

Teen Shows Us the Art of Caring

This lesson can be presented over 1-2 sessions. Instructors should feel free to use whichever discussion questions and 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:

- have a deeper understanding, empathy and compassion for the difficulties that people with illnesses and diseases face.
- see how they can put their compassion into action by being generous and caring for others.
- see that standing in solidarity with others makes big goals more achievable.
- learn the value of approaching challenges creatively.
- see how to use social media in ways that bring people together for the greater good.
- recognize where they have helped others, can help others, and have been helped themselves.
- be inspired to live courageously and triumphantly in the face of obstacles or difficulties.

Virtues / Character Traits

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

Creativity: the ability to think of new ideas; to come up with new approaches for accomplishing a goal or solving a problem

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

Resilience: the ability to recover from, or adjust to change and difficulties. Choosing to use setbacks as an opportunity to learn and grow

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

Today we're going to read about a young man named Gabe Donovan from Albany, New York. He understands that having access to medical care and technology has the potential to change the lives of people who are sick and under hospital care all too well. Gabe has spent much of his life in hospitals and with specialty doctors because of his own brain disorder. Let's read Gabe's story and how despite his own health problems, he has found a way to help others.

Reading on Gabe Donovan – please print the “Art of Caring Reading” from our website <https://www.characteractionmedia.com/>

Leaders can read the text to the students, students can read silently, or leader can call on students to read.

Optional Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ox6C-x1-B64>

Leader Summary

Gabe has more reasons to be negative and angry than most people, but he chooses instead to focus on what he can do to serve others in creative and effective ways. By taking this approach to his life Gabe has not only helped Lilly but also inspired and enabled so many other people to participate in this creative mission of caring.

Discussion Question Options *(discussion prompts / answers are in parentheses or bullet points 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. How does Gabe's illness affect his body?
(growth of tumors within the nerves of his skin and brain; weakening of his bones)

From what we have read and what you can imagine, how has Gabe's illness affected his life?

(being sick and weak; many broken bones; many doctors appointments; not being able to play sports like most kids do; missing school, not being able to see your friends as often; stress on you and your family; frustration, sadness)

2. How have Gabe and Lilly both lived out **perseverance** and **resilience** in their lives?
(Gabe: not allowing his medical challenges to stop him from being a **compassionate** person; moving beyond being angry about being sick and instead using his challenges as a platform to help others like Lilly, and in using his one and only Make a Wish grant to help the Double H Ranch instead of something only for himself)

Lilly: working to graduate from high school despite spending most of her life in a hospital, striving to be her best)

3. What virtue is Gabe living out when he said, "And I feel sad that kids like Lilly can't get what they need. [I had to] figure out a way to help her"?
(**Compassion** in hearing Lilly's story and having sympathy for her need and being motivated to make a change)

4. What virtues has Gabe lived out as he is now taking action to help Lilly and in how he chosen to help her? Let's list each virtue we can think of and talk about each one in detail.
(**Generosity** in dedicating the time and effort to create a design, get it manufactured, and launch a social media campaign.

Creativity in coming up with a new and unique idea for creating a work of art that relates to Lilly's life and that can be printed onto products that they can sell.

Wisdom in using social media as an effective tool to spread Lilly's campaign, as a means of generating **solidarity** with people from across America, and in empowering the workers at Spectrum Designs.

Resilience in using his own medical challenges as a platform for change and to improve his own life and the lives of others.)

5. Social media is often full of negativity and bullying of others. Gabe and Lilly's campaign has shown us how social media can also be used to promote the good.

What other ways can social media be used in daily interactions and one-time events to promote the good?

(being kind to others online; if others are being negative toward someone online to stop it by either sharing something positive about that person or simply calling out that we shouldn't spread negative messages about others; sharing/spreading good messages or movements to help others, starting fundraisers, raising awareness of problems, etc.)

6. What are the different ways that Gabe's project has built **solidarity** with others? (Building a unity of purpose and connecting:
 - donors with Lilly and other patients of St. Margarets
 - the workers at Spectrum Designs with Lilly, the other patients and donors
 - the workers at St. Margarets with donors))
7. Gabe's principal said of him, "Instead of focusing on any negative aspect of life, he recognized how fortunate he is and serves others." Let's discuss how this statement can apply to our lives?

Do you think we focus too much time and energy on the negatives in our lives?

Do you think we should be more thankful for what we have, and if yes how do you think we can do this each day? (One idea is to encourage students at the beginning or end of each day to review the things in their own mind of what they have to be thankful for, and especially the many small but important things.)

Gabe seems to have a sense of joy from the work he is doing to serve others, even as he is suffering with his own health problems. Let's talk about some examples from our own lives where we have helped someone, and it made us feel better. Why do you think helping others makes us happy?

8. Gabe's principal stated that Gabe is a "servant leader". What does this phrase mean to you? Do you think in our culture today there is enough emphasis on the serving part of leadership? Who are good examples of servant leadership today in our school, local community, nation and world? (**This is also a team activity below**)
9. Gabe is a great example of what young people can do to make a difference. Let's talk about causes or problems within our own community that we would like to address and where we think we can make a difference. For each cause or problem we state let's also talk about specific **creative** and **wise** ideas for promoting that cause or addressing that problem.

Journal Writing Options

1. The doctor asked Gabe's mom when he was diagnosed, "Why don't we have the goal of an extraordinary life (for him)?" Everyone faces challenges in their lives, and we are all capable of extraordinary things. Write about some of the goals you can set for yourself to be extraordinary this year, for yourself or for others?
2. Without the help of everyone involved in raising the money, it couldn't have been done. Write about a time you have practiced **solidarity** in standing with others to help someone else, or to help address a problem or to promote a cause?

Extended Activity:

1. Organize students into teams of 2-4 students. Ask each team to identify and then present to your class or group on a servant leader within your school, local community, nation or world. Each student should speak in the presentation and the team presentation should include the work of the servant leader they chose, the virtues they live out and how they exemplify each virtue and the difference they are making.

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