

Character Action Media

Lieutenant Michael Murphy: A Life of Courage and Service

Please note the format for the first discussion question, which explains the parentheses questions / prompts at the end of each virtue definition. If you choose to use the lesson over 2 sessions then we have outlined recommended activities for the first session (A) and second session (B). Instructors should feel free to use whichever activities you think best for your class or group. We advise giving students the sheet with the definitions of the virtues and an overview of the story before each session.

Lesson Goals

- Encourage students going into Memorial Day to appreciate and honor the sacrifice of those whom have given their lives in defense of our nation and freedom
- Help students develop a greater appreciation for our freedom
- Help students gain a more complete understanding of the virtue of courage, both in meeting physical dangers and the many other ways we can live with courage in standing up for and acting according to our beliefs, and standing up for the underdogs we come across in our daily lives
- Develop an understanding that the ability to act with courage often comes from a lifetime of making the right decisions in the many smaller and daily matters of our lives
- Inspire students to consider how compassion and a sense of duty can lead us to help others and to better ourselves by accomplishing worthwhile endeavors

Primary Virtues

- **Courage**- the capacity to meet danger without giving way to fear; to have the courage of one's convictions; to be willing to put one's opinions into practice. (What decisions and actions did Michael live out that demonstrated his courage? – he knew that in joining the Navy SEALs he would be asked to serve in the most dangerous missions, he knowingly exposed himself to enemy fire and likely death to make the call for reinforcements to save his team, Michael defended others being bullied)
- **Heroism**- being a person who is regarded as a model due to his/her acts of courage, or nobility of purpose and noble qualities (Which actions or qualities that Michael lived out make him a hero, a role model for you?)
- **Integrity**- steadfast adherence to a moral or ethical code; being true to oneself (Discussion question 2 focus)

Secondary Virtues

- **Compassion** - feeling of sympathy for the distress of others, with the desire to help (What did Michael do in his childhood and young adult life that demonstrated compassion? - defended others who were bullied, served others as a tutor and life guard)
- **Duty**- something that one is expected or required to do according to one's own standards, moral or legal obligation, especially as it relates to one's status as a citizen and/or member of various communities (How did Michael view his duty to our nation and what event motivated him to serve in the military? What was Michael's sense of duty to the men in the SEAL unit he led?)
- **Justice** - fair treatment, reward or punishment in alignment with honor, our standards, or law. (Discussion question 2 focus)
- **Loyalty**- living up to our commitments or obligations (Loyalty is the focus on question 6 with Marcus Luttrell remaining with each of his comrades into their death.)
- **Respect for Others**- showing full appreciation of the worth and dignity of others; living by "the golden rule": do unto others as you would want done unto you (Discussion question 2 focus)

Leader Introduction

Memorial Day is in late May and as we come into this national holiday, it gives us an opportunity to remember and honor the sacrifices of those who have given their lives in defense of our nation and for our freedom, as well as the sacrifices of all of those today serving in the military and their families. Today's story is about Lt. Michael Murphy, a Navy SEAL who died in battle in Afghanistan. Lt. Murphy was fighting the terrorist group al-Qaeda which attacked New York City, and was also fighting the radical elements of the Taliban, a tribe in Afghanistan that supports al-Qaeda. The Taliban then, and still today, are fighting to retake control of Afghanistan and are in a campaign of attacking schools, aid workers, hospitals and the Afghan army. Lt. Murphy earned the Congressional Medal of Honor, our nation's highest military award, for his courage and loyalty in fighting the enemy and sacrificing his life in the attempt to save the lives of his comrades. The video we will watch will help us to learn not just about the heroism of Lt. Murphy, but also about the person he was as a young boy, and as a man.

Film Clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XldlrzWLS60> Please begin the video at 1:06
(The views presented in the first 1:06 seconds of this video are not endorsed by CAM)

Leader Summary

Lt. Murphy's life is a powerful example of the fullness of heroism. He was courageous in placing his life at risk for his principles and in trying to save the lives of others, while also being noble in living out the virtues of compassion, duty and loyalty. Lt. Murphy's story reminds us that it is important to honor the sacrifices of those who serve our nation in the military, and especially going into this Memorial Day to honor those who have given their lives in service to our nation.

Discussion Question Options (*discussion prompts / answers are in parentheses if needed*)

Before beginning our discussion, let's read over the virtues and their definitions. (Included within the online lesson as a separate document).

1. What did you find to be inspiring, interesting and most meaningful about Lt. Murphy's story? As you offer your comment, connect it to one or a couple of the virtues, defined on the sheet we just passed out and listed on the board. We'll keep discussing new points about the story until we have discussed each of these virtues. **(A)**

Discussion Leaders – *in the list of the virtues are in parentheses discussion tips / reminders if students don't bring up a discussion point related to that virtue. Justice, integrity and respect for others are primarily covered in question 2.*

2. Lt. Murphy decided to release the goat herders, even though Murphy and his team knew this would likely place their lives at risk. Do you think they made the right decision?

In making the decision to release the herders, what virtues did they live out? (justice, integrity and respect for others in living up to their values and the values of the US military in not intentionally harming innocent civilians, even at their own risk) **(A)**

3. Does courage always involve taking on significant physical risk? How can we live with courage in our everyday lives? (standing up for others being bullied, standing up for what is right even if our friends as a group are about to do something that we know is wrong, or are promoting ideas that we know are wrong)

Do you think that we are better able to live with courage in important ways if we make the right and often more demanding choices in our everyday lives? How does Lt. Murphy's life speak to this question? **(B)**

4. Compassion often leads to a sense of duty, why do you think this is true? (*If we experience sympathy for another person's suffering, we often then develop a sense of duty to help them.*)

Please share an example of when someone you know within your family, local or school community, who experienced a sense of compassion and duty to help another person and who then took action. **(B)**

5. Let's think about the virtue of duty as what we expect of ourselves given our own moral code of what is right and wrong, and our duty as members of various communities. I will write on the board your ideas for some of the things you view as our duty within each of these communities that make up our lives: family, school, sports teams, friends, local community, our nation, global community. (Please give students time to present ideas for each community you choose to list on the board.) **(B)**

6. In the video, Marcus Luttrell states that none of his teammates died alone. He was with each of them. What virtues did Luttrell live out in this action? (*compassion, loyalty in living up to his commitment to each of his team members as a friend and comrade, love*) **(B)**

7. What are other examples in the world today of people being courageous and taking significant risk to stand up for principles they believe in? These examples can be from famous people to members of our family, school and local community. **(B)**
8. Do you think we as Americans appreciate the freedom we have?
Has your own appreciation for our freedom changed after thinking about the life of Lt. Murphy? If yes, why? **(B)**

Journal Writing Options

1. Write about a principle or cause you believe is worthy of being courageous to promote and to defend. **(A)**
2. Write about a person or situation in your school, community or family that has compelled you to act to help others. Explain how you experienced compassion and a sense of duty to help. **(B)**
3. Loyalty is living up to our commitments or obligations. In addition to our friends, who are you loyal to? Have you made a commitment to your family members, sports teams or teachers? Please describe who you are loyal to and how you are living this out. **(B)**

Extended Activities

1. Going into this Memorial Day, let's find stories within our own community of individuals who have died as a result of their military service to our nation. These stories can be from the recent wars in Afghanistan or Iraq, or from the wars of our nation's deeper history. You may find these stories within your own families by speaking with your parents and grandparents, or others within our community. Please ask about the branch of the military the person served in, any details about their job, how they died and whether you know of their beliefs and feelings about the war they fought within. We will then share some of these stories in another session.

We can also learn about and discuss the stories of those who are presently serving or have recently served. Good questions to address are what motivated them to join the military what is or was their job, have they been in a situation that required courage, do they view their work as a way of serving others and our nation, and please ask if they have a message that they would like to communicate with our class. **(A)**

2. Discuss with students ideas for commemorating this Memorial Day. Please let students know about community events such as local parades, wreath laying services and / or religious services at local cemeteries. **(B)**

3. Read the following to students:

“Compassion for another person, as well as a sense of duty to defend and to do what is right, often compel people to help, and sometimes this requires the courage to act despite the risks involved. This is true even in our daily lives. I’m going to outline different situations that involve helping someone or standing up for what is right. For each situation, let’s discuss the risks of responding to help another person and to do what is right.”

Situation Examples:

- You witness a friend being cruel to his/her younger sibling. What should you do? What are you risking?
- You find a \$5 bill on the floor in a store, pick it up and put it in your pocket. Moments later, you see a young woman ask the store clerk if anyone found it and turned it in. What should you do? What are you risking?
- A group of your friends is speaking cruelly about another person. What should you do? What are you risking?
- In a basketball game for your school team you know you dribbled the ball out of bounds but the referee didn’t see it. What should you do? What are you risking?
- What other situations can you come up with where you need to take a risk to do what is right **(B)**

4. Reflection/Homework Assignment

“This evening, ask a parent or adult relative to share about themselves or someone they know who showed courage during their life. We’ll talk about these examples tomorrow.” **(A)**

Discussion of Reflection/Homework Assignment from session A: “Let’s share the stories that we discussed last night about someone who lived out the virtue of courage.” **(B)**

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