

# The Spoon of Power: A Story of Imagination Inspiring Caring and Solidarity

*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...

- See how simple gestures can provide meaningful support to others in difficult situations.
- Explore how imagination can transform ordinary objects and situations into new and meaningful experiences
- Understand how traditions can strengthen communities, including but not limited to school.
- Evaluate the importance of collective support in creating a positive environment.
- Identify opportunities to take positive initiative in supporting classmates and develop strategies for supporting peers

### Highlighted Virtues and Character Traits

**Caring:** to help others; a caring person lives with empathy in trying to understand another person's situation, compassion in desiring to help others, and then with generosity in acting to help

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

**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.

**Perseverance:** trying hard and continuously in spite of 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

**Imagination:** the act of forming a thought, picture, or image of something or someone that we are not able to see or touch with our senses

### Leader Introduction:

Before we begin today's story, I want you to think for a moment about something special to you—a lucky pencil to help you with tests, a treasured toy to help you feel better when you are sad, or a family heirloom or friendship bracelet that reminds you of someone you care about. Now, raise your hand if you have something like that and want to share what it is and why it is special to you. *(Allow students to share some quick examples)*

Sometimes the most ordinary objects can become extraordinary, not because of what they are but what they mean to us—even a spoon! You may be thinking, “A spoon? Really?” But today’s story is about just that. Matthew Dicks, a best selling author, marketing strategist, and most importantly a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, brings us the story of how one of his students transformed a misplaced spoon into something so powerful that it has helped classes of students for years to come... just by using a little imagination and a lot of heart. Let's watch the video to discover the magic of an ordinary spoon!

**Lesson Video: (start at 6:10 and end at 12:26 ABRUPTLY. There is some adult language shortly after this)**

[https://youtu.be/bZDiwANRS84?si=zX6UMREDr\\_T8sAy8&t=370](https://youtu.be/bZDiwANRS84?si=zX6UMREDr_T8sAy8&t=370)

### **Leader Summary:**

We just heard a story about how a simple spoon became something magical. But what made it truly special wasn't the spoon itself – it was because the students used it to care for one another. Jamie transformed through his imagination what could have been just a silly game into a powerful tool of compassion, caring and solidarity. Even during the pandemic, the simple spoon continued to provide comfort and support to students and teachers alike, showing us how small gestures to support others can have lasting impacts on an entire community. Let's get to our discussion questions to see how “The Spoon of Power” applies 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. What first transformed the ordinary spoon from a pile of leaves into the "spoon of power"? *(The **imagination** of the teacher seeing the spoon as something beyond its typical use and at first purely as a way to have fun.)*
2. How did Jamie then use his imagination to further transform the spoon? *(He **imagined** the spoon being a simple but powerful way to comfort and to help his fellow students.)*
3. Jamie could have kept the spoon as his personal treasure or "weapon" against the teacher, especially after his family took the time to turn it into a necklace, but he chose instead to share it. What virtues did he demonstrate in this decision? *(**Generosity** in sharing something special, **empathy** in recognizing the needs, **compassion** in wanting to help others)*
4. Think about something that's special to you. How would you feel about sharing it with someone who really needs it? Let's share some stories of times when we did share something special to us with another person.
5. Throughout the story, we see the spoon being used to help students and adults alike through different challenges. What were some of these situations? *(**McKinney's test anxiety**, **David's grief over his grandfather's death**, **homework troubles**, **bullying situations**, **difficult experiences of loss and grief during the pandemic**)*

Notice how different these challenges were - some were big, some were smaller, some were short-term, some lasted longer. Why do you think the spoon helped each person to

**persevere** through these different types of problems? Stated another way, what was the real power of the spoon? (The spoon represented that the person giving it **cared** for the person receiving it and that's why it gave the person receiving it comfort, confidence and strength. We all feel better when we know that we are cared for by others.)

6. The spoon is an example of a tradition, or a consistent pattern of thought or behavior and often connected with holidays and special situations that occur. Traditions are important because they give people a sense of belonging, reinforce shared values, create memories, and help us to understand who we are and what is important to us. Think about your own classroom or family— what are some special traditions you take part in that help bring people closer together? (A morning meet up or check in at school, “fun Friday” at school, family dinners, special meals at holidays & birthdays, special rituals around religious and secular holidays, team cheers and rituals)

What are some ways we can create new and special traditions to support the people in our lives? (Create class symbols like the spoon, develop special signals or gestures to encourage our friends, establish traditions as family to help each other and also those we don't know who are in need.)

7. At the end of the year, Jamie said "the magic of the spoon only work(ed) in (Mr. Matthew Dick's) classroom." Why do you think this was true? (The “magic” of the spoon came from the class's unified experience and belief in its ability to represent how they cared for each other and other classes wouldn't have had the same shared experience.)

The spoon of power created a special bond among the classmates. What virtue does this show? (**solidarity** in that the spoon unified the students in the class around a shared commitment to support and care for each other)

8. What are some things your classmates might be going through, big or small, that they may need some extra support to handle?

What are some ways that we can show **care** and **compassion** towards others, even without the spoon of power? (being a good listener and simply being present for someone in need or struggling, helping someone imagine and consider different solutions to a problem, affirming the goodness of another person when they are struggling, sometimes actually giving something of value to someone in need)

9. The teacher carried the spoon for 16 years after Jamie gave it to him. What does this tell us about the impact **caring** for others and **imagination** can have? (Simple gestures can have lasting impact, traditions can grow from small beginnings, symbols that we imagine and create can have a strong impact on others)
10. (Also can be used as an extended activity below) Some problems like poverty and violence in a community and even on a smaller level a lack of unity within our school, a team or a family may seem too large or entrenched to change. Let's use our imagination and take a minute to visualize the problem and then the problem going away.

Now let's imagine how that transformed community, school, team, group of friends or family would be without the problem and what it would be like to live within it.

Does imagining the transformed community make you more motivated to work to change

it?

**Journal Writing Options:**

1. Write about a time when you needed and received support from others. What helped you feel better? How could you use that experience to help someone else who might be struggling?
2. Write about a tradition in your family or classroom that brings everyone together. Why is it important? How does it foster a sense of belonging and support with each other?

**Extended Activities:**

- In small groups, have students brainstorm and develop a new classroom tradition that could promote support and unity. They should outline how this tradition would work and present it to the class. Consider implementing the most popular idea.
- Discussion question 10 above.