

Build a Child's Character With The Five Golden Rules for Staying Connected to Children

Unit 7

- A. * First thoughts first- Are there a lot of "As soon as" obsessions in your life? As soon as... and then I'll be happy! "...as soon as my kids grow up... as soon as I get new students in my classroom... as soon as I get more money... as soon as my boss drops dead..." We know that as soon as those things happen, life will still be the same, and you will still be you. The key is to start today to grow to be the person you want to be. Who do you want to be? Do you define yourself by your list of your accomplishments? Or, by the content of your character?

B. Video - 14 Minutes

Golden Rule #5 Grow to become the person you want to be.

Section concepts

- Laugh at Life's Imperfections- Children will Give You Brain Damage
- Forgive others and forgive yourself
- Drop the ego, winning power over someone only means you've taken power away.
- Don't try to get even with the world - you'll never win.
- If the world appears rotten, angry, and hostile - remember: life can only reflect back to you, what you give to it.
- Remember: What you "do" is the only evidence of what you are.

1. Dr. Birchak tells the story of Roy Campanella and says, "It's not what life hands you, but what is it that you are going to do with what you've

got?" Who inspires you? Why? Do they have a habit you wish you could use more often in your life?

2. *** Children will Give You Brain Damage!** Dr. Birchak shared an experience of when a child gave him brain damage. Life will never go exactly the way you would like it. We have the potential to guide others through moments like these (with humor) or scar them with anger. Have you ever made a mistake and someone wanted to scar you instead of find humor in the situation? Describe the lesson you learned from that treatment and how it will shape your behavior in those challenging times.
3. In order to grow to become more productive and peaceful in life we need to forgive. Dr. Birchak described how forgiveness does not imply that what you did was okay, nor does it mean that you are absolved of your responsibility, or that we will now be friends. Forgiving simply means we learn to let go. What kinds of things are hardest to forgive in others? In yourself? When you cling and can't let go- what need does this meet for you?
4. In the video, it was suggested that we need to "Drop the ego," in order to work better with others. Winning power over someone only means you've taken power away. Has there ever been a time when you didn't back down on a position because of your false pride? Name one strategy you can utilize to help you drop your ego in these situations.
5. In 90% of all acts of school violence, students report they were just "getting even." Revenge for the sake of making others feel your pain is a waste of energy, but we continue to teach children to "get even with others" or "if they mess with you - hit em' back!" How can you teach children how these behaviors are futile?
6. *** Dr. Birchak emphasizes how we need to remember, "What you 'do' is the only evidence of what you are."** The video had the following quote:

In all that you do - you are a force for health or psychopathology. Let people realize that every time they threaten someone, or humiliate, or hurt unnecessarily, or dominate, they become forces for psychopathology, even if these be small forces. Let them recognize that everyone who is kind, helpful, decent, psychologically democratic, affectionate, and warm, is a psychotherapeutic force, even though a small one."
Abraham Maslow - 1970.

This quote emphasizes our power in life. All of us have power and can choose to seek power over others or power with others. Read the quote above and try to think of one instance in your life when you struggled and desperately needed help. Did someone use their power to help you?

7. Dr. Birchak suggested that true education is in the little things we do for each other in our time of need. He quoted Leo Buscaglia who said, "The opposite of love is not hate, it is apathy." When we become apathetic we stop seeing others in pain, and we lose all our ability to be valuable to each other. Name one way you can detect when you are apathetic, and one behavior you can employ to pull yourself out of this apathy.
8. *** Merle Shain said, "Loving can cost a lot, but not loving can cost a lot more."** Dr. Birchak described the woman in line as she shared a few kind words and helped lift the spirits of the girl having a tough day. If you can be that one person (even if it is rare), you can change the world even if it is only in some small way. Think of at least two things you can do to remind yourself of your power in everyday situations. After this workshop is over, what is your life plan for enriching your power as a "person who can build character" in others?

c. Reading discussion questions for Chapter 5 - Kinship.