

Character for Life

The Pyramid of Success™

Building Character Block by Block

This year, your teen's school has selected to use the Premier Character Development planner program. The program features Coach John Wooden's Pyramid of Success™ to help students develop Character for Life.

This month, your teen is being introduced to the Pyramid of Success™, the cornerstone of the program. The Pyramid is a compilation of fifteen character trait blocks which, when developed together, will help your child become the best he or she is capable of becoming. Each month your teen will learn new traits that will help him or her on the road to success.

A Unique Approach

The Premier Character Development planner program is specially designed with your teen's future success in mind. It uses Coach Wooden's no-nonsense approach to character development, and applies his principles to career and future planning.

Each month, students will learn how the Pyramid of Success™ traits apply to career opportunities and post-secondary decisions. In addition, exciting video profiles accompany each monthly theme, providing students with real-life examples of how the character traits are applied to situations and careers. This exploration jumpstarts a rich, year-long character development journey!

Why Character Development?

"Develop character that will help you succeed—character that will last a lifetime." That's what Coach Wooden recommended. By strengthening your character, you are developing a part of yourself that will play a large role in whether or not you find success. To build character, your teen should strengthen all of the Pyramid traits:

Industriousness & Enthusiasm
Friendship
Loyalty & Cooperation
Self-Control
Alertness & Initiative
Intentness

Condition & Skill
Team Spirit
Poise & Confidence
Competitive Greatness

Support and Encouragement

Coach Wooden said, "Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best that you are capable of becoming." How can you help your teen find that peace of mind?

- **Talk.** Ask your teen to tell you what success is and how it plays out in his or her life right now, and what it will look like in the future (in college and beyond).
- **Praise.** All success, big and small, deserves recognition.
- **Encourage.** Help your child develop the confidence to pursue opportunities—in school, in extracurricular activities, at home, in life at large—that could lead to success.
- **Explore.** Probe and discuss your teen's career interests, nurturing exploration and discovery.
- **Remind.** Don't let your child forget that success is in everyone, as Coach Wooden firmly believed.

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Industriousness & Enthusiasm

Working Hard ... and Enjoying It

This month, your teen has been introduced to the *Industriousness* and *Enthusiasm* blocks of the Pyramid of Success™. These traits, according to Coach Wooden, are the cornerstones of the foundation for success.

No doubt, like most people, your teen wants to live the dream—to be successful. But, that does not happen magically. It occurs through hard work and careful planning. That's industriousness ... making the effort to succeed.

Sporting a winning attitude is equally as important, because it makes success not only possible, but also *fun* to achieve. If your teen's heart is not invested in a task, a goal, or the "dream," then his or her potential cannot be fully realized. Enthusiasm is the operative trait in this case.

Jumping the Hurdles

Your teen already knows that things don't always go as planned. Obstacles appear, no how carefully crafted a plan may be. However, being industrious and having enthusiasm enable people to overcome challenges and continue on their paths to success. When your teen has a positive, hard working attitude, he or she won't let obstacles get in the way of reaching goals.

A strong message to your teen this month has been: *No matter how big an obstacle or how tough a job seems, when hard work and enthusiasm are at play, success is possible.* Your child is learning that by practicing industriousness, worthwhile results will be achieved, and that enthusiasm will generate excitement for what he or she pursues. These traits undergird success.

The bottom line, according to Coach Wooden, is that there is no "cutting corners" when it comes to attaining success. Someone with an eye toward success should recognize that the journey on that path requires hard work, commitment, and a positive outlook.

Support and Encouragement

Let your teen know that hard work pays off! When people do the best they can all the time, they achieve meaningful results. Help your teen give his or her best effort by working through the following steps:

- **Name it.** Help your teen identify the goal he or she wants to reach.
- **Create it.** Work with your teen to set the goal. Check in on his or her progress toward it and discuss challenges he or she might be facing.
- **Overcome it.** When obstacles arise, help your teen tackle them. Praise him or her when success is achieved, and offer guidance when the going gets tough.
- **Stick with it.** When your teen is ready to give up, pile on the encouragement. Help him or her push through feelings of boredom or failure.
- **Praise it.** Model the positive attitude your teen should have as he or she follows dreams. Don't let your teen lose sight of the fact that he or she is developing incredibly important skills that will see him or her to a promising future.

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Friendship

Establishing Bonds

This month, students are studying the Pyramid of Success™ block *Friendship*. Friendship is foundational to our success, since it requires us to work and interact with others. It takes time and patience to develop, as well as a spirit of loyalty and a willingness to work with others.

As students learn about this trait, they will begin to see that friendships are a powerful component in everyone's personal and professional lives. They will also learn the importance of finding a positive support system within a friendship as they recognize that true friends value, support, listen to, and watch out for each other.

It's Also Professional

Until this point in your teen's life, his or her focus may have been on friendships formed at school. However, as he or she prepares to enter the workforce, it becomes important to recognize the critical role friendships play on the job. Coworkers can become supporters, teammates, and mentors. While these friendships may not be as intimate as those in your teen's personal life, they will provide a valuable source of workplace collegiality, positive professional growth, and experience.

Support and Encouragement

Your teen knows that true friendships aren't formed in a day. It takes time to develop them. And once they are in place, it takes even more time and effort to get to know friends inside and out. How can you help your teen make and keep friends? Encourage him or her to:

- **Make wise choices.** Encourage your teen to form friendships based on respect, truth, and honesty.
- **Branch out.** Help your child brainstorm ways to meet new people in the various environments he or she frequents.
- **Develop respect.** Advise your teen to treat friends the way he or she would like to be treated. Often, friendships built on mutual respect withstand the test of time. Long-standing friendships are a sign of trust, respect, and loyalty.

- **Solve conflict.** Guide your teen through rough spots with friends, modeling positive approaches to resolving conflict that lead to stronger relationships.
- **Know what's appropriate.** Help your teen differentiate between personal and workplace friends, ensuring appropriate relationships and interactions on both fronts.

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Loyalty & Cooperation

Truth + Collaboration = Success

This month, your teen is exploring the *Loyalty* and *Cooperation* blocks of the Pyramid of Success™. These two character traits are not only extremely valuable in the career world, but also in life overall.

No two humans are exactly alike, which is why the traits of Cooperation and Loyalty are so important. When people cooperate and are loyal, they use their differences to accomplish more than they could ever realize alone. And, when your teen makes Cooperation and Loyalty part of who he or she is, success is inevitable.

Breaking It Down

Loyalty and Cooperation are critical character traits, and ones people depend on. Loyalty demonstrates the ability to be true to oneself and others. It is the sign of a good friend. Cooperation reflects an interest in finding the best way to do something, rather than doing something from a selfish standpoint. Coach Wooden described it best when he said, "Consider the rights of others before your own feelings, and the feelings of others before your own rights."

Support and Encouragement

Loyalty and Cooperation are traits your teen should develop and hone. How can you help him or her do that successfully?

- **Be a role model.** Show your loyalty to others by avoiding gossip, coming to the defense of friends and family, and doing kind deeds.
- **Point out examples of loyalty.** When you see your teen being a loyal friend, worker, family member, or citizen, point it out. Conversely, identify when he or she has not shown loyalty.
- **Create collaboration.** Establish a cooperative household where everyone pitches in. Try to include your teen in family decision-making processes.

- **Encourage participation.** Sign your teen up for a team or group activity where peers must work together.
- **Teach problem-solving skills.** Help your teen learn effective ways to resolve conflicts on the job, at school, or among friends.

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Self-Control

Calm in the Face of Adversity

This month, your teen is examining the *Self-Control* block of the Pyramid of Success™. Self-control is a skill necessary for any kind of achievement, and plays a significant role in the setting and reaching of goals.

Coach Wooden taught that self-control must be practiced at all times. He believed that when we keep our emotions in check, we can make better decisions and perform more consistently. If we make major decisions when emotions are at their highest, we're not always using good judgment. Coach said, "Master your emotions through preparation and positive thinking, and let a self-controlled lifestyle lead you to new heights."

Take a Deep Breath

Your teen has probably heard it before—advice on ways he or she can stay in control. Suggestions like "look before you leap," "control yourself," and "stop and take a deep breath" have been around for years, and for good reason—they work!

The reason advice like this works is because it requires people to stop and reflect. To have self-control, people must first know who they are and what they want to achieve. They need to know the path they want to take. Stepping back from a situation allows them to compare their behavior to their end goals.

While most people agree that better decisions are made when emotions don't cloud judgment, it's not easy to get to that point. Explain to your teen that self-control doesn't just happen; it's a skill that requires training. But it's a skill worth working for because it ultimately enables clear thinking and most often has positive results.

Support and Encouragement

Staying cool, calm, and collected is the way to remain sharp and focused. How can you help your teen acquire and practice self-control?

- **Model self-control whenever possible.** Share your strategies with your teen.

- **Help your teen set limits and boundaries.** Point out what the potential consequences are when self-control is not in check. Structure is important.
- **Learn your teen's emotional triggers.** Discuss with him or her approaches that would help strengthen his or her self-control skill.
- **Practice self-control.** Encourage your teen to enroll in activities or sports that require him or her to practice and develop self-control.

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Alertness & Initiative

Watch, Observe, Take Action

This month, your teen has been immersed in the Pyramid of Success™ blocks *Alertness* and *Initiative*. Coach Wooden included these character traits in the second tier of his Pyramid because he believed one needs to observe and be active in order to become his or her personal best. Taking initiative requires responsiveness to daily situations, and can determine whether the outcome to those situations will be positive or negative. Some situations require immediate action, and this is when alertness is critical.

This month, students are learning the importance of taking responsibility for their actions, and how being a self-starter can help them reach their goals.

The Elements

Coach Wooden said, “Failure to act is often the greatest failure of all.” He believed that success cannot be achieved without taking initiative. However, he also taught that the right kind of action must be taken. Actions based on awareness, understanding, and knowledge are important.

When the elements of the Alertness and Initiative Pyramid blocks are put into action, success will be achieved—because you’re aware of it, you can see it, and you’re ready to go out and get it!

Support and Encouragement

As a basketball coach, John Wooden recognized the physical value of Alertness and Initiative on the court. It’s what could make or break a game. The same goes for life and work, according to Coach. How can you help your teen develop these important skills?

- **Encourage him or her to do the work.** Learning is an important part of developing any skill.
- **Praise a “go getter.”** When your teen pursues a task or goal without being reminded, praise the behavior. Developing the Initiative trait means becoming a self-starter.

- **Remind your teen to stay alert.** To do so, he or she only needs to rely on himself or herself—and not on things like caffeine.
- **Teach your teen to be an observer.** Help him or her figure out when opportunities arise and how to pursue them.
- **Take advantage of teachable moments.** Remind your teen that mistakes and failure are part of the process, and are an opportunity to learn something new.

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Intentness

Focused Determination

This month, students are examining the Pyramid of Success™ block *Intentness*. Being intent means being determined to stay the course to achieve personal and professional goals. And that means working hard and staying focused on objectives. It's not always easy—but the end result is worth it.

It's Easy to Get Sidetracked

Teens are easily distracted. They have so much to do in and out of school. So, it doesn't take much for them to wander onto a path leading them away from their goals.

To keep your teen on track, help him or her stay focused. Remind him or her of the end goal and that it can require patience to reach it. Tell your teen: *With patience, people can do anything they set their minds to.*

Support and Encouragement

Coach Wooden valued determination and tenacity, and believed that giving up on dreams is not the way to go. Thus, he included that trait Intentness in his Pyramid of Success™. How can you help your teen acquire the qualities associated with intentness?

- **Chat with him or her about plans, goals, and ideas.** Work together to come up with a strategy for achieving them. Then, regularly find out where your teen is at and guide him or her when challenges, distraction, or confusion come into play.
- **Remind your teen to stay on track.** Use the planner to record what needs to be done, especially in regard to goals.
- **Support your teen when the going gets tough.** Offer to sift through approaches that can help him or her get through obstacles.
- **Share your experiences.** How did you achieve something you set your sights on? How did you overcome obstacles? Show him or her that success is possible.
- **Be a constant pillar of support.** When your teen needs you to fire him or her up, be there to help strategize and cheerlead.

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Condition & Skill

Of Mind, Spirit, and Body

This month, students are examining the Pyramid of Success™ blocks *Condition* and *Skill*. These two blocks are part of the heart of the Pyramid. They build upon and expand many of the principles already in place.

Condition demands that students reflect upon their character. It requires them to ask if they have the mental, moral, and physical strength to stay the course and reach their goals, no matter what the circumstances. It draws upon the traits of Determination, Enthusiasm, and Intentness.

Skill is at the very heart of the Pyramid. It is the development of knowledge to complete a task to the best of your ability. It requires students to have Alertness to learn from those around them and from their mistakes, and to have Self-Control to be disciplined in their choices.

It's Not Just Physical

Being at one's best means taking the time to tune up mentally or physically, depending on the task at hand. So, your teen may have to do some sprints to prepare for the regional track meet. Or, build up his or her confidence to do well in a job interview. Practice, in this case, might actually make perfect.

To be at the top of the game, your teen needs to condition his or her mind, body, and soul. It's a balancing act, for sure, trying to pay attention to head and heart at the same time.

And, to take things up to the next level—to become better—one needs stamina to move through the obstacles and complexity. That stamina, and the drive to grow and succeed, is part of the condition and skill package.

Support and Encouragement

Coach Wooden was no coward when it came to building skill. If doing something over and over again meant improvement was imminent, then that's what needed to be done. Condition and skill are what your teen needs to grow and strengthen his capabilities. How do you help him or her regularly tend to mind, body, and spirit?

- **Know what your teen does well.** Encourage him or her to practice regularly that special skill.
- **Regularly praise your teen's effort, improvement, and success.** Find opportunities that could boost your child's skill and discuss with him or her those that seem to be the best fit.
- **Support decisions that will bring him or her to the top of the game.** In addition, offer constructive feedback and guidance so he or she can confidently tackle challenges and maintain balance.
- **Help your teen create and stick to a schedule.** Ensure it allows for the conditioning he or she needs, and includes time for academic work and fun with friends. Use the planner to help on this front.
- **Talk about the future.** Explore with your teen the type of condition and skill he or she might need in order to pursue careers he or she finds interesting.

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Team Spirit

Working Collectively

This month, students are examining the block of *Team Spirit*. Team Spirit is not just for sports. It is a lifelong skill that can be used in multiple settings—from school to the workplace—where people rely on one another.

While true team spirit may require an individual to step out of the spotlight, putting the team first enables all involved to be able to bask in the greatness that comes from being at the top of the game.

A great team is made up of individuals who function as a unit; individuals who've put aside personal interests and needs for the sake of the team. Success is so much sweeter to celebrate with other people.

For the Good of the Team

Your teen is an integral part of many teams—after-school clubs, part-time jobs, academic groups, your family. So, he or she probably already knows that team spirit involves sacrificing personal interests for the good of the team.

Working collectively creates a positive environment for everyone. A pool of people has more ideas; it's synergy—the effect of different people's perspectives.

Working toward a common goal makes teamwork essential to every relationship, team, and family unit your teen is a part of. Would your teen describe himself or herself as a team player ... or spotlight stealer?

Support and Encouragement

Team spirit means putting the team's needs of first, and is also what makes the difference between a good player and a great player. How can you help your teen contribute to a team's success and become a great player?

- **Identify your teen's skills and talents.** Talk about how these abilities can be supported and bolstered by the abilities of others.
- **Talk about the importance of teamwork.** Learning how to partner and collaborate is very helpful and practical, especially in the workplace.

- **Point out the many things he or she can learn from others.** Discuss how that knowledge adds to strengths and skills.
- **Talk about sacrifice.** Discuss things your teen might have to give up in order to support his or her team. Guide him or her through relationship challenges that can emerge when working with others.
- **Focus on the team's success rather than players' unique contributions.** Remind your teen that praise given to a team is also praise given to the individual members.

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Poise & Confidence

Standing Tall

This month, your teen is looking closely at the *Poise* and *Confidence* blocks of the Pyramid of Success™. Students are learning the importance of being prepared, controlled, and secure in their decisions so they can enter the world with poise and confidence.

Poise means always being oneself, regardless of the circumstances. And *Confidence* emerges from knowing, trusting, and respecting oneself. The two together make for a strong, calm personality and presence.

Knowing Your Worth

We all get nervous, but when we have faith in ourselves and believe we can get through moments of fear, our nerves won't get the best of us. But how do we get to the point of trusting ourselves? By working on our poise and confidence!

One of the first steps of developing poise and confidence is forming a true understanding of your worth. Help your teen understand his or her value by listing the positive traits, skills, talents, and qualities you see in him or her every day. Give specific examples. Coach Wooden said that true poise comes from being comfortable in your own skin. Help your teen develop that confidence.

Support and Encouragement

Life is full of tasks that require poise and confidence. Your teen should respect himself or herself enough to know that she or he is capable of completing these tasks. How can you help your child build that self-belief?

- **Continually support your child.** As he or she develops important character traits and puts them into action, acknowledge the achievements and offer guidance when things get hard.
- **Remind your teen that he or she is on a journey to success.** Everything he or she does plays a role in the journey, so it's important to put the best foot forward whenever possible.

- **Partner with your teen.** Identify his or her strengths and work together to bolster those qualities.
- **Don't let your teen give up.** Instead, help him or her rethink strategies, start things over again, or change plans.
- **Help your teen find confidence.** Bring your teen's achievements to his or her attention.
- **Encourage practice and improvement.** Find ways that your teen will enjoy working hard to accomplish something.

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Competitive Greatness

The Tip of the Pyramid

This month, your teen has reached the top of the Pyramid of Success™ and is examining the block of *Competitive Greatness*—being one's personal best when the best is needed and being able to enjoy a difficult challenge.

This block helps students understand that competition can be healthy. It is human nature to embrace competitiveness, because everyone aims to do better. However, it also reminds students that winning is not possible all the time, and that success is not just for the victorious. The difference between success and failure is hard work and determination. These traits nurture and lead to Competitive Greatness.

Reaching the Top

Competitive Greatness is the Pyramid's peak; it's the coming together of all the character traits. It's the culmination of knowledge, practice, and hard work.

How does your teen reach the top? By taking one step at a time and putting one foot in front of the other. By gathering knowledge and experience and putting traits into action. By practicing and trying. That is how he or she will reach the summit. Success will come on your teen's own terms. Just don't forget to remind him or her to have fun on the climb to the top!

Support and Encouragement

Coach Wooden believed that Competitive Greatness is a struggle worth pursuing and enjoying. Help your teen enjoy his or her journey to success by encouraging him or her to:

- **Give it 100%.** Encourage your teen to give endeavors the best effort possible.
- **Be a willing participant.** Point out when your teen is showing enthusiasm and taking initiative.
- **Build strong relationships.** Have your teen think of ways he or she can develop strong connections with others.

- **Take pride.** Share with your teen reasons why he or she should feel proud of his or her accomplishments.
- **Enjoy the journey.** Remind your teen to find joy in the small accomplishments that lead to larger accomplishments, to be thankful for the opportunities to pursue greatness, and to take comfort in knowing that everyone has the same chance to make the most of what he or she has.