUP POLL

*Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday?*

Percentage who say “yes” in countries with average annual incomes of \$25,000 or more



GALLUP POLL