

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

for use with
Program 4

The FAIRNESS Connection

In the Video Series



Created and Produced by
Elkind+Sweet Communications, Inc.
in association with Character Counts!
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HOW TO USE THIS VIDEO

Use in classrooms, libraries, youth groups, or view it at home.

This video, along with the facilitator's guide and website, is designed to help teachers engage students in classroom discussion and other activities leading to deep, meaningful reflection about the kinds of people they are and want to be.

Have a great discussion!

Thoughtful, reflective discussions are essential to getting the most out of these videos. You will find some very fruitful facilitation techniques, including **Socratic Method**, at our special character education website at <www.goodcharacter.com>. The questions in this discussion guide begin on page 9.

www.goodcharacter.com provides a wealth of helpful material including questions, assignments, and activities for special topics such as **sports**, **workplace readiness**, and others. Please utilize this very valuable resource.



WHAT IS FAIRNESS?

In this program fairness means:

- 🍏 Treat others the way you want to be treated.
- 🍏 Treat people impartially and without prejudice.
- 🍏 Consider the feelings of all people who will be affected by your actions.
- 🍏 Be open-minded and reasonable.
- 🍏 Play by the rules.
- 🍏 Don't take advantage of others.

PROGRAM CONTENT

As soon as children are able to speak they often complain, “No Fair!” With that as a point of departure, Chloe, a thirteen-year-old blogger, guides us through her classroom video blog on the topic of fairness.

Chloe shows us how teens are defining fairness, practicing fairness, and dealing with the obstacles that come up around fairness. We listen in while kids express their own opinions on a case study dealing with academic cheating. Chloe also shows us two documentaries that help demonstrate how young people struggle with the issue of fairness. The first story is about a middle school teen court that has to decide on fair consequences for student misbehavior. The second documentary tells the story of a young student athlete who uses his talent to literally “level the playing field” by setting up a charity to help children less privileged than he is.

Part I – What is Fairness?

Chloe starts her blog about fairness by showing three young people who respond to situations in their lives by stating, “no fair.”

We watch and listen to a middle school discussion about how the idea of fairness plays out in their families and in their friendships. They tell us what the real definition of “fairness” might be.

Some essential issues they raise are:

- Are kids at this point too young to really understand what “fair” is?

- Our idea of fairness is going to be different from someone’s in a third world country.

- Fairness is getting what you need.

- When things aren’t fair, that means someone wins and someone loses.

- It is hard to give a hard and fast definition of fairness, because we all have our own idea of what fairness is.

Part II – A Difficult Situation. You Decide:

Chloe comes back on screen and says, “Now that we have some ideas of what fairness is, let’s see if that can help us make a fair decision.”

The Situation: Jennifer has won a scholarship to a summer music camp. She is a very good student who comes from a poor family that couldn’t afford to send her to the camp without the scholarship. During the final science test of the year, Jennifer is caught cheating. Normally, when a student cheats it goes on the student’s record. So, if that happens to Jennifer, she will lose her camp scholarship. If it were up to you, what should the school do?

Teen Discussion about Jennifer’s Cheating:

The students give the following responses:

- She might be poor, but she is like every other person and should be treated that way.

- She has no right to cheat. If it were someone else, that person would be punished. Otherwise it’s not fair.

- Maybe she had something that made it harder for her to study. Is there a balance we could come up with? Are there other consequences besides taking away the scholarship?

- Another definition of fairness is getting what you deserve. By making that choice to cheat, she got what she deserved.

- Why break the rules just for her? She is taking the place of another kid who didn’t cheat.

- When people cheat, they lose the trust of others. It makes you doubt other things they have done. Like maybe all their good grades came from cheating.

- In making a fair decision you have to disregard class and gender.

- When we punish someone we need to ignore everything but the deed and the rule broken.

- If you break a rule and don't think of the consequences, there are still consequences.

- One boy tells us if we put ourselves in her shoes, we're going to think differently. He says, "honestly, I can't make a decision."

**Part III – How do we make a fair decision?
Documentary about a middle school Teen
Court:**

Chloe launches the Teen Court documentary by saying, " Making tough decision can be, well, tough. So, how do we go about making a fair decision? Let's take a look at a group of kids who do this on a regular basis and see if we can learn something from them."

Chloe narrates while we watch footage from the teen court at Goshen Middle School, in Goshen, Indiana.

One of the students has gotten into trouble and faces suspension. Instead she is given the opportunity to go before the school's teen court, a group of her fellow students who help to decide an alternative punishment.

Chloe describes the case in detail: The girl in trouble is Felicia. She recently started dating a boy named Adrian. She also has a friend named Holly, who is in Adrian's Biology class. Adrian and Holly were paired up to work on a project together. So, Holly wrote Adrian a note asking if he wanted to set a time where they could meet to get started. Felicia found the note and thought that Holly was trying to steal her boyfriend. Felicia began getting her friends to help her write mean notes to Holly and spread rumors about her. She also threatened her after school. After two weeks, Holly reported the bullying to the school counselor.

Felicia meets with the principal. She is told that the school does not tolerate this behavior and that she can choose between suspension or going through the teen court process. Felicia admits what she has done. Being remorseful and admitting guilt are two requirements for going before the teen court.

The teen jury hears the full story in order to try to come up with a “fair” outcome. They hear evidence, and then deliberate. They use certain guiding principles to help them arrive at a fair decision:

- Listen carefully and get all the information.
- Be open-minded and don’t prejudge.
- Consider all the sides of the story.
- Think about everyone who is affected.
- Make sure the punishment fits the crime.

The teen jury ends up recommending that Felicia write two letters of apology, one to Holly and another to her parents. She must do an anti-bullying display at the school. And she is denied the school trip to Washington, DC.

On her way out of the courtroom, Felicia says, “I think it was pretty harsh, but I guess, in the end, it was pretty fair.”

Part IV – Sometimes life just isn’t fair. Chloe and Teen Discussion:

Chloe remarks that in everyday life we don’t have a jury to help us make things fair, and that sometimes, life just isn’t fair. She leads in to a student discussion on fairness.

Students tell about the following experiences they have had. In these situations they felt that they were not treated fairly:

- I don’t like it when people form an opinion about me without knowing me. It makes me angry because you are judging me without knowing me or the whole situation. I want the chance to show the real me. If you want to know the real me, you have

to talk to me.

- I heard two teenage girls talking about how I was too skinny and that I probably don't eat anything. They were making assumptions about me, and they didn't even know who I was. It made me feel really bad. I wish I could learn how to walk up to someone and tell them I felt like they were being unfair.

- Once I was accused of being racist because I was in a fight with a girl who happened to be black. This other girl pushed me into a lake. She didn't even know me. All she knew was that we were fighting. She judged me and I didn't understand it, and I felt horrible.

- The students point out that every day you turn around and see something unfair but you don't have the power to stop it.

- A boy concludes that sometimes life is fair and sometimes it isn't. There's nothing you can do about it.

Part V – Is there really *nothing* you can do when life is unfair? A documentary about a young teenage athlete who found a way to make life a little more fair for people less privileged than himself:

When he was eleven years old Michael Pesci took his passion for baseball and started his own Home Run Derby. Michael thought of how privileged he is compared to a lot of people. He knew he was able to do the things he loved to do, while other kids don't have that same opportunity. That didn't seem fair. With the help of his parents and a good friend, Michael created an annual event to raise money to make life a little more fair for others.

Michael and his friend worked hard to organize and recruit others to help them with their project. Inspired by his own collection of baseball memorabilia, Michael and his friend auctioned off

autographed baseballs and baseball cards to collect money for their cause. In the first year they raised \$16,000. The Perfect Pitch Home Run Derby is now a yearly event which raises a lot of money to support athletic opportunities for disadvantaged kids.

Michael tells us about one of his little league games where the opposing team didn't have uniforms. They even had torn baseball gloves, and some of their players were wearing unmatched shoes. Michael's team had proper uniforms and equipment. This put his team at an unfair advantage. So, Michael "leveled the playing field" by giving the other team the money to buy uniforms and new equipment.

The documentary finishes with Michael saying, "I don't think that I'm special . . . Other kids can do what I do. It's pretty simple. Just come up with an idea . . . Get people to help you out . . . Anything is possible."

Part VI – A Short Teen Discussion about the little things we can do to make life more fair:

Kids speak passionately about why it is important to be fair. They talk about making things more fair by helping people less fortunate than themselves. One boy concludes the discussion by saying you can be that one person who makes a difference in someone's life by treating them fairly.

Part VII – Conclusion

Chloe concludes the program by echoing the last boy who spoke. She asks, "can you be the person that makes a difference in someone's life simply by treating them fairly? And if so, imagine if we all did that?" Chloe quotes Mahatma Gandhi: "Be the change you want to see." She tells us, "I think that means that if we want life to be fair, it's up to each of us to be fair."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions to ask before showing the video.

1. What is “fairness”?
2. How do you know when something is unfair?
3. Does being fair mean you always treat people equally? Explain your answer.
4. How many people here think the world is unfair and there’s nothing you can do about it?

Questions to ask after showing the video.

1. In the video one boy said kids were too young to really understand fairness. Do you think it’s true that you don’t really understand what “fair” is because you are too young?
2. Do you think there is a definition of fairness everyone could agree on? If so, what might that definition be?
3. Do you think it is fair for Jennifer to lose her scholarship because she cheated? What do you think the school should do?
4. One kid said that another definition of fairness is “getting what you deserve.” Another kid said that Jennifer might be poor but “beside that, she is like every other person and should be treated that way.” Do you agree?
5. Should gender or class be disregarded when someone is being punished?
6. One kid says we need to ignore everything but the deed and the rule broken. How do you feel about that?

7. Can you think of an example where it might be fair to give someone an extra advantage?
8. What do you think of the statement that whether you think of consequences or not, they're still there?
9. What makes a person fair?
10. What does being fair have to do with one's character?
11. Do you agree that it's necessary to walk in someone's shoes before you decide what is fair?
12. What do you think about the statement that one boy makes, "It's easy for us to define what's fair when it's not about us"?
13. After talking about Jennifer's situation, have any of you changed your mind about what the school should do about her?
14. Have you ever been punished in a way you felt was unfair? What was unfair about it?
15. Do you think the teen court at Goshen Middle School was fair in its decision to keep Felicia from going on the Washington DC trip? If not, should it have been more or less strict?
16. If you had a chance to serve on a teen court, do you think you would be able to make fair decisions? What if the person you were reviewing was a friend of yours?
17. How do you hold onto strict principles of fairness? Is it possible?
18. What are "assumptions"? How do assumptions play in role in fairness?

19. What responsibility do we have when we see someone being treated unfairly? What does our response to unfairness to others have to do with our character?
20. Is there nothing we can do when something is unfair?
21. In the video, Michael Pesci said, “Come up with an idea, get people to help you out, anything is possible.” Do you agree?
22. Michael used a passion of his to make a difference. What role do you think passion plays in making changes in the world that create more fairness?
23. What is your own personal passion that you can express by making a difference in this world?
24. What are some little things you can do to make life more fair?
25. What do you think Mahatma Gandhi meant when he said, “be the change you want to see?”
26. What do you think about Chloe’s statement that some people say that if we want life to be fair, that means each of us need to be fair. Do you agree?
27. Did the video present any ideas you disagreed with?
28. In what way did the video inspire you to be more fair in your dealings with friends and family?

For additional questions, or for questions relating to special topics such as sports, workplace readiness, etc., visit www.goodcharacter.com

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. One girl said that she thinks an example of being unfair is when people judge her without knowing her or the whole situation. Write about a time when that happened to you? How do you feel the person should have acted? Have you ever treated someone unfairly because you judged him or her without knowing the whole story?
2. Research and write about how the legal system works in a democracy. How does this system attempt to administer justice or fairness? What elements of the system work to achieve that fairness?
3. One girl said she wished she could learn how to walk up to someone and tell him or her she thought they were being unfair. Write about a time when you saw someone being unfair to you or to someone else and you wish you had been more assertive?
4. Michael Pesci tapped into his passion for baseball to make a difference in making the world more fair. What passion do you have that you might turn into making a difference in someone's life simply by making things fairer?
5. What do you think Gandhi mean when he said, "Be the change you wish to see?" Do you know someone in your life you feel is doing that? What character traits do they hold that cause you to respect him or her? Do you share any of those traits?
6. Describe something you see in your community that you think is unfair. What do you think should be done about it? What role could you play in making that change?
7. Research the term *Affirmative Action*. Do you think it is fair?

GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. Have your students visit our website www.goodcharacter.com where they will find opportunities to become involved in activities and issues relating to fairness and justice. Click on either “Opportunities for Action” or “Service Learning”. Have each member of a group choose a non-profit listed and research what the mission statement is of that organization. How does that mission try to make things more fair or just?
2. Choose a service-learning project from www.goodcharacter.com and work on it as a group. Present a reflection that addresses how your actions worked toward making the world more fair.
3. Invite a judge to talk to your class or group about how she/he makes a fair decision in the courtroom.
4. As a group, brainstorm the following three lists: a list of things you feel are unfair at your school, a list of things we sometimes do in our own lives that are unfair, and a list of things we do in society that are unfair. What could be done to cross at least one thing off of each list? What could you do to contribute to making that happen?
5. Choose a real life case study from *Teens Take it to Court: Young People Who Challenged the Law and Changed Your Life*, by Judge Tom Jacobs. As a group, decide what the fairest verdict would be.
6. The principles that Goshen Middle School’s Teen Court uses as its guideline are:
Listen carefully and get all the information. Be open minded – don’t prejudge. Consider all sides of the story. Think about everyone who is affected. Make sure the punishment fits the crime. Apply these five principles to a fictional or real discipline case that might happen in your school or community.

goodcharacter.com

www.goodcharacter.com

This content-rich website is loaded with free resources to help you do the job!

Please visit this website to find:

- * **Facilitation techniques** for conducting meaningful, productive classroom discussions, including **Socratic Method**.
- * **Additional discussion questions, writing assignments, and learning activities.**”
- * **Opportunities for your students** to become involved in activities and issues relating to the topics in these videos.
- * **Links** to key character education organizations and resources.
- * **Articles** and other writings on educating for character.
- * Special discussion guide supplements for use with **sports programs, workplace readiness programs**, and other areas of special interest.
- * **The Daily Dilemma** - an ongoing series of moral and ethical discussion starters from the case files of Charis Denison.

This video series was produced in association with
CHARACTER COUNTS!sm

The CHARACTER COUNTS! coalition is a consortium of the nation's largest and most influential educational and youth-serving organizations united in one over-riding mission: strengthening the character of America's youth.



CHARACTER COUNTS!
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