

Character Action Media

Pay It Forward - The Pizza, That Is

Primary Virtues

Compassion: feeling of sympathy for the distress, hurt, or pain of others with the desire to help

Generosity: giving freely of our own possessions, time and/or talent

Integrity: being honest with yourself; consistently doing the right thing by following and living up to an ethical code of what is right and wrong

Secondary Virtues

Caring: to help others; a caring person tries to understand another person's situation, desires to help others, and then acts in helping others.

Empathy: trying to understand another person's situation, entering into the feeling or spirit of others and imagining yourself in another person's situation.

Solidarity: unity with others from a shared common purpose and / or interest within a group; active loyalty within a group; mutual support within a group

Lesson Goals

- Help students understand and inspire them to live out the virtues of empathy, compassion, generosity, caring, integrity and solidarity as we endeavor to help others
- Encourage students to be honest with themselves and live with integrity in assessing what they are passionate about, their talents and goals, and to have the courage to change
- To be open to inspirations and ideas, often from unexpected places, that will lead others and us to a better path forward
- Realize the importance and power of individuals coming together as a community to help others in need, and that communities can be formed in many different ways

Featured Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3OH9B2CFaY>

Leader Introduction to the Video

“Have you heard the expression, ‘pay it forward’? (explain if needed) We’re going to watch a story of someone who created a unique way for people to care for others by paying it forward. He first had to take a risk and follow his dream. Let’s see how his story unfolds.”

Watch Video

Leader Transition Statement

That was a great story about generosity and solidarity, and importantly how Mason is living with integrity in following his dream. Please help pass around these sheets (last page in this Leader's Guide) that have the definitions of the virtues. We will take a couple of minutes to read these over, and we will then use these for our discussion of the story and how these virtues apply to our lives.

Discussion Question Options – Critical Analysis and Personal Reflection

Questions begin with those directly related to the story and transition to ones that connect the key themes and virtues to students' lives and the larger community

(Discussion prompts and/or answers are in parentheses if needed)

1. “Pay the Pizza Forward” started by one customer asking if he/she could buy a piece of pizza for a homeless person. What virtues did this customer demonstrate by asking this? (compassion and generosity, discuss with students how both of these are pillars of caring) What virtues did Mason demonstrate by acting on it? (generosity)
2. Ellen stated, “Most people would discourage homeless people to come into their business.” He/she might be afraid customers will not come in if the shop is frequented by homeless people. This is usually based on fear.

- Would this matter to you? Why or why not?

- What can Mason do to try to make customers feel comfortable in his pizza shop?

3. How does the wall of post-it notes show solidarity? (unity around the shared purpose of helping the homeless) How is the phrase “strength in numbers” true in this situation? (The more customers see other people being generous to help others the more they are inspired to do the same.)

4. What risks did Mason take on in leaving his first job and starting Rosa’s? (less money, less security and high likelihood of failure as most new restaurants fail)

Mason also said his job as owner of Rosa’s is much harder, but more rewarding than his previous job. Explain why he might be willing to do this. (Mason and Ellen mentioned it’s more rewarding, fulfilling and joyful.)

What virtue did Mason live out in deciding to follow his dream and start Rosa’s? (integrity in being true to oneself) Do you think it’s right to give up a higher paying job and security to follow a dream? Let’s discuss reasons for both why and why not.

5. Mason challenges other restaurants like Chipotle, to follow his example (of encouraging customers to “pay it forward”) Can you think of other restaurants that might adopt this same action? Can you think of any retail stores that might do something similar? Do you think customers would actually participate?

6. In this story people are caring for others by “paying it forward” with a slice of pizza. What acts of kindness have been, or are currently being done for us? (If needed, prompt students to consider what coaches, teachers, parents or friends have done for them.)

What other ways can we in our lives, care for others by paying acts of kindness forward?

7. Mason has established a community and sense of solidarity within his store by unifying people around the shared common purpose of helping the homeless, and more importantly by enabling people to be with and interact with homeless individuals. How can we, within this school or our general community create greater solidarity and unify students or people from different groups? (Encourage students to share creative unifying actions – as simple as students rotating table for lunch, to larger community building endeavors.)

Journal Writing Options

1. Everyone is capable of helping others in some way, within their job or outside of work. For example, a

dentist might help others by providing free dental care to those in need. Or a coach might volunteer his / her time to organizing and coaching teams in communities that lack enough coaches. Write about what job you might want to do when you grow up and how you could “pay it forward” within that job or other activities.

2. Ask students to write a letter to the manager or owner of a restaurant, asking him/her to consider helping the homeless through a “pay it forward” idea or in some other way. Be sure to be polite and respectful in your words.

3. Explain how you can pay it forward now through either something physical or an act of kindness.

4. Write about someone in your life who cares for others by being compassionate and generous, giving their time and/or resources to others.

Extended Activities

1. Too often the media and our culture focus on what divides us. Organize the group into teams of 3-4 and ask each team to write out a list of goals and experiences that unite most students within our school. Ask each team to then present and discuss its list to the group as a whole.

2. Ask each team of 3-4 students to think of a new activity that would create a greater level of solidarity and unity within your school. Each team will then present the proposed activity to the group as a whole. The presentation should include an outline of the idea, exactly how it would be accomplished, and how it will create greater unity. Encourage students to give positive feedback to each response.

3. On index cards copy the following statements and questions. Leader “fans out” the cards, faced down. At random, a student selects a card, shares response with the group and passes card to another student. Repeat until 3 or 4 different students have shared their responses. Encourage students to give positive feedback to each response.

- Integrity means being true to yourself and consistently “doing the right thing.” Tell about someone you know, who almost always “does the right thing.”
- Caring for others is not limited to people. How can caring be shown to animals or our environment?
- Even in our after-school group, we can show solidarity. How can we help or support each other during our time together?

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