

Lesson 9: Habits of Excellence: Fairness

PURPOSE

To motivate the students to develop the habit of fairness.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

1. Understand what habits are and how they are developed.
2. Recognize what is fair and unfair in different concrete situations.
3. Practice fairness in their everyday lives.

VOCABULARY

- Habits: something that we regularly do so it becomes easier for us
- Fairness: giving each person their fair share

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- Game: Where's My Candy?
- Aesop's fable: The Lion's Share
- Fair or Unfair?
- Implementing Fairness

PROCEDURE

Step 1: Review the previous lesson. Recall the definition of solidarity and its connection to the pursuit of human excellence. Highlight Greensboro Four as a historical example of solidarity with the wider community. Check if the students have practiced their solidarity project written in the Solidarity Puzzle.

Step 2: Start the lesson by playing [Where's My Candy?](#) game. Prepare several bags of mixed candy and make sure to include different amounts and kinds of candy in each bag. Make sure that each bag contains only one chocolate. Then divide the students into groups and give each group one bag of candy. Explain that the groups have 5 minutes to determine how to distribute the candy fairly (make sure not to say "equally") among themselves. After 5 minutes, if they do not manage to find the solution that makes everyone happy, they lose all the candy.

After all groups finish, ask them to explain if and how they reached the solution that made everyone happy. What were the problems and stumbling blocks? How did they overcome them? After hearing the comments, highlight that the groups likely needed to come up with a set of rules or principles and consistently apply them. Also, to treat everyone fairly, some principles needed to be excluded as unfair: e.g. that the strongest person gets all the candy or that the ones who talk the loudest get more than others.

Step 3: This game brings us to today's topic. This is fairness. Fairness is a habit of excellence that needs to be developed.

Habits are behaviors that are developed through repeated practice of certain actions. For example, if a person wants to become healthier, they will practice regularly exercising, eating healthier food and sleeping eight hours each night. Similarly, to develop the habit of fairness, it requires practice in many small situations.

Write the definition of habit on the board:

Habit: something that we regularly do so it becomes easier for us

Ask the students to name some excellent and non-excellent habits. Write a table with two columns on the board, one for excellent and one for non-excellent habits.

Excellent habits	Non-excellent habits

Write down the examples that students share with the class.

Excellent habits	Non-excellent habits
Doing your homework first thing when you get home	Saying that you'll do your homework when you're finished playing your game
Going to sleep on time	Going to bed at midnight
Being kind to everyone in your class	Saying rude things to people who aren't your friends
Being truthful	Hiding the truth or lying
Not joining in when people are talking badly about others	Telling a story about someone that you know will make them look bad
Being generous (letting people go first, sharing a snack, etc)	Being selfish
Being humble	Bragging
Persevering in good things	Giving up too easily
Being fair to others, sharing	Being unfair and taking more than your share

Habits can be both excellent and non-excellent. When we make excellent choices, we develop excellent habits. By making non-excellent choices, we develop non-excellent habits. The problem with excellent habits is that in the beginning they are usually harder to develop than non-excellent ones. It is easier to eat sweets instead of healthy food, it's easier to keep everything for oneself than to be generous, it's easier to be selfish than kind, etc. The good news is that with time, practicing excellent habits also becomes easier. The beginning is the hardest and it gradually becomes easier.

Fairness is an excellent habit. To introduce the topic of fairness, read the [Aesop's fable: *The Lion's Share*](#) available in the Materials.

After reading the fable, lead the class discussion by asking the questions connected to the fable.

Hear the students' comments and then highlight the fact that the lion was acting unjustly because in the beginning he and all the other animals agreed that they will share whatever they found, but in the end the lion took everything for himself. He was acting according to the principle "might makes right", which is wrong. Those who are stronger do not have the right to treat others as they wish, but they need to treat everyone fairly. Similarly, in the 'Where's My Candy?' game, the strongest group members could not take all the candy for themselves.

However, fairness does not require that everyone get the same amount of something. For example, since the lion is much bigger than the fox, he could get a bigger share of spoil than the fox. Fairness means giving each person what is due to him or her, and not necessarily giving everyone the same.

Write the definition of fairness on the board:

Fairness: giving each person their fair share

Step 4: To reflect on what would be fair in different everyday situations, divide the students into groups and give each group [Fair or Unfair?](#) worksheet. Ask the students to discuss all the situations in the worksheet and explain whether the action is fair or unfair.

After all groups finish working, ask them to share their answers and lead the class discussion based on the Answer Key provided with the worksheet.

Step 5: Keep the students divided into groups and ask them to think of two examples of unfairness in school, at home or in the world around them. They should choose one and explain how they would respond to it in the [Implementing Fairness](#).

They can think of their immediate surroundings, such as the class or school, or a wider community as the Greensboro Four did. After all groups finish, ask volunteers to share their solutions aloud with the class.

Step 6: Summarize. Recall the definition of habits and how habits are developed. Stress the importance of developing excellent habits and especially the habit of fairness. Review some of the concrete fair and unfair examples. Motivate the students to implement their solutions to [Implementing Fairness](#).

AESOP'S FABLE: THE LION'S SHARE⁵

"A long time ago, the Lion, the Fox, the Jackal and the Wolf agreed to go hunting together, sharing with each other whatever they found.

One day the Wolf ran down a Stag and immediately called his comrades to divide the spoil.

Without being asked, the Lion placed himself at the head of the feast to do the carving, and, with a great show of fairness, began to count the guests.

'One,' he said, counting on his claws, 'that is myself the Lion. Two, that's the Wolf, three, is the Jackal, and the Fox makes four.'

He then very carefully divided the Stag into four equal parts.

'I am King Lion,' he said, when he had finished, 'so of course I get the first part. This next part falls to me because I am the strongest; and this is mine because I am the bravest.'

He now began to glare at the others very savagely. 'If any of you have any claim to the part that is left,' he growled, stretching his claws menacingly, 'now is the time to speak up.'"

QUESTIONS FOR A DISCUSSION:

- Did the lion act fairly? Why or why not?
- Do those who are stronger in any way have the right to treat others who are weaker as they wish?

⁵ Gretchen Bernabei, Jayne Hover: Text Structures and Fables, Teaching Students to Write About What They Read, Grades 3-12, 2022.

FAIR OR UNFAIR?

Situation	Fair or Unfair? Explain.
Tom and Jen are playing tag at recess. When Mike asks to play, they say no because Mike is wearing brown shoes and only kids with blue shoes can play...	
Mrs. Wolfe tells her students that anyone who gets all of their spelling homework done will not have spelling homework the next week. She reminds them every day. Becky and Mark do not do their spelling homework. They are the only ones who have homework next week.	
Brianna, Justin, and Bethany are playing together. When Alex asks to play too, the others tell him he needs to wait until they finish and a new game starts.	
Mary, Simone, and Alexa invented a game in which each day they decide that someone is "sick" and that day no other student can come close to that person.	
In the physical education class, the class is asked to form a line according to height. You are the tallest in class, but another student occupies the top of the line because he says he wants to be the first.	
Luis achieved the same grade on an exam by cheating as Peter who achieved the grade by studying.	
A teacher asks John to leave the classroom since he continued to interrupt her after several warnings that he should stop.	
Bridget's parents always ask her to wash the dishes, but her little brother who is 4 always gets something easier to do, like removing the utensils from the table.	

Fair or Unfair? – Answer Key for the Teacher

Situation	Fair or unfair? Explain.
Tom and Jen are playing tag at recess. When Mike asks to play, they say no because Mike is wearing brown shoes and only kids with blue shoes can play...	That is unfair because the color of shoes should not be relevant for determining who can play.
Mrs. Wolfe tells her students that anyone who gets a 100 on their spelling test will not have spelling homework the next week. She reminds them to study every day. Becky and Mark did not study and did not get a 100. They are the only ones who have homework next week.	That is fair since the teacher clearly explained the rules and applied them consistently. The rules were fair since everyone had the same opportunity to follow them.
Brianna, Justin, and Bethany are playing together. When Alex asks to play too, the others tell him he needs to wait until they finish and a new game starts.	That is fair since Brianna, Justin, and Bethany were playing already from before and it is not convenient to stop the game in the middle of it. They are fair since they allow Alex to play with them immediately when the next game starts.
Mary, Simone, and Alexa invented a game in which each day they decide that someone is “sick” and that day no other student can come close to that person.	That is unfair since the rules are fictional and they make others excluded from the group. This can obviously hurt the persons who are excluded.
In the physical education class, the class is asked to form a line according to height. You are the tallest in class, but another student occupies the top of the line because he wants to be the first.	That is unfair since the rule is that the class lines up according to height.
Luis achieved the same grade on an exam by cheating as Peter who achieved the grade by studying.	This is unfair to Peter since the principle for getting the grades should be the amount of knowledge one has. Peter followed this principle, and Luis did not.
A teacher asks John to leave the classroom since he continued to interrupt her after several warnings that he should stop.	That is fair since the teacher clearly explained the rules and applied them consistently. The rule is fair since interrupting makes it harder for everyone to learn, and this is the main reason why they are in school.
Bridget’s parents always ask her to wash the dishes, but her little brother who is 4 always gets something easier to do, like removing the utensils from the table.	Since her brother is younger, it is fair that he gets easier tasks. As he gets older, they can share the more difficult chores.

IMPLEMENTING FAIRNESS

List two cases of unfairness. Choose one and explain how you would respond to it to implement fairness.

1.

2.

MY RESPONSE
