



PURPOSE

To demonstrate that the human person is always free to choose excellence.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson students will be able to:

1. Understand that intentional choices can be either excellent or non-excellent.
2. Direct their power to choose toward excellence.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- *Role-Playing Scenario* sheet (see Materials)
- *Gandhi – Human Rights Activist* video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ept8hwPQQNg>)

VOCABULARY

- **freedom for excellence:** the capacity to always desire human excellence and act to attain it

PROCEDURE

Step 1: Review the previous lessons. Ask students to report on the success of their pay it forward actions, or to share the act of kindness/generosity they discovered in a news story.

Step 2: Introduce freedom for excellence with a student exercise.

Write the following two statements on the board. Ask students to write out how the statements make them feel.

“You’re so kind.”

“You’re so ugly.”

Gather for a classroom discussion. Ask:

- How does the first statement make you feel? Why?
- How does the second statement make you feel? Why?
- Is one more excellent than another? Why or why not?

Do the same exercise with the following two statements.

“When you assumed that I lied to you, you hurt my feelings. It wasn’t kind.”

“I’m so glad that you swiped money from your mom to pay for my field trip.”

Gather for a classroom discussion. Ask:

- How does the first statement make you feel? Why?
- How does the second statement make you feel? Why?
- Is one more excellent than another? Why or why not?
- What role do emotions have in choosing excellence?

Step 3: Teach freedom for excellence.

Explain: There is a very important element to our power to choose. In one way, we can use our power to choose to do whatever we want—such as to say mean things that can damage a person; or to do something illegal and potentially dangerous, like running a red light at a traffic stop. This is not, however, what our power to choose is meant for.

The mission of the person is to respect human dignity in us and others and to grow in excellence! This means that, with every choice we make, we should choose between all the options we have—choose that which best respects human dignity and helps us grow in excellence! This is what it means to be **free for excellence**.

Role-play with students. Gather a pair of student volunteers in pairs and assign them the *Role-Playing Scenario*. They should perform this scenario in front of the class.

Ask:

- What choices were made during this role-play? What choices were not made?
- Were the choices excellent? Why or why not?
- What would you have done in this situation?

Step 4: Help students prepare to grow in excellence. Write on the board:

- **integrity:** the state of being whole or undivided

Explain: What a life of integrity requires is that we make all of our choices based on what we value and based on what our powers allow for us—that everything that we say, do, and choose correctly reflects who we are! We don’t only exercise when our friends do, or don’t only study when our parents are around. We should make these choices out of a personal desire to grow in excellence.

Group students in groups of 2-3 and propose to them the following scenario: You three all try out for the school basketball team and promise yourselves before try-outs that either all three of you will be on the team, or none of you will. The coach praises you all during try-outs, both in private and in front of the crowd, and you are so excited—but, when the day for announcing teammates comes up, only two of you make the team.

Ask:

- What should acting with integrity look like in this situation? What should you do?
- How should you talk about this?
- What do you think your coach would say? Your teachers? Your parents?
- What would you do if you were chosen as a member? What if you were the one who wasn't?

[The student should be humble and compassionate to their friend and not rub in the fact that they made the team when their friend did not.]

Step 5: Summarize: In the last lesson, we looked at the difference between two types of actions in the human person—intentional actions, those actions that a person chooses, or non-intentional actions, those actions that a person doesn't choose. Today we have seen that there are two types of actions that a person can choose—excellent or non-excellent actions. While we are able to choose either, our mission and the human dignity we all possess should compel us to always choose the most excellent thing, in respect of that dignity and in the pursuit of human excellence!

FOLLOW-UP & HOMEWORK

Ask students to choose someone they know who has passed away, who lived a life of integrity— and ask them to write a eulogy for this person, demonstrating the qualities of this life. The alternative would be for them to write a eulogy for themselves, thinking of actions they would want to take in order to demonstrate integrity in their life.

SUPPLEMENTS

Supplement 1: Watch the *Gandhi* video.

Ask:

- How does Gandhi exhibit human excellence?
- How did Gandhi's excellent actions lead to change around the world?



Role-Playing Scenarios

Directions: Prepare two students to role-play under these circumstances.

Student #1

You've gone home right after school to study for a big Honors Algebra test tomorrow. You need to get a B or higher in order to raise your class grade to an A-, which your parents will require of you if they're going to give you money to go on a summer mission trip. You know you'll have to study a lot in order to get this grade. Student #2 is your best friend--and he calls while you're studying.

Student #2

Student #1 is your best friend--you call them, and ask them to come over and play video games/watch a movie. When Student #1 says no, because s/he has to study, you play the blame game: *You're not really my best friend, then! If you really cared, you would come over and play.*