



HEROISM

Values for Living—Cadet Character Development Forum

INTRODUCTION

Each Values for Living helps Civil Air Patrol members explore a virtue from multiple angles and practice that virtue through a hands-on activity. The combination of analysis and practice helps members internalize the virtue so it stays with them beyond the end of the squadron meeting.

Movies, television, and history celebrate heroes. We admire larger-than-life champions who face grave dangers to save others from harm. **Heroism**, however, is not about superpowers and exceptional circumstances. Most heroes are ordinary people making small sacrifices every day for the benefit of others. By practicing our Core Values with intensity and consistency, every CAP member can—and should—become a hero

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 FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (5-10 MINUTES.)

Option 1: Multimedia

Clarence Sasser was awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroic and selfless service to his wounded comrades as a medic in Vietnam, though he himself was severely wounded at the time.

A downloadable file of the Clarence Sasser video is available in the AXIS Learning Management System through the generous permission of the Medal of Honor Society. The video is also available through this YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9ldSEsECQU>

Option 2: Medal of Honor Story

Tell an appropriate Medal of Honor story and/or read the citation to the cadets. You will find dozens of Medal of Honor stories by visiting <https://www.defense.gov> and searching for "Medal of Honor Monday."

Option 3: Personal story

Share a personal story about a heroic act that demonstrates the principles in this lesson.

UNDERSTANDING THE DESIRED BEHAVIOR

SMALL GROUP FACILITATED BY PHASE III CADET (15 MINUTES.)

- "Hero" can mean many different things. One kind of hero is the "superhero," especially popular in modern movies. We recognize these heroes because they use superhuman abilities to fight villains. Do you have a favorite superhero and, if so, what do you admire about that person?
- Some heroes are people who do something extraordinary in exceptional circumstances. For example, to receive the Medal of Honor, one must have "distinguished himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty." What is your favorite story of a hero in exceptional circumstances?
- Sometimes, "hero" means "role model." A hero can be an ordinary person whose abilities, qualities, or achievements we admire. These heroes prove their worth by doing the right thing, doing it well, and doing it every day. Who are some of your "everyday" heroes?
- We have identified three different kinds of heroes: superheroes, heroes in exceptional circumstances, and everyday heroes. Which of the three kinds of heroes do you admire most? Why?
- What do your heroes have in common?

APPLICATION OF THE BEHAVIOR TO THEIR LIVES

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

- How can following the Core Values help you become a hero?
- Many Medal of Honor recipients do not want to be called heroes. Consider the example of Allen James Lynch, who rescued three soldiers from an ambush during the Vietnam War. "I did what anyone else would have done in my place," says Lynch. "I'm not a hero, I'm a guy that did his job."¹ Do you agree with Lynch? Why or why not?

¹ <https://ktxs.com/news/abilene/medal-of-honor-recipient-to-speak-at-fort-chadbourne-on-thursday-night>

- Candidates for sainthood in the Catholic Church must demonstrate “heroic virtue.” Heroic virtue is ordinary virtue lived with greater **intensity**. If “caring for the poor” is a virtue, then giving some percentage of your income to the poor might be ordinary virtue; selling everything you have and giving it to the poor might be heroic virtue. Think about our Core Values. What could it mean to be intensely committed to integrity, volunteer service, excellence, and respect?
- Heroic virtue requires more than a few heroic acts in exceptional circumstances. You could say that heroic virtue is less about circumstances than **consistency**. What regular opportunities do you have to practice the Core Values? What circumstances make it hard to keep the Core Values?
- Heroic virtue is motivated by **charity**. In other words, heroes make sacrifices for the good of others. What sacrifices can you make today, tomorrow, and every day to benefit others?
- What do you think is more heroic, doing one exceptional thing or doing the right thing for a lifetime?

ACTIVITY

LED BY SMALL GROUP FACILITATORS (15-20 MINUTES.)

You may conduct these activities in small groups or in a single large group according to the needs of your unit.

Option 1: Heroic Opportunities

Some heroes emerge from extraordinary circumstances. When faced with extraordinary circumstances, heroes do their ordinary duties. How can you prepare yourself for extraordinary circumstances?

Your life will present you with millions of ordinary choices. Each of these choices is an opportunity to perform your ordinary duties. Each of these choices is a chance at making heroism a habit. If you do the right thing every day, you are more likely to do the right the thing in the heroic moment.

A Core Values hero lives the Core Values intensely, consistently, and for the benefit of others. The “hard cases” are easy; a Core Values hero doesn’t cheat, for example. But what does a Core Values hero do every day?

Divide the participants into groups and assign each group one of the following areas of life. Ask each group to describe a Core Values hero in its assigned area. Give the groups 5-10 minutes to make their lists. Then ask each group to brief the rest of the unit on its conclusions. Several areas of life are listed below; facilitators are free to select from or add to this list.

- What does a Core Values hero look like at home?
- What does a Core Values hero look like at school?
- What does a Core Values hero look like in relationships?

- What does a Core Values hero look like in fitness?
- What does a Core Values hero look like at work?
- What does a Core Value hero look like at play?

Option 2: Ranking Heroism²

This activity involves ranking the heroism on display in ten different scenarios. Many of these scenarios reflect true stories; you may recognize some of them. Facilitators may modify the scenarios according to the needs of their units.

Tell the participants that they will rank the heroism in these scenarios. Which scenario depicts the most heroic behavior? Which depicts the least heroic behavior? Participants should discuss their rankings in their groups. Ask each group to come to a consensus and give a reason for its rankings. What do your rankings tell you about heroism?

(An optional student handout is included for scoring the scenarios.)

Here are the scenarios:

- An accident leaves a gymnast paralyzed. For five years she spends twelve to fourteen hours a day in therapy to try to regain the use of her legs. Her hard work results in a miraculous recovery, and she wins a gold medal in the Olympics.
- A schoolteacher is invited to be part of the seven-person crew of the Space Shuttle. Her story draws national attention and increases interest in NASA's scientific missions. She dies as the Shuttle explodes shortly after takeoff.
- An eleven-year old boy sees a teenager robbing a young woman, threatening to stab her if she resists. He rides off on his bike and gets the police. The officers arrive too late to prevent the theft, but the boy's actions may have saved the young woman's life.
- A lifeguard rescues a six-year old boy from drowning in a public pool by dragging him out with a hook.
- After years of research, a scientist makes a discovery that will cure thousands of people with heart disease.
- A woman is swimming in the ocean. When sharks are seen near her, her husband dashes into the water to save her. Sharks sever part of his leg, but he manages to pull his wife and himself to safety.
- A man runs into a burning building that is about to collapse to rescue a child trapped inside. As he is running out with the child, the building collapses, killing them both.
- When a boat capsizes in a storm, four people are clinging to a small raft that will hold only three. An old man with a fatal disease knows he will die in a few months, so he gives up the raft for others. He drowns in the waves.
- A bystander helps a woman who is drowning in a river after a plane crash. The water is very cold, and only a few minutes of exposure could result in death. He is able to save the woman but freezes and drowns in the process.
- A man finds that the company he works for has been cheating customers. He reports his findings on a television news program. Shortly thereafter, he is fired from his job.

² This exercise is adapted from <https://betterlesson.com/lesson/603931/what-is-a-hero-developing-a-common-framework>. Use is covered under the [Creative Commons 4.0 Share Alike license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

LESSON SUMMARY AND WRAP-UP

LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (2 MINUTES)

You don't need to fall on a grenade or run into a burning building to be a hero. Anyone who sacrifices for the good of others is a hero. The teacher who puts in extra hours to help a struggling student is a hero. The parent who never misses one of your games is a hero. The Cadet NCO who volunteers to study with you to help you pass your Wright Brothers Exam is a hero. You, too, can be a hero.

Every decision you make is an opportunity for heroism. Each one of your small choices prepares you for the big choices. Make a habit of living according to your values and you'll be ready for whatever challenge lies ahead. Between you and those extraordinary moments lie a whole lot of ordinary choices. Choose to be a hero.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

"I think a hero is any person really intent on making this a better place for all people." — Maya Angelou

"A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself." — Joseph Campbell

"We do not have to become heroes overnight. Just a step at a time, meeting each thing that comes up ... discovering we have the strength to stare it down." — Eleanor Roosevelt

"The hero is commonly the simplest and obscurest of men." — Henry David Thoreau

"In short, heroism means doing the right thing regardless of the consequences." — Brandon Mull

"Heroes are ordinary people who make themselves extraordinary." — Gerard Way

"The greatest heroes are those who do their duty in the daily grind of domestic affairs whilst the world whirls as a maddening dreidel." — Florence Nightingale