



Civil Air Patrol

PERSEVERANCE

Values for Living—Cadet Character Development Forum

INTRODUCTION

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

Perseverance is persistence in pursuit of a vision, especially in the face of obstacles and setbacks. Perseverance requires leaders to practice optimism, honor their commitments, and seek solutions to problems that seem insurmountable. Leaders with perseverance refuse to give up and find new ways to realize their vision.

This lesson is suitable for online delivery.

PRECLASS CHECKLIST

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

- If meeting online, be familiar with and test the online software platform
- Ensure that Cadet Facilitators have completed online training
- Prepare and test multimedia

ATTENTION GETTER

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

Option 1: Media Clip. "Sir Earnest Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition." The media clip includes the entire story of Shackleton's expedition, so no other introduction is needed. (Video in lesson folder)

Option 2: Shackleton's Endurance

If your unit does not have access to video equipment, please read the following transcript from the video.

Perseverance means persistence in pursuit of a vision or goal despite delays, hardships, or other difficulties in achieving success. Perhaps no one better personifies perseverance than Sir Ernest Shackleton.

In August 1914, Shackleton, a seasoned Antarctic explorer, set off from England on an expedition called the "Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition." Shackleton's vision was that his team would be the first to cross the Antarctic continent from one side to the other, via the South Pole.

In December 1914 Shackleton and his crew of 27 men set sail from the island of South Georgia, off the coast of Argentina, on a sailing ship named *Endurance*. Their goal was to cross the Weddell Sea to Vahsel Bay on the shore of Antarctica, where Shackleton would lead a team of six men across the Antarctic continent and bring them safely home.

Before they could make landfall, they encountered ice, which grew increasingly worse. By the 19th of January, 1915, the ship was frozen fast in an ice floe. The ship and her crew slowly drifted northward in the ice floe for the next eight months until warmer weather in September began to break up the ice. Shackleton had hoped the ship would be set free from the ice so the expedition could continue, but the movement of the fractured ice broke the *Endurance* apart, forcing the crew to abandon ship. On the 24th of October, 1915, ice crushed the ship to the point where water began pouring in. Nearly a month later on November 21, the remains of the wrecked *Endurance* slipped away beneath the ice.

For the next two months Shackleton and his crew camped on the fracturing ice flow waiting for a chance to make a break in their three lifeboats. His vision of crossing the Antarctic continent was now impossible, so Shackleton re-framed and narrowed his vision to what he could still achieve. He might not cross the Antarctic continent, but he could still bring every single member of his crew home alive. His goals now included keeping the morale of his crew positive by engaging his men in sports, music, and reciting poetry, and finding an escape route that would lead to their rescue.

When the ice floe finally broke in half Shackleton ordered his crew to launch their three lifeboats. For five sleepless days and nights they labored at the oars until they made landfall on Elephant Island, an icy, uninhabited, mountainous island 346 miles from the spot where the *Endurance* sank and 780 miles from the help they needed on the island of South Georgia. Elephant Island was far from normal shipping lanes and they had no means of communication. Again, all seemed lost.

Shackleton decided their only hope was for a small crew to set sail in one of the lifeboats and make for the Stromness whaling station on the island of South Georgia. They improvised a wooden deck, mast, and sail on the strongest of the three boats, the *James Caird*. Shackleton chose five men to accompany him on the dangerous voyage, including the two men most likely to sow pessimism if left on Elephant Island. They set sail on April 24, 1916, and spent fifteen harrowing days at sea, battered by constant storms as they navigated by dead reckoning, the sky clearing long enough for only four sightings with a sextant.

When the shore of South Georgia finally appeared, they were unable to make land because of weather and were forced to ride out a hurricane-tossed sea through the night, which constantly threatened to capsize their tiny 20' boat. The next day the sky cleared and they were able to make land, only to learn they were on the opposite side of the island from civilization.

Shackleton had failed yet again but refused to give up. Deciding against another risky launch of the boat, Shackleton and two of his crew set out on foot to cross the 32 miles of glaciated mountains that lay between them and the whaling station at Stromness. No one had ever crossed those mountains before and the only equipment they had was a 50' rope and a carpenter's adze they used as a makeshift ice axe. After 36 sleepless hours of travel over uncharted glaciers they stumbled into Stromness.

Shackleton's first thought was for his men. After rescuing the three men on the other side of the Island, he and the rescue crew from Stromness attempted to reach the rest of his marooned crew on Elephant Island. They failed three times but refused to quit. Finally, after four months and on their fourth attempt, Shackleton reached the island, rescued the rest of his crew, and realized his vision: every single man from the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition returned safely to England.

Antarctic Expeditions were known for low survival rates, but Shackleton was a different kind of leader. He refused to tolerate pessimism. He constantly told his men that his job was to get them all home alive and nothing—absolutely nothing—would deter him from realizing that vision, no matter how many daunting setbacks he encountered. Shackleton's unwavering demonstration of perseverance over the eighteen months between the wreck of the *Endurance* on the ice floe and the rescue of his crew on Elephant Island is one of history's greatest examples of leadership at its absolute finest.

UNDERSTANDING THE DESIRED BEHAVIOR

ONLINE GROUP OR SMALL GROUP FACILITATED BY PHASE III CADET (15 MINUTES)

- Perseverance means continuing to work toward realizing your vision, especially in the face of setbacks. How would you explain the vision of Shackleton's expedition?
- Goals are like stepping-stones to realizing our vision. Even high achievers will not accomplish every goal they set for themselves. What are some of the goals that Shackleton and his crew failed to achieve?
- To persevere toward realizing his vision, Shackleton had to adjust or change his goals. Can you give an example of how Shackleton revised his goals in the face of a failure or setback?
- Think of a time when you have failed to achieve a goal. How could you revise your goal or propose a new goal to keep working toward realizing your vision?
- Shackleton was intensely devoted to his crew and insisted that his job was to get them home alive. His commitment to them prevented him from giving up. What kinds of commitments can help you persevere in realizing your vision?

APPLICATION OF THE BEHAVIOR TO THEIR LIVES

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

Several discussion prompts are listed below. Choose questions that are appropriate for your unit.

- Why is perseverance necessary for living the Core Values?
- How can you recognize perseverance in another person?
- Can you describe another historical figure that demonstrated great perseverance?
- Can you have perseverance without a vision? Why or why not?

- Perseverance is most important when our goals seem out of reach. In what areas of your life might you fail to reach your goals?
- What are the alternatives to perseverance? How will choosing these alternatives affect your life?

ACTIVITY

ONLINE GROUP OR SMALL GROUP FACILITATED BY PHASE III CADET (10-15 MINUTES)

Option 1: Perseverance Project (In-Person Meetings)

Before the meeting, gather materials, select judges, and obtain appropriate prizes.

Provide each small group with a bag of crafting materials. The bag may contain items such as heavy paper, small blocks of wood, crayons, scotch tape, glue guns, masking tape, paper straws, paper cups, or anything else you can come up with. These materials will be used to construct a free-standing object.

Give these instructions to each small group: You will have ten minutes to construct an object that represents your group's idea of perseverance. At the end of that time someone from your group will explain to the rest of the unit how your object portrays the spirit of perseverance. A panel of senior members will judge these objects in terms of best use of materials and message. The object will need to stand on the floor; it may not be held. A prize will be awarded for the best one.

Select two or three senior members to judge the objects. The judges will evaluate each small group's creation according to two standards: best use of materials and how well the object portrays the message of perseverance. Make note of any groups that thought "outside the box" and made use of materials beyond those provided to construct their object. The judges should award a modest prize to the winning team.

Option 2: Perseverance Scavenger Hunt (Online Activity)

Units meeting online because of COVID-19 restrictions may opt instead for an online scavenger hunt. Ask each small group to search the internet for images of perseverance in three or more of the following categories (facilitators should choose categories appropriate to their units):

- Aviation
- Arts and Literature
- Athletics
- Business & Industry
- Current Events
- Education
- Leadership
- History
- Military & Defense
- Science & Technology
- Wildcard – Anything Goes!

Give each small group 10 minutes to collect one image for each of the assigned categories. After 10 minutes, one representative from each small group will share the images in the online meeting platform and explain to the unit how each image portrays perseverance.

As in the in-person activity, a group of senior members should judge the images in terms of creativity and message. If possible, award a prize to the small group with the best collection of images.

LESSON SUMMARY AND WRAP-UP

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

We will close the lesson with the story of someone you probably know. Here is how he described his own vision: "Every man is said to have his peculiar ambition. Whether it be true or not, I can say for one that I have no other [ambition] so great as that of being truly esteemed of my fellow men, by rendering myself worthy of their esteem." Put simply, his vision was to be worthy of the esteem of his fellow men.

The road to realizing that vision was full of failures. He failed in business at the age of 21; was defeated in a legislative race at age 22; failed again in business at age 24; had a nervous breakdown at age 27; lost a congressional race at age 34; lost a senatorial race at age 45; failed in a vice-presidential bid at age 47; and then lost a senatorial race at age 49.

Would you call this man a failure?

At the age of 52, Abraham Lincoln was elected president of the United States. Many say he was one of the best, if not the best president in our history. The road was not easy, but he persevered in service to his community, then his state, and then his nation. No one can doubt that Lincoln realized his vision and rendered himself worthy of our esteem.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

"No matter what turns up, [Shackleton] is already always ready to alter his plans and make fresh ones." – Frank Worsley, Captain of the *Endurance*

Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.
– Paul the Apostle

"Perseverance is failing 19 times and succeeding the 20th." – Julie Andrews

"If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward." – Martin Luther King, Jr.

"It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop." – Confucius

"Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up." – Thomas A. Edison

"Your own resolution to succeed is more important than any one thing." – Abraham Lincoln