

Character Action Media

Stories of Courage, Generosity and Resiliency Amidst the Devastation from the Hurricanes of 2017

This lesson can be presented over 1-2 sessions. If you choose 2 sessions you can use the discussion questions, journal writing and extended activities designated by session (A) and 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 before each session.

Lesson Goals

Help students:

- attain a deeper understanding of the virtues of courage and generosity in helping others in need
- see how we can be resilient in recovering from negative events beyond our control, especially through perseverance and solidarity with others
- appreciate the importance of hope in believing in a better future and how this enables us to better persevere through present difficulties and obstacles
- see how obstacles and even disasters can help us to attain a greater level of solidarity within our communities and for our nation as a whole
- become more aware of the strength that comes when we work with others toward common goals

Primary Virtues

Courage - the capacity to meet danger and difficult situations without giving way to fear; to have the courage of one's convictions; to be willing to put one's opinions into practice

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

Hope - confident expectation of achieving a goal or wish

Secondary Virtues

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

Perseverance - trying hard and continuously despite obstacles and difficulties

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

Wisdom - ability to apply knowledge, experience, understanding in ways that are effective and good. The ability to discern or judge what is true, right, or lasting

Leader Introduction

Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria have wrought incredible damage in the loss of life, the destruction of people's homes, and for many, the loss of jobs. However, amidst these horrific disasters, we have also seen powerful stories of courage, generosity, resiliency and hope. Let's watch some of these now.

Film Clips:

ABC News Good Samaritans risk their lives for Hurricane Harvey rescues

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJJ007YvAtg>

Stories of resiliency, hope and generosity: Houston coming together in the wake of tragedy from Hurricane Harvey | SC Featured | ESPN Stories

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=iYk1kt4IG_0

Leader Summary

The stories we have seen today are incredible and these are only from hurricane Harvey. There are so many additional stories from Hurricanes Irma and Maria of people coming together to help others, and their own determination to recover and rebuild their lives. Although the physical destruction from all three hurricanes is immense, we have seen how in all of these disasters the human spirit is so much stronger. We never want a disaster to occur, but often it is when we are tested that we find the best within ourselves and within our communities.

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 are some of the risks that the rescue workers faced in working to help others, and in many cases save the lives of others? (snakes, alligators, red ant colonies, dangerous chemicals in the water, electrocution)

What virtues did the rescue workers live out, and do you think motivated the professional rescue workers and everyday heroes to help others? (empathy, courage, generosity) (A)

2. What are some examples from the film clips we saw, and any other stories you have seen on the news, of people coming together in solidarity to help the victims of the hurricanes?

3. The ESPN film clip has many stories and comments that show us how to be resilient in striving to recover from a negative event, and in the case of Hurricane Harvey from a total disaster. What are some of the comments and stories that speak to you, and for each one please name one or two of the virtues that connect to your story or comment. (Instructors please feel free if needed, to prompt students with the settings from the clips below and / or to read some of the quotes and then ask students to identify and discuss the virtues that apply.)

Elderly woman sitting looking at her pictures: discussed how the pictures and memories are all she has left “it’s rough but I’m still kicking and alive, and I’m going to keep going as long as I can, as long as I can.” – gratefulness even within the tragedy; perseverance in her determination to keep going.

Man speaking from his kitchen in his flooded out home: “I’ve never seen a horse win a race by stopping in the middle of the race, it’s not a hundred yard dash, it’s a marathon, so let’s all pull together and work together, it is what it is, we’re not the only people going through this, some lost their lives, it’s just a house and it can be rebuilt, our lives can be rebuilt.” – perseverance; solidarity in calling on people to work together; wisdom in putting his loss of things into perspective and placing more emphasis on rebuilding our lives; hope in being confident they will rebuild their lives

Same man at the end of the film: “help other people when they are in need, it’s got to be us, we, our, that’s including everybody.....It’s going to take time, little by little and if we do it little by little we’ll do it right.”– solidarity in rallying everyone to come together and help each other; wisdom in realizing it’s going to take time to recover, but that by focusing on one step at a time we’ll make it.

JJ Watt: “no matter how bleak things can look, and no matter how dark times can be, there is good in people. We’re with you, the world is with you.” Generosity in using his time, fame and talent to organize donations; solidarity in rallying our national community behind his efforts and in letting the victims of the hurricane know that they are not alone; wisdom in using his fame and social media in ways that are effective in raising money to help others.

Recommended Statement: It’s important to know that others are also stepping up to raise money for the victims of the hurricanes. Former NBA star Tim Duncan grew up in the US Virgin Islands which suffered extensive damage and Duncan is raising money and directly helping the victims.

(A)

4. Often we hear people comment that our nation is divided in many ways. Do you think our nation’s response in helping people who are suffering from the recent hurricanes shows us that we can still unify as a country?

Do you think our local community would come together and unify to help each other if we were struck by a disaster? (B)

5. Resiliency is defined as the ability to recover from, or adjust to change and difficulties. Have the stories we have seen on the rescues, and determination of people to recover from Hurricane Harvey changed your view on your own ability to recover from and adjust to difficult situations?

What virtues do we need to live out to be resilient in our own lives?
(perseverance, courage, hope, wisdom) (B)

6. How can we help others be more resilient and succeed in adjusting to difficult situations? (empathy in placing ourselves in another person's situation, generosity and solidarity in being there for others with our time and support, hope in helping others to be confident that they can overcome challenges) (B)

Journal Writing

Imagine that you are able to send a letter to a student your age whose home has been flooded or destroyed by one of hurricanes. Write a letter where you offer support, hope and encouragement in whatever ways you think best. (Instructors can then identify a school in one of the disaster areas to send the letters.) (B)

Extended Activity Option

1. As students we may not have a lot of money to donate to the victims but we can likely give something. In instances of significant disasters it's not the amount of money given that is important, but rather the fact that many people care enough to help. This outpouring of support gives hope to the victims of a disaster and in a real way helps them to persevere and to recover. Read to students the above two sentences and then ask them to either make a donation to one of the charities below and / or to organize a simple fundraiser.

To help the victims of Hurricane Harvey through JJ Watt's charity please donate to:

<https://www.youcaring.com/victimsofhurricaneharvey-915053>

To help the victims of the US Virgin Islands please donate to for NBA star Tim Duncan's charity: <http://21usvihurricanehelp.com/>

To help the victims of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria please donate to:

a) <https://www.redcross.org/donate/donation>

b) <https://disaster.salvationarmyusa.org/>

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