EXCELLENCE

Values for Living—Cadet Character Development Forum

INTRODUCTION

Each Values for Living lesson is designed to help cadets explore a life virtue from multiple angles, examine it in ways that touch on all five learning styles, and experience the virtue through a hands-on activity that helps them internalize the virtue so it "sticks" and stays with them beyond the end of the squadron meeting.

Excellence is one of CAP’s core values and sets a person apart from the masses. This lesson will explore the link between excellence and improvement and the benefit of overcoming failure.

PRECLASS CHECKLIST

Prior preparation is essential to success. Please prepare the following well ahead of time:

☐ All media installed and checked out
☐ Handouts and materials prepared and available as per teacher instruction sheet
☐ Phase Three cadet orientation/training completed
☐ Participation awards such as candy or granola bar treats available
☐ Room arrangements complete

ATTENTION GETTER

LARGE GROUP (USE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING OR DEVELOP YOUR OWN. 5 MINUTES.)

Media Clip. “October Sky Official Trailer #1”—this is a true story about a boy who is inspired by the Russian launch of the first satellite, Sputnik, and decides to build a rocket. His parents are against it, he experiences many failures, but eventually is successful. He does not give up and continues to improve his design. Eventually he wins a national science fair prize. (Media clip is in the folder)

Personal story. Share a story about your personal life related to something in your life that you wanted to improve. For example, a time when you wanted a better job, but did not have the education to apply for it. What did you do? What obstacles did you encounter along the way? What sacrifices did you have to make? What are you doing right now to keep improving your life?
Current event. Share a current event (within the past week) that illustrates the concept of excellence.

OBJECTIVE

To understand how using the concept of daily improvement—striving for excellence each day—can move a person or an organization from satisfactory to “world-class.” Whether a personal dream or a group project, everyone involved needs to understand that failure is an opportunity, not a reason to quit.

UNDERSTANDING THE DESIRED BEHAVIOR

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION LED BY PHASE 3 CADETS (3-5 PEOPLE IN EACH GROUP. 10 MINUTES.)

If the video clip was used, use these questions:

- What was the dream of the boy who was building the rockets?
- How did he react to failure? (He asked other people to help him; kept going; learned from his failures)
- Share a time when you used failure as an opportunity to improve and didn’t just give up.

If the video clip was not used, use these questions:

- When did you fail at something, used it as an opportunity to learn from your failure, and you did better next time?
- What are some things, organizations, products, or even people that you would consider excellent?
- With the things you listed, do you see some similar factors, some things they had in common?
- If you were to make a list of all the things that come to mind when you think of excellence, what might be on that list? For example, something that is done with excellence has very few mistakes.

APPLICATION OF THE BEHAVIOR TO THEIR LIVES

LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (15 MINUTES)

- Excellence is one of CAP’s core values. How does this core value apply to our squadron? (We should be seeking both cadets who are striving for excellence and a squadron that functions at top performance.)
• What is your role in making this an “Excellent” squadron. (Desired answer—everyone of us plays a role, doing my job that I was assigned to do, if no job assigned—doing my best, helping others to do their best)

• What is an example in your own life where you were faced with failure, but kept going instead and accomplished your goal?

• In your small groups you will discuss areas that you think could make this squadron better. If you see something you think would make this a better squadron, what should you do about it? (Identify it to your cadet officers; fix it yourself)

ACTIVITY: SQUADRON EXCELLENCE

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION LED BY PHASE 3 CADETS (3-5 PEOPLE IN EACH GROUP. 20 MINUTES.)

Setup of the Exercise:

Each student should have a 3x5 card and a pencil/pen.

Instructions:

Have each cadet take a card and write one thing on the card that is not excellent about their squadron. Take your small group’s cards and exchange them with another small group. The point is, nobody should have their own card. Then, have each cadet share an idea on what they would do to improve that deficiency—to seek excellence. If there is time, you could pass the cards and get new ideas.

If time permits have each group share an example or two. You should point out how many ideas were generated, and which, if implemented, would make an excellent squadron. After the exercise, collect the cards and give them to the squadron commander.

LESSON SUMMARY AND WRAP-UP

LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (5 MINUTES)—CHOOSE ONE

Option One—Personal Story: Share a story about a time in your life where you were part of an organization that used the concept of seeking excellence to be successful. You also could share a story about a situation in your own personal life where you moved to excellence in spite of challenges. This story needs to be personal so “it is real” for the cadets. If there were “potholes” in the process, be sure to share them.

Option Two—Media Clip: “Overcoming Resistance.” This video speaks to some of the problems with change and how they can be overcome. Note that the cartoon individual in the video is not actually change resistant; he just needs the right motivation. Seeking excellence requires change. People resist change. When you are trying to accomplish change, one of your challenges is to find the right motivation. (Media Clip in folder)
At the end of the clip, emphasize that many people are not comfortable with change. There will be resistance to doing anything new, even if it would be a change for the better. The road to excellence is not always smooth or easy.

**Option Three.** Michael Jordan story about failure to excellence.

The legendary basketball star was passed over by his high school basketball team because the coach told him he wasn’t tall enough to play. It was a moment deeply imprinted on Michael’s life. He stared at the alphabetically arranged list of names that made the team, feeling sure his coach had mistakenly left his name out. He was so disappointed and ashamed, he wept when he got home that day. Fortunately, his mother came to his side and gave him some important advice. “She said that the best thing I could do is to prove to the coach that he had made a mistake,” recalled Michael, who added, “leaving my disappointment behind, I started to improve my performance.” As we know, he would quickly go on to become the most recognizable athlete in history because he refused to give up and treated his failure as an opportunity and a challenge to excellence.

**QUOTABLE QUOTES**

“If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as a Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, ‘Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.’” (Martin Luther King Jr.)

“If you don’t have time to do it right, when will you have the time to do it over?” (John Wooden)

“Excellence is to do a common thing in an uncommon way.” (Booker T. Washington)

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