

Gabby Thomas Sets the Gold Standard on Determination, Giving Back and Balance

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 the discussion questions.

Lesson Goals

Help students...

- Recognize the value of building a balanced life filled with different interests and activities.
- Appreciate the importance of determination, discipline and consistent practice in striving towards our goals.
- Explore the power of positive visualization, “self-talk”, and mental preparation to overcome challenges and meet goals.
- Appreciate the role of family support and positive role models in shaping our own character.
- See the value of giving back to the community and helping others.

Highlighted Virtues and Character Traits

Determination: firmness of purpose; complete commitment to achieving a goal

Discipline: training expected to produce a specific benefit, moral, mental and / or physical improvement.

Balanced Life: being engaged and pursuing excellence in several areas of life; leading a healthy lifestyle in what we eat, getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, having relationships that are affirming and constructive. Living a balance life leads to long term happiness.

Family Dedication / Support: complete dedication for the well-being of other members of our family, physically, emotionally and spiritually, motivated by love

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

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

Leader Introduction:

Who watched the Olympics this summer? If you did, you may recognize the name “Gabby Thomas.” Thomas is an American woman who won three gold medals at the 2024 Paris Olympics for track and field. She earned gold in the women’s 200 meter race, in the 4 X 100 meter relay and in the 4 X 400 meter relay. Gabby’s story isn’t just about running fast – it’s about working hard to achieve her goals, striving for balance and succeeding in different parts of life, harnessing the power of positive thinking, and using her talents to help others. Let’s watch two interviews of Gabby Thomas that share her story of athletic and personal wins!

Lesson Videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kliyKLaH0RU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2seljcQKgmA&t=29s>

Leader Summary:

Gabby Thomas shows us what it takes to succeed at the highest levels of competition with her own determination, hard work and a positive attitude and importantly as well with the support and inspiration of others. Thomas also shows us the value of living a life that is balanced by focusing on our own health, being engaged in different pursuits and helping others. Thomas's story doesn't end with the Olympics as she hopes to open her own hospital to provide healthcare to those who may not be able to afford it. Let's discuss the virtues that shine forth so brightly in Thomas's life and see how they apply to our lives.

Discussion Question Options: *(discussion prompts / answers are in parentheses)* Before beginning our discussion, let's read over the virtues and their definitions, found in the online lesson as a separate document.

1. Gabby Thomas trains for 3-6 hours every day for running. What other activities does Thomas participate in? ([studying medicine](#), [volunteering at a health clinic](#))

Which virtues does Thomas live out in striving for excellence in all of these different activities? ([determination](#) in having a complete commitment to doing her best in each of her pursuits; [discipline](#) in taking on the training necessary to compete as an Olympian and studying at the level to be accepted to Harvard and to earn an advanced degree.)

2. Let's read over the definition of the character trait **balanced life**. Thomas is a terrific example of someone living a balanced life. How can we strive now at our age to live out a life that is balanced? ([Doing our best with learning at school, homework, clubs, sports, exercise; making time for affirming, fun and constructive friends; making time for our families, including helping out; making time to simply play and relax; making sure we are getting enough sleep, eating healthy, taking care of our hygiene and limiting screen time](#))
3. Thinking about all the things we should do to live a balanced life it looks like we need to be determined and disciplined – interesting how these virtues build on each other!. What do you think are the benefits of living a balanced life? ([Greater sense of well-being, fulfillment and happiness; ability to endure a setback better in that if we fail in one area, we know we still have other area of our life that will give us joy and well-being](#))
4. Before races, Thomas says she uses positive self-talk and visualization techniques. What specific techniques did she share that she uses? ([writing repeatedly "I will be the Olympic champion"](#), [envisioning herself crossing the finish line first](#))

Thomas also says that half the battle to overcome a challenge is mental, which suggests that believing in yourself is the first step to succeeding. Let's share some examples of when having a positive attitude helped us overcome a challenge?

5. Thomas credits her mother as a major inspiration for her own success. How did Gabby's

mother demonstrate **determination** and **family support**? (She worked very hard over many years taking classes and working as a waitress while being a single mom, and eventually becoming a professor. She did it to provide for her children and set a good example.)

Let's share some examples of role models in our lives that help shape our character and inspire us? Who are they and why?

6. Thomas volunteers at a health clinic to help people without insurance. How does this show the virtues of **compassion** and **generosity**? (She feels sympathy for the plight of others who cannot afford healthcare and then gives of her own time and skills to help others in need)
7. What are some ways we can use the skills and talents we have now to help others? (helping others with school work, helping others within our sports teams, helping within our families with the simple but important daily things that are needed, volunteering within our community)
8. Thomas advises young athletes to "have fun, focus on your own journey, and find a sport that you love." How important do you think it is to have fun within our journeys?

Journal Writing Options:

1. Despite achieving success at the Olympics for running and in academics in earning an advanced degree, Thomas continues to set goals for herself like opening up a hospital for people who cannot afford health care. Write about why you think goal setting is important for success, and some of the goals that you have for your life.
2. Gabby's mother was a big inspiration for her. Write about someone in your life who inspires you. How have they influenced your character? What virtues do they demonstrate that you admire?
3. Write about what a balanced life means for you and the specific activities you want to focus on to lead a balanced life?

Extended Activities:

Organize students into a circle, line, or any shape where they can pass something from one to another. Ask students if they know what a relay race is. If they need help, explain that a relay race is a racing competition between teams where each member takes a turn completing parts of the racecourse, typically passing a baton of sorts between them to signal whose turn it is.

Explain that two of the three gold medals Thomas won was for the US women's track team in the relay race, and that today the students will be having a positive self talk relay today.

Passing a pencil, or any item between them, students will share a goal or positive statement about themselves when the item gets to them. Encourage students to use "I will" or "I am" statements instead of "I want to" or "I guess."