



PURPOSE

To distinguish humans from other living beings with their power to choose.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

1. Recognize the power **to choose** as one only we humans have.
2. Apply their power to choose **freedom for excellence**.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- **Tic Tac Toe** board (see Materials)
- **Role Playing** list (see Materials)
- **Malala's story – BBC news** video
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FnloKzEAX7o>)
- **Best Foot Forward** worksheet (see Materials)
- Supplementary materials:
 - **14-year-old's mission to end hunger** video
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTI5JOmSxAw>)

VOCABULARY

- **to choose**: the human ability to knowingly select between options
- **intentional action**: an action knowingly chosen by a person
- **non-intentional action**: an action not knowingly chosen by a person
- **freedom for excellence**: the ability to choose what is good in the long run

PROCEDURE

Step 1: Review the previous lessons. We've learned about human dignity, which is our unique value as human persons. We've also learned about the powers that all living beings—plants, animals, and humans—share: the powers to eat, grow, and reproduce. We've learned about the powers we share with animals—including feeling emotions and using our external and internal senses.

Ask two to three students to share their **Science at Home** worksheet.

Ask:

- What special human power did you use to complete the assignment? [power to think]
- How does the power to think help us with individual details? [we are able to think about them all together in our mind to solve questions]

Step 2: Teach the power to choose.

Start with a hook. Draw the **Tic Tac Toe** board, and play a game or two with students, to review key concepts from the HDC, as well as practice of their power to choose. At the end, ask: What is the strategy to win this game? How do you choose one box or another? And how did you choose which answer to give for the questions asked?

Then discuss: Your teacher asks you to bring a box of crayons from one side of the classroom to the other. On the way, you trip on the rug and drop the box, scattering the crayons across the floor. Ask: Did you make a choice to listen to your teacher? To trip? To drop the crayons?

Then, ask: What is the difference between listening to your teacher and accidentally tripping?

Write on the board:

- **to choose:** the human ability to knowingly select between options

Explain: Humans have the special power to choose, to choose one action over others, knowing which action they are choosing and why they are choosing it. Our power to choose divides the actions that we take into two categories. One category includes the actions we choose, such as listening to the teacher, and another category includes the actions we did not choose, such as accidentally tripping.

Write on the board:

- **intentional action:** an action knowingly chosen by a person
- **non-intentional action:** an action not knowingly chosen by a person

Explain: Our actions to participate in the game and to listen to our teacher were intentional actions—they were actions that we chose. The actions of blinking and tripping were non-intentional actions—they were actions that we did not choose. Today we will learn more about our power of choosing intentional actions.

Step 3: Teach freedom for excellence.

Draw two large buckets on the board—an “excellent” and a “non-excellent” bucket—and explain: Actions for which we used our power to choose in the right way we can put into the “excellent”

bucket, and actions for which we didn't use our power in the right way we can put into the "non-excellent" bucket.

Model an answer under each category for the students:

excellent: comforted a sad friend

non-excellent: lied about the number of cookies I ate

Our goal should be to grow in human excellence as much as possible! The way that we do that is by taking excellent actions.

Hand students two pieces of paper—one for an excellent action they took this week, one for a non-excellent action. Upon completion, students should add the pieces to the right bucket.

Read student answers, and ask:

- Why is this an excellent action?
- Why is this a non-excellent action?

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 want—such as say mean things that can damage a person; or to do something illegal and potentially dangerous, such as run 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 and to grow in excellence!

Write on the board:

- **freedom for excellence:** the ability to choose what is good in the long run

Discuss: This means that, with every choice we make and between all the options we have, we must 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 one item each from the **Role Playing** list. 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?

Watch the **Malala's story – BBC news** video with the class as an example of someone who used her freedom to grow in excellence.

Explain: Malala Yousafzai is a young Pakistani activist for women’s and girls’ education. From an early age, she made her opinions vocal that all people have a right to education, girls and women included. Her country has undergone the occupation by the Taliban and suffered under its control. The Taliban is a radical group that did not allow women and girls to go to school. Malala knew this was wrong, and she chose to courageously speak out about it, even putting her own life in danger, as the Taliban saw her as a threat and specifically targeted her. Her actions showed her determination and bravery, and it revealed the importance of her cause. She also inspired, and continues to inspire, women and girls across the world in the fight for girls’ right to education. In fact, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014, and was the youngest recipient of the award.

Step 4: Summarize: In our last lesson, we learned that we have the power to think: about ourselves, about the world, about ideas! We can do a lot of good for the world when we put our power to think to good use, and think about excellent things. We also have the power to choose, which lets us take intentional actions to put our ideas into action. Doing this, we grow in excellence ourselves, and can help others grow in excellence also.

FOLLOW-UP & HOMEWORK

1. Share your excellent and non-excellent choices with your parents and family. Ask them to share some examples from your family history of excellent choices that people in your family have made.
2. Have the students accomplish the **Best Foot Forward** worksheet for the next class.

SUPPLEMENTS

Supplement 1: Teach the creative power of action: The most important thing to remember about our power to choose is that, when used with intention and purpose, it has amazing power to “create” in the world in accord with what we envision as individual persons.

We can choose to make changes to our bodies, to our traits, to the way we spend our time; we can choose the way we relate to other people, and the way that we help or don’t help them; the way that we interact with the world around us. Each action that we take generates an effect in the world, and every action affects us because it contributes to developing our pattern of actions.

Tell the story of Trevor McKinney, a character from a novel titled *Pay It Forward* by Catherine Ryan Hyde, to illustrate the creative power of human actions.

Trevor McKinney is a seventh grader in Las Vegas. His social studies teacher assigns the class an assignment: to put into action a plan that will make the world a better place.

Trevor comes up with a plan he calls “Pay It Forward”: whoever receives a favor has to do a favor for three other people rather than pay back the original one. These new favors have to be major favors that the person who receives them cannot have accomplished alone. First Trevor lets Jerry, a homeless man, live in his garage. Jerry later does car repairs for Trevor’s mother, then helps a woman who is in danger.

The pay-it-forward project grows into a network of people doing good things for others, until, after a series of interactions among many, many people, a man even gives away his car to a journalist in Los Angeles who is in a car accident. In the end, Trevor defends his friend Adam against bullies who have ganged up on him, and gets accidentally killed. At the vigil held for Trevor’s death, hundreds of recipients of pay-it-forward favors show up to pay their respects: an exponentially great effect, that started with one seventh grader!

Discussion questions:

- How does this story demonstrate the power of one human action?
- Why did Trevor’s project work so well? Why is affirming another person’s human dignity so powerful?

Supplement 2: Demonstrate the importance of taking actions that intentionally respect the dignity of others.

Introduce students to Katie Stagliano, founder of Katie’s Krops.

Katie Stagliano is a young 14-year-old American girl.

When she was nine years old, she grew a cabbage for a school project (one that grew to nearly 44 pounds!), then donated it to a local soup kitchen where it helped to feed nearly 300 people!

That’s when Katie realized the great impact she could have on poverty in her town, with her own individual effort! She established vegetable gardens in order to donate what she grew to the people who needed it most. Today her group is called Katie’s Krops, and Katie and her organization continue to grow crops and donate thousands of pounds of produce to organizations that feed the hungry.

Show the **14-year-old’s mission to end hunger** video to conclude.

Explain: Katie's story is one example of the way that a simple choice on the part of one individual person can have immense repercussions on the lives of other people. The first excellent choice was Katie's donation—while she grew the cabbage for school, instead of keeping or destroying it, she donated it where it would be needed and where it could help respect the dignity of others, by providing for their basic human needs. She then continued this work, and it has spread to affect for the good the lives of hundreds of people in her community.

Supplement 3: Share *The Legend of the Dipper*.

Once upon a time, a young girl lived with her mother in a tiny village. They were very happy together, and all was well. But then, one day the mother fell gravely ill. She laid in her bed for days because she was so sick, and the little girl tried her hardest to make her mother feel better. Eventually, the little girl needed to go the spring in the forest to collect more water for her mother to drink, but the girl was so tiny that she could only carry a small, tin dipper. Even though the dipper was small, the little girl knew that it would help her mother, so she grabbed the dipper and she began to run towards the forest.

The little girl ran and ran for what seemed like forever. She finally reached the spring, and she filled her dipper to the brim with the sweet, cold water. Then, the young girl began her long journey home. The way home was long, and the young girl was so tired. She would trip over rocks and stumble over bushes, and some of the water fell out onto the ground. As she was walking, the young girl spotted a small dog in the woods. He looked so tired and hot, and the young girl felt sorry for him. She knelt beside the dog and offered him a little bit of the precious water meant for her mother. As she did this, her small, tin dipper turned into a beautiful silver dipper, but the girl did not even notice. When the dog had drunk enough water, the young girl continued on her way home.

After a while, she encountered an old man walking along the road. The sun was so hot, and the man was very thirsty. He asked the young girl for a drink of water. Even though there was only a little bit of water left, the young girl knew that she should be kind, so she gave the man a drink. As she did this, the dipper changed from silver to gold, but the young girl did not notice. Once the man had finished his drink, the young girl continued her journey home, but eventually she too became thirsty. She was thirsty and weak from her long journey, but she didn't drink any of the water because she knew her mother needed it more than she did.

Finally, the young girl arrived back at her house. She ran inside and gave the dipper to her mother. As the mother drank, she became healthy and whole once again, and the dipper changed from gold to diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and sapphires. The dipper began to glitter with such beauty, and it was taken up into the sky. Up and up it went until it finally nestled

amongst the other stars so all the world could see it. And now, every night when you look up to the stars. Look for the little dipper shining so high up above, and remember the story of the little girl who was brave and kind.

Ask:

- What is excellent about the girl's choice?
- How do choices like this help bring good into the world?
- How can we imitate her choices?



TIC TAC TOE BOARD

Why does an older, sick woman have dignity?	List the three internal senses.	Define art.
List one type of movement that only human persons can do.	Define the power to think.	Can a plant choose what it eats? Why or why not?
How do different forms of dance show culture?	Can your teacher take your human dignity? Why or why not?	Does a prisoner for a large crime still have dignity?



ROLE PLAYING LIST

You see a classmate cheat on a geography test.

You are tired after basketball practice, but when you get home, your mom asks you to do the dishes.

You see one of your classmates being made fun of because his/her shirt was on backwards.

You accidentally spilt a drink on the cafeteria floor.

One of your classmates forgot his/her lunch money, and had nothing to eat.



BEST FOOT FORWARD

Name: _____

Directions: Trace your foot in the space below.