

ESTABLISHING WHAT'S IMPORTANT



AGENDA

- Starter
- The Top 10
- Hmm, Let Me Think about That
- "To Thine Own Self Be True"
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will examine and determine their personal values.

Students will make decisions based on their values.

Students will practice resisting pressure to make decisions that are not in line with their personal values.

Materials Needed

- One copy of the "Top 10" activity sheet for each student (Part I)

Starter (3 minutes)

Ask students to identify who George Lucas is. (He is the writer and director who created Star Wars, Indiana Jones, and the sequels to those movies. He is also the founder of Industrial Light & Magic, a computer technology company that creates special effects for movies.)

Tell students that Lucas was quoted as saying, "I used to think there was nothing more important in the world than making movies, but there is...raising children is more important."

From his blockbuster films, we know that George Lucas is an accomplished filmmaker who has invested a great deal of effort in his career. However, it is reported that he also made a decision to take a 16-year break to raise his children as a single father. Point out that this decision would indicate that George Lucas values his family. Explain to students that although most people cannot afford to leave their jobs in order to raise their children as George Lucas did, everyone makes choices about their lifestyle, their values, and the priorities in their lives. This is how we establish what is most important to us.

Part I The Top 10 (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students examine and determine their personal values.

1. Students identify the people, places, and things that are important to them.

Distribute a copy of the "Top 10" activity sheet to each student. Explain that these top 10 lists are meant to help them discover who and what is important to them. Direct students to think about what they really feel before they start writing. Tell students to list their top 10 choices for each category.

Allow students 10 minutes to complete the activity sheet.

2. Students examine their choices and draw conclusions about their personal values.

When students have completed the activity sheet, ask the following questions:

- Look at your top 10 list of people. Are they mostly friends or family? Are they people that you've known for a long time? Are they people you know well or admire from a distance? What qualities of character, if any, do these people share?
- Look at your top 10 list of things you like to do. Are they things you do with others or alone? Do you mostly use your body, your mind, or both to do them? Can you do them near your home, or must you travel? Do they cost a lot of money, or are they free?
- Look at your top 10 list of places. Are they near or far? Do you like to go there alone or with other people? Are they all real, or are some imaginary? Do they cost a lot of money, or are they free?
- Look at your top 10 list of things you'd like to own. What did you write down? How do these things reflect your values? If, for example, your list is filled with clothes, does this mean that you value looking good?
- Look at your top 10 list of rules to live by. What qualities of character do these rules reflect (e.g., honesty, loyalty, perseverance)?

Guide students to conclude that the people, places, and things that are important to us and the rules we live by reflect who we are and what we value. We all have things that we value, and those values affect every choice we make.

Part II Hmm, Let Me Think about That (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students make decisions based on their values.

1. Students prepare for the activity.

Explain that you will be presenting students with a series of choices. Students will make a choice and either stand up or remain seated, depending on where you point. Demonstrate how this will work by saying: "For example, I will ask if you would rather have X (point up, meaning stand up) or Y (point down, meaning remain seated)."

2. Students make some choices.

Ask a series of questions like the following, beginning with simple choices and moving to more difficult ones:

- Would you rather dress up or dress down?
- Would you rather be onstage or in the audience?
- Would you rather be an athlete or an artist?
- Would you rather have dinner at home with your family or go to a fast-food restaurant with friends?
- Would you rather take a long walk by yourself or be with friends?
- Would you rather be healthy but poor or sick but very rich?

3. Students reflect on the choices they made.

Ask students if they thought the choices became more difficult toward the end. Encourage them to explain why and tell how they finally made a decision. Explain that the decisions and choices we make are influenced by what is important to us, or what we value. Point out that everyone made different choices and that there are as many different sets of values as there are people.

Part III "To Thine Own Self Be True" (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students practice resisting pressure to make decisions that are not compatible with their personal values.

1. Students perform role plays.

Share the following quote from William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "To thine own self be true." Discuss the meaning of this quote. Explain that once we know what's important to us, we must live by those values, even in the face of pressure.

Divide the class into three groups. Have each group brainstorm one of the following scenarios and act it out for the class:

- You're at a party with a popular crowd, and someone you like and want to impress is encouraging you to do drugs. What do you do?
- Someone you like has the answers to your midterm exam and is passing them around. You've been worried about passing this course—it's a tough one. There's little chance of getting caught because almost everyone who's been approached has taken the answers, so they're not likely to snitch. What do you do?
- You notice that your friends like to taunt the less-popular students at school. They want you to join in, and they tease you when you don't. What do you do?

Discuss the difficulty of maintaining your values in the face of pressure to change them. Remind students that self-respect, as well as the respect of others, is strongly tied to our values. Ask students if they think that self-respect is more important than having the respect of others. Point out that self-respect is defined by a person's own value system, while the respect of others is defined by their value systems. Since another person's value system may be different from their own, remind students again of the quote, "To thine own self be true."

2. Students apply what they have learned.

Have students write a paragraph describing a time when their values conflicted with the values of someone close to them. Ask volunteers to read their paragraphs out loud. Have the rest of the class suggest resolutions to the conflicts.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to name the one thing that is of paramount importance to them. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- The things you value influence everything you do.
- Decide what things you value and make choices based on them.
- Stay true to your beliefs in your actions. Make decisions that are aligned with the rules that you live by.

Student Assessment

1. List three values that are important to you. Explain how these values influence your actions.
2. Explain what is meant by the saying "To thine own self be true."
3. On whose values is self-respect based? What about the respect of others?

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

"Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value." —Albert Einstein

Ask, "If you were to live by your values, do you think you would be vulnerable to pressure from peers? Why? Why not?" Brainstorm with students ways to stick to their own values.

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Ask students to stand in the middle of the room. Label the corners of the room "strongly agree," "somewhat agree," "strongly disagree," and "somewhat disagree." Ask students questions related to values. Tell students to go to the corner that represents how they feel.

Have students explain why they feel the way they do.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students write about a person who they think has values similar to their own and why they think this is the case.

Discuss with students how values are formed and how values might change.

Using Technology

Watch a high school-themed movie as a class. Talk with students about the values (or lack thereof) that are represented in the film. Ask, "Are these values realistic? Do you agree with or accept the values portrayed?"

Homework

Ask students to create a "Me Bag." Students should decorate a bag or box and fill it with items that represent them and their values.

Have students describe the contents of their "Me Bag."

Additional Resources

Choose a short story that emphasizes values and share it with the class.

Have students choose and share their favorite quote from the story.

TOP 10

The top 10 people in my life:

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

The top 10 things I like to do:

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

The top 10 places I like to go:

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

TOP 10

(CONTINUED)

The top 10 things I'd like to own:

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

The top 10 rules I live by:

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

The top 10 dreams I have for the future:

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.