

I AM-BECAUSE: A Keys to Character values training program

1. METHODOLOGY

The importance of character education and the study of its development cannot be overemphasized as mature character is the foundation to a healthy society and is prerequisite to our democratic way of life.

The character maturation process begins at birth. Human beings are born completely self-centered. Their concern is only for themselves and their need to survive takes precedence over everything else. The growth to maturity and selflessness involves time and the experience of the maturation process.

This paper concerns itself with explaining the process of mature character development from self-centeredness to socialization. What is the process, how long does it take and how does it work to bring a child to a state of mature socialization?

In order to understand how character is shaped we must first see the importance relationship between the individual and the society in which he lives. There are four major social institutions that compose society: the family, the religious institution, the government (community) and the workplace (or the school, if one is still a student). These institutions and the authorities that lead them are the “instruments” that shape the self-centered human nature into the character of the mature adult. The leaders in these four institutions have the responsibility to love, discipline, train, guide, and employ (as an apprentice) the maturing child in order to help him/her reach full character potential. The role of the child is to respond to the work of the authority leader by submitting to their direction. By complying to the direction of the adult authority figures a modification of the child’s self-centered character takes place.

When considering the process of socialization it is important to understand what the human problem is in relationship to the nature of self-centeredness. There are five major categories of our human self-centeredness: self-preservation, self-will, self-deceit, self-gratification, and self-exaltation. Each one of these expressions of our self-centered nature is a human motivation which must be molded by external processes so that we can live in harmony with others. We mature when we properly respond to the direction of the authority figures and we rise to a higher level of human conduct. However, if we do not, we will remain self-centered and perform in ways which will stress us and can complicate our life and the lives of those around us. An additional problem is created when the authority figures do not properly relate to the child. Consequently, the character of the child will remain self-centered and no responsible character growth will take place. Please refer to the Character Development chart to view the process of socialization

beginning with the self-centered infant to the mature socialized adult. This chart can be found in chapter 2 of the Family Education Booklet.

The methods used by the character shaping authorities determine the effectiveness and quality of the character developed in the children under their authority. When attempting to shape the self-will of the child, in order to bring the will of the child into compliance with the will of the authority figures, two main types of techniques are used. They are the “power” technique and the “authority” technique.

Let us first review the character shaping effects of the “power” technique. The “power” technique is that method of controlling others which is characterized by the use of physical strength, fear, or intimidation. When the authorities within the four institutions use the “power” technique the child only develops the ability to control himself so long as there is external power over him. This technique is unable to bring one to mature development; however, it is a necessary method to bring the child to personal stability. Without the “power” technique, controlling the child, the character cannot be stabilized and it will be impossible for the child to internalize mature character. When using the power technique the quality of the child’s character is satisfactory only as long as the authority figure is close enough to exercise control over the child. However, once the authority figure is perceived by the child as unable to control the situation, then the child reverts to his own self-centeredness and conducts himself any way he likes. It can control the child and create an impression that the child has a good character, but this is true only as long as the child perceives the adult as having the power. Once the authority figure no longer possesses the power to control, the power will shift to the child who becomes the power figure and will then attempt to dominate the parent. Unfortunately, during this power transition there is often a contest for control and an ensuing battle is fought for dominance leaving the relationship in chaos. Obviously, mature character development will not happen within this context.

Nevertheless, there is legitimacy to the “power” method. The “power” technique is used by law enforcement to control those who lack the necessary character to control themselves. As mentioned before, children growing up under the power technique only learn how to control themselves when power is present to control them; they do not develop internal control. As these children advance in age they remain at an immature level of character development and unless an intervention causes some change will continue to live out their life relating to others in a self-willed manner. Further, they rear their children with the same power/control methods. As a result it becomes a generational problem, resulting in self-willed children who must be controlled by outside forces.

The second concession to the legitimacy of the “power” technique occurs during the early childhood years, when children do not have the maturity of character to protect themselves from danger. During this time the “power” technique is the necessary method to control, as it can ensure the safety of the child until such time as the child can gain sufficient personal ability to protect himself from the obvious dangers of life. Due to their immaturity, infants and young children must be controlled until the character training process has a chance to shape their self-will into an amenable-will so that they

will be able to cooperate with their authority figures and protect themselves from apparent danger. Understandably, during these early and innocent years of childhood, the “power” technique will only produce in the individual the ability to successfully function within a setting of strong external controls. Nevertheless, “power” is necessary to prepare the child to receive the character training during his third developmental character stage which can produce internal control. (See the stages of the Character Development Chart, The Family Education booklet)

As the child grows and matures the “authority technique” becomes the recommended method of teaching values within the character shaping experience. The possession of mature character is an internal work; the elements of power and control can only force external compliance. Because of this we can see why the use of the “authority technique” within both the home and the school is so important. Authority is defined as the legitimate and established right of appointed individuals, ordained by law, who have been granted the privilege to protect and provide direction to those under their responsibility. Those under authority are expected to willingly submit, that is obey with a good attitude, those who are appointed over them. The authority method is necessary in developing internal controls within an individual because it implements the use of the concept of the “rule of law” which sets the stage for “moral reasoning” to take place. In order for one to internalize the values necessary for the development of mature character the process of moral reasoning must take place.

First, let us define what we mean by “rule of law” and why it is so important in the development of character. Rule of law is the basic set of rules or guidelines of living that are modeled and taught by the authority figures and are held up to those under their authority as the necessary rules to live by. Through this method the ones under authority have a chance to learn and contemplate the significance of the rules and attempt to internalize them into their own character by means of moral reasoning. Through this process one’s character is then modified by willing submission to legitimate concepts established by the rule of law. Forced compliance may control outward behavior, but it produces no inward change in character as there has been no internal choice.

Moral reasoning is defined as one’s intellectual ability to analyze, judge, and make sensible and sound determinations regarding the quality and value of moral behavior. The goal of effective teaching, whether it is in the home, community, church or school, is to help children develop the capacity to think through the set of circumstances that life presents to them and come to a sensible conclusion. In order to succeed in this task the child must first be trained in the rule of law. The child first needs information regarding how the “game of life” is played in order to possess the concepts necessary to come to the eventual sensible conclusions. The information necessary for the development of moral reasoning is found in the rule of law.

The I AM-BECAUSE character training program is designed to assist students to internalize character concepts by the method of moral reasoning under the rule of law. This program has two parts, the “I AM” part and the “because” part. The following will explain how students are taught the art of moral reasoning by using the cogitative

process. There are three levels of the cogitative process associated with the “I AM-BECAUSE program: the declarative, the intentional and the personal. The “I AM” part of the key card emphasizes the personal level of the cogitative process and challenges the student to internalize a character statement regarding his self-image. The “because” part of the program explains the “why” and it answers questions brought about by the affirmation of the personal statement.

The following is an explanation of the three levels of the cogitative process within the “I AM” part of the Key Card. For purpose of illustration the “I AM RESPONSIBLE” Key Card will be used.

1. The cogitative process begins with the use of a *declarative statement*; “be responsible.” A declarative statement simply means to declare, to state clearly, formally and officially; it is a straight forward statement directing the one under authority in how to think and behave. The declarative statement is merely an intellectual concept. If a student thinks the declarative statement through by means of moral reasoning and makes the mature choice, then the character trait will be validated by the student. However, many students in the process of character development are not mature enough to accept the declarative statement and will ignore or resist its message. Because they are used to only superficially complying with adult directives they do not effectively incorporate its meaning and permit it to become a part of their character. Others, in the maturing process, will see it as a confrontational statement and simply rebel against it.
2. The *volitional/intentional statement*, “I will be responsible” is the second level in the cogitative process. This level of character training has value and is used by some character training programs to help teach character to maturing students. This is a statement of intention. However, even though this is part of the cogitative process, it still does not go all the way to address the deepest level of the process of moral reasoning. Intention is good, but it is only a promise. If the individual follows through on his purpose all is well. But, if not, then intention falls short of reaching the desired goal.
3. The third level of the cogitative process is the *personal statement*: “I am”. The statement “I am responsible” is an acknowledgement of a state of being, which we know as self-image. When the student repeats this statement he prepares himself for full “moral reasoning” to take place. If the student agrees with this statement he validates himself and his self image is enhanced. By reading and believing the message of the key card he reinforces the reason that he acts in a responsible manner and that is, in the case of the example of the “Be responsible” key card, because he knows that others are counting on him. However, if during the process of thinking upon this statement, the student decides that the “I AM” statement is not descriptive of his self-image, and he admits that he is not a responsible person, he can then be confronted with his own admission of why he is not responsible. This opens up the opportunity to deal with the second part of the “I AM-BECAUSE” character training program which is the “*because*” part.

The following is an explanation of the second part of the key card, “the *because*”.

The purpose of the “because” part of the key card is to give the students a reason or justification for affirming the “I AM” statement. It also enhances the process of moral reasoning by challenging the student to think about himself in positive ways. If the student validates himself by answering the “**because**” part of the key card in the affirmative he will reinforce his own self-image. However, if he is unable to validate the “I AM” of the personalized statement, and admits to himself that he does not identify with that statement, the “because” part of the key card opens up an opportunity for the teacher to question the student in regards to his self-image and provide an opening for further discussion. In analyzing the “because” statement the student would have to ask himself the question of why he does not agree with the personalized statement, and then the meaning of the “because” part of the character key card comes into play. For example, to answer the question of “why I am *not* responsible”, some common responses could be: “because I am selfish and do not properly care about the well being of those who are counting on me; or, “I am not adequately connected to others to realize that they are counting on me”; or, in fact, “no one is counting on me and therefore I don’t care to be a reliable person.” The interplay of the question-answer dialogue within the student is an example of moral reasoning.

These admissions open up the opportunity for the student and the teacher to enter into dialogue and enhance the student teacher relationship. The teacher can then help the student deal with the personal issues which prevent answering the question in the affirmative. This model stresses that the teacher should seek to ask questions beginning with “why”, “what”, “where”, “when”, in order to enhance moral reasoning within the mind of the student. Asking questions challenges the student to increase his knowledge of the character statement and to challenge further insight about character concepts. This dialogue places the teacher in the superior “moral authority” role. The teacher now has an authoritative position to answer the character questions the student poses. Whoever asks the question controls the direction of the dialogue. Students who are experiencing struggles with character issues need someone (the teacher) to help them work through their struggles in order to come into eventual compliance with the character challenge. The “because” part of the training model will provide the teacher and the student with an opportunity to engage in a wide variety of discussion opportunities toward the goal of helping the student develop a positive character. As we know many students do not come from homes where responsible values are modeled. Consequently, character programs are all the more important to help students become successful.

Now that we have a basic understanding of the I AM-BECAUSE character training program let us review the program and study its application in a classroom setting.

1. *Teacher* chooses a Key Card and has the class read its message.
2. *Teacher* asks the class to think about the statement and be prepared to discuss how they view themselves in relationship to the statement.
3. *Teacher* asks individual students to give their answer to the statement on the Key Card. For example have the class read the Key Card, “I am respected...”

4. *Teacher* asks the question to the student, “Are you respected or Why are you respected?”
5. *Student* answers, “because I live by the values I’ve learned at home and school”
6. *Teacher*, “Tell me about your values and why you care about them and how you learned them.” They can then recite the character traits or values that they know. This gives the teacher an opening to validate the student’s values and help the student build his self-image.
7. In the following is an example of how a teacher might respond when the student reacts in the negative to the Key Card.
Student: “I am not respected. No one likes me”
Teacher: “Why are you not respected?”
Student: “No one respects me” This is not an answer, but a possible statement that can be made by a discouraged child. The teacher now has the opportunity to ask questions and regain control of the situation and help the student work through his challenge. The teacher can have the student read the “because” part of the Key Card and continue the dialogue to a successful resolution.
8. *Teacher* “Tell me about your values and where you learned them”. The teacher can point out to the student the areas of deficiency and challenge the student to make better choices. The teacher can have the student recite the other keys and have him ponder their significance. Further, the teacher can direct the student back to the foundational concept of the Builder in order to help the student re-think the whole process of building a better life. The teacher can request the student to read the Builder key card “I am the Builder of my life” Then the teacher can begin asking questions to help the student regain his sense of direction and challenge him to regain his sense of meaning for his life. Questions such as, “How are you building your life?” “Are you living by the seven Golden Keys?” “Do you feel like building your life; Why, or Why not?”
9. *Student* “I don’t care about building my life. No one cares about me and I don’t care about anyone.”
10. *Teacher* “I care, is that enough for you to care? Your parents care about you. Is that enough for you to care?”
 Obviously, the above presentation is only a small sample of how the program can help a teacher relate with a student and help him/her develop a stronger self-concept.

The I AM BECAUSE character training program can also be used as a counseling program as the seven golden keys represent the choices necessary to mature character growth. Beginning with the Builder key the teacher/counselor can guide the student to the seven choices and help him/her incorporate the appropriate choices which lead to maturity.

II. TUTORIAL ON THE SEVEN GOLDEN KEYS TO SUCCESS

The fundamental concept to all the keys of the Reality Education Programs is that of “the Builder.” Each person is the builder of his life and must assume responsibility for his behavior. Everyone has an inner desire to build his life, and will never be content until he reaches his goals. Failure is shunned, but success is sought out rigorously. For example: In the process of learning to walk a little child will continue to get up even after many failed attempts. We see many examples of the human drive for success in sports, politics, and romantic relationships as well as a myriad of other events in every day life. Success is king and the desire to win and achieve is the goal upon which people build happy and fulfilling lives.

From this fundamental belief follow the seven key concepts and related choices which are necessary for successful living.

The seven keys of success as presented in the I AM –BECAUSE program correlate with the following seven concepts which are used in other Reality Education programs. It is held that seven golden keys to success are the basic training tools leading to the development of the mature character. For further explanation of these seven traits please refer to *Thinking For Living and The Keys To Success*. As presented in part I of this paper, Methodology, the keys presented in the I AM-BECAUSE program use statements which are on the third level of the cogitative process and are used as teaching tools to accomplish the acquisition of these character qualities. In the following is a correlated list of the seven concepts found in the Thinking for Living program, the Keys to Success program and the I AM BECAUSE program.

THE REALITY EDUCATION PROGRAMS CORRELATED

<u>Thinking For Living</u>	<u>Keys To Success</u>	<u>I AM-BECAUSE</u>
THE CONCEPTS (Intellectual)	THE CHOICES (Volitional)	THE STATEMENTS (Self-image)
Purpose	Accept yourself--	“I am important”
Communication	Be Thankful--	“I am happy”
Freedom	Make Commitments--	“I am respected”
Authority	Respect Authority--	“I am obedient”
Relationship	Be kind to Others--	“I am kind”
Management	Be Responsible--	“I am responsible”
Opportunity	Invest in Others--	“I am helpful”

The following is presented to explain the definitions behind the seven concepts of the Reality Education Program, which include the seven concepts of the Success In Life program, the Thinking for Living program and the I AM –BECAUSE program.

THINKING FOR LIVING CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

The following are the seven universal concepts that promote success in life.

1. Purpose: Everyone is designed for a special reason.
2. Communication: Everyone desires to express themselves.
3. Freedom: Everyone desires liberty, both personally and socially.
4. Authority: Everyone is accountable to respect leadership.
5. Relationships: Everyone and everything is connected.
6. Management: Everyone is responsible to care for what they possess.
7. Opportunity: Everyone gets chances to help make someone's life better.

The seven key statements of the I AM BECAUSE program are taken from the seven choices of the KEYS TO SUCCESS program which also relate to the seven concepts of the THINKING FOR LIVING program. Although each key can stand alone as an important concept of human psychological development, they are also sequential concepts which build upon each other. Below is a summary of each key choice:

THE SEVEN CHOICES OF *THE KEYS TO SUCCESS* PROGRAM

1. **SELF-ACCEPTANCE** - *Recognizing our purpose in life.* To accept ourself leads to believing in ourself and knowing who we are. We must develop our own self-identity by refusing to compare our self to someone else. Comparison results in two wrong views: "I'm better than" or "I'm worse than". Everyone is a unique individual designed for a special reason. To search for one's place, to find it and to make something of it, is everyone's challenge. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses. We must become willing to improve upon our weaknesses and celebrate our strengths.
2. **THANKFULNESS**- *Recognizing what others have done for us* We must express gratitude for all that we have in life; especially for our family, friends and possessions. Our attitude is controlled by our positive outlook on life which is rooted in thankfulness. Consequently, we make ourselves and others around us happy because we emphasize the good things in life rather than the bad.
3. **COMMITMENT**- *Deciding to hold firm to our beliefs by not violating our conscience.* Making a personal commitment not to compromise our values for social approval will result in personal self-respect. A strong values system acts as an internal guidance system and helps to keep us out of trouble.
4. **RESPECT AUTHORITY** - *Honoring leadership by obedience.* Authority figures are responsible to help guide one's life, and to provide protection from unnecessary troubles. All of us have "blind spots" and can profit from counsel and direction of those in authority over us. They are there to help protect and guide us.
5. **KINDNESS**- *Loving support for those less fortunate* Showing love and kindness to others by treating them the way we would like to be treated is called the Golden Rule and is the recommended behavior in all societies. We are not expected to "like" every

person, but we are called to love and show kindnesses to all; even those who are different from us and whose customs and ways we do not understand.

6. **RESPONSIBILITY-** *Willing to care for what we have* Making a decision to care for and manage what has been entrusted to us helps us develop self-discipline and is a key to maturity. Each of us is responsible to care for everything we have; body, time, talents, possessions, and etc.

7. **INVESTMENT-** *Giving with purposeful intent to help others.* To invest in the life of others is to take every opportunity to share what we have in order to meet their basic needs. We increase our self-esteem and maturity when our life becomes meaningful to others.

The following is another presentation of the correlation between the I AM BECAUSE program and the concepts that are presented in the Thinking For Living program.

The Seven I am's, of the I AM BECAUSE Keys to Character Program

1st KEY—I AM IMPORTANT-- because I have a special purpose in life.
PURPOSE—ACCEPTANCE—SELF-IDENTITY

2nd KEY---I AM **HAPPY** because I am thankful for what I have.
COMMUNICATION-THANKFUL-SELF-CONTENTMENT

3rd KEY—I AM RESPECTED because I live by the values I've learned at home and school
FREEDOM-COMMITMENT-SELF-RESPECT

4TH KEY—I AM OBEDIENT because the rules at home and school are there to keep me safe.
AUTHORITY-RESPECT (SUBMIT)-SELF-CONTROL

5th KEY—I AM KIND because others deserve to be treated the way I would like to be treated
RELATIONSHIP—LOVE—SELF-COMPOSURE

6th KEY –I AM **RESPONSIBLE**-- because I know that others are counting on me.
MANAGEMENT—RESPONSIBILITY—SELF-DISCIPLINE

7th KEY—I AM **HELPFUL**-because I want to make others feel important too
OPPORTUNITY—INVESTMENT—SELF-WORTH