



Civil Air Patrol

TEMPERANCE

Values for Living—Cadet Character Development Forum (For Online Delivery)

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.

Temperance is the habit of moderating our impulses and emotions so we can make wise choices, behave in ways that benefit ourselves and others, and set ourselves up to achieve meaningful life goals. Temperance is one of the strongest ways to stand against negative peer pressure, but it can be especially challenging for teens to master because of the way adolescent brains develop. This lesson helps cadets understand what temperance looks like and gives them tools for making temperance a lifelong habit.

NOTE: Some CAP squadrons are returning to in-person meetings. This lesson has retained the shorter format used for online meetings but is also suitable for in-person 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.)

Read to the group:

As human beings we have long recognized conflicts within ourselves. The ancients talked about these conflicts as competing parts of the soul. Modern science explains these conflicts as a competition between different parts of the brain. Despite different ways of describing our inner conflicts, the conclusions are similar. Human happiness requires the exercise of self-control over our impulses and emotions. We call the habit of maintaining control over our impulses and emotions **temperance**. This lesson will explore what temperance looks like and some practical ways we can develop it in our own lives.

Option 1: Media clip: Phineas Gage and Temperance. Phineas Gage suffered a devastating brain injury in 1848 when an explosion sent a 3-foot iron rod through the front of his head. His recovery is one of the most famous cases in the history of neuroscience and psychology and sets the stage for a discussion about how our brains function in relation to personal temperance.

Option 2: No Media Available. Read the story of Phineas Gage. Images are available on <https://commons.wikimedia.org> if you would like to print out an image to support the story.

On September 13, 1848, 25-year-old Phineas Gage was working on the construction of a railroad track in Vermont. An accidental explosion on the site sent a 3-foot iron rod through his head. The rod entered his left cheek, all three feet of the rod passed through the front of his brain like a bullet, broke through the top of his skull, and then landed point-first 80 feet away. Amazingly, Gage survived and has become one of the most famous cases in the history of neuroscience and psychology.

Gage recovered most of his physical strength and his doctor, J. M. Harlow, claimed that Gage was just as intelligent after the accident as before. Nevertheless, the accident changed Gage's behavior and personality. Before the accident Gage was a well-balanced, clever, and persistent man, but, in Dr. Harlow's words, the injury left him "fitful, irreverent, indulging at times in the grossest profanity, manifesting but little deference for his fellows, impatient of restraint or advice when it conflicts with his desires, at times pertinaciously obstinate, yet capricious and vacillating, devising many plans... which are no sooner arranged than they are abandoned in turn for others appearing more feasible."

The story doesn't end there. Unable to reclaim his work for the railroads and having failed as a farmer, Gage eventually ended up working as a stagecoach driver in Chile. It seems that the highly regulated and disciplined life of a driver and the constant social interaction with customers helped Gage recover his earlier personality. Researchers call this "social rehabilitation" and point toward Phineas Gage as a beacon of hope for all who have suffered traumatic brain injuries.

Phineas Gage's skull and the iron rod that passed through it are now on display at the Museum of the Harvard Medical School. Doctors still debate what exactly happened to him.

Behind these debates are two questions: first, how do changes in the brain change our behavior? Second, can our environments help shape our brains and our behavior?

We now know a lot more about brains than we did in the 1850s and may be better able to explain the changes in Gage's behavior. The brain has many different systems, but we'll focus on two.

- The Limbic System is responsible for our impulses and our emotions. When you feel fear, excitement, a sense of belonging, the urge to accomplish something, or the satisfaction of a job well done, your limbic system is hard at work.
- Another area of the brain, the Pre-Frontal Cortex, which is located just above your eyebrows, solves problems, manages your behavior, and helps you decide how to handle social situations.

Perhaps this helps us understand what happened to Phineas Gage. The iron bar damaged his pre-frontal cortex, leaving it unable to regulate his limbic system. His emotions and impulses went unchecked. Over time, the repetitive tasks and social obligations required of stagecoach drivers seem to have helped heal Gage's pre-frontal cortex and restore his sense of responsibility and self-control.

Ready for a disturbing fact? The different parts of our brain grow at different times and at different rates. There is a point in normal human development when the limbic system outgrows the pre-frontal cortex, making it hard to regulate our impulses. Can you guess when that happens? If you guessed adolescence, you're right.

It's no surprise that teenagers have a harder time controlling their impulses. Their brains aren't wired for it! The good news of social rehabilitation, though, is that we can help ourselves. We can't always count on our own pre-frontal cortexes to automatically temper our impulses but we can give them a boost by bringing a little more structure and accountability into our lives. And that's what we're going to work on in this character forum.

UNDERSTANDING THE DESIRED BEHAVIOR

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

- We all have conflicts within ourselves. Often, our impulses and emotions make us want to do things that we know we shouldn't do! Let's start our discussion by considering how strong emotions can affect us. What changes do you notice in your body and in your thinking when you are afraid, excited, or happy?
- How does your behavior change when your impulses and emotions are especially strong?
- Who do you think is most aware of changes in your personality, you yourself or others around you? Why?
- How are your emotions and impulses affected by the people around you?
- Once we become aware of our emotions and impulses, we can take steps to moderate them. This moderation of our emotions isn't about suppressing our emotions but using them in the pursuit of excellence. What negative consequences could follow from suppressing our emotions?

APPLICATION OF THE BEHAVIOR TO THEIR LIVES

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

- We learned from the video that the prefrontal cortex helps us manage our behavior and handle social situations. We also learned that, at certain times in our lives, our prefrontal cortex will be weaker than the limbic system. If I can't count on my own brain, how could I help myself manage my behavior and better handle social situations?

- Before we make any decision, we should always consider our values. For this to work, we must know exactly what our values are! You all know our Core Values as CAP members. Which personal values guide your decisions?
- We can also make better decisions by considering our long-term goals. What are some of your long-term goals and how do they affect your day-to-day decisions?
- The disciplined and predictable life of a stagecoach driver helped Phineas Gage restore his temperance. What parts of your everyday routine bring order and predictability to your life?
- One of the best ways to avoid making bad decisions is to avoid situations that tend to lead to bad decisions. Perhaps you have heard the saying that “nothing good happens away from home after 10pm.” Which situations make it harder for you to make responsible decisions?
- We are more likely to be careful about our decisions if we know we must explain them to someone else later. Many adults seek out an accountability partner, life coach, confessor, or spiritual director. This can be anyone who shares your values, appreciates your long-term goals, and has the courage to tell you the truth. Who could serve this role in your life? (Note for facilitators: this could be a parent, physician, teacher, coach, clergyperson, neighbor, older sibling, etc.)
- Decisions made in “the heat of the moment” are often poor decisions. We can protect ourselves by giving the limbic system a chance to relax. When you are on the spot, what techniques can you use to calm yourself down?
- Suppose someone is asking you to make a choice when you are under emotional stress. What can you say to buy time and postpone a decision?

ACTIVITY

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

Activity #1: Box Breathing (Multimedia)

Throughout this lesson, we have explored ways we can help our brains manage our behavior. Another way of calming ourselves down involves controlling our breath. Today, we're going to learn a technique called “Box Breathing” from former Navy SEAL Mark Divine. “I used it every day in SEAL training,” says Divine. “it helped me graduate as the honor man, [the] number one graduate. Now I use it for every challenging situation and practice it daily.” Medical research supports his claims. Breathing techniques like Box Breathing can reduce stress, improve focus, and improve our ability to manage impulses.¹

¹ <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/321805>

You can find a video of Mark's instruction here: <https://player.vimeo.com/video/94253607>. If you are unable to play the video during a meeting, you may watch the video beforehand, learn the technique, and then teach it to your unit.

After everyone has had an opportunity to practice the technique, invite participants to share their experiences. Use the following questions or propose your own.

- Was this easy or challenging? Why?
- Do you feel different after a round of box breathing?
- In what situations might you be able to use this technique?

Activity #2: Planning to Succeed

Perhaps you have heard the expression, "Failing to plan is planning to fail." You know you will face stress, strong emotions, peer pressure, and powerful impulses. Do you have a plan to deal with them?

In this activity, participants will reflect on the previous discussions and put together a plan for practicing temperance. You can start working on your plan with a worksheet designed for this exercise, [available here](#).

If your unit is meeting in person, encourage cadets to work on these plans in small groups and share ideas. If your unit is meeting online, ask individual participants to share parts of their plans. If any member is struggling to complete some part of the plan, ask the rest of the group to assist instead of answering yourself.

If time allows, you may pose scenarios that allow participants to test their plans. For example:

- Which parts of my plan will help me when I'm upset because I scored poorly on a test?
- Which parts of my plan will help me avoid using drugs and alcohol?
- Which parts of my plan will help me with feelings of loneliness?

Facilitators should propose scenarios according to the needs of their units.

LESSON SUMMARY AND WRAP-UP

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

In this lesson, we've learned a lot about brains and behavior. You may not remember the term "prefrontal cortex," but you will probably remember the story of Phineas Gage. We hope you will also remember that your brain is helping you and you can help your brain. You can choose to think and to act in ways that will give you more control over your emotions, impulses, and behavior.

How can you learn temperance? Keep your values and your goals ever in mind. Make an ordered life for yourself. Practice calming techniques. Surround yourself with people who share your values and will support you in your pursuit of your goals. Plan to succeed so that you may live with excellence!

QUOTABLE QUOTES

“Temperance is simply a disposition of the mind which binds the passions.” — Thomas Aquinas

“Temperance is moderation in things that are good and total abstinence from things that are foul.” — Frances E. Willard

“A man who makes his golf or his motor-bicycle the centre of his life, or a woman who devotes all her thoughts to clothes or bridge or her dog, is being just as "intemperate" as someone who gets drunk every evening.” — C. S. Lewis

“The first requirements for a heroic career are the knightly virtues of loyalty, temperance, and courage.” — Joseph Campbell

“Temperance and labor are the two best physicians for man. Labor sharpens the appetite and temperance prevents from indulging to excess.” — Jean-Jacques Rousseau

“Temperance, in the nobler sense, does not mean a subdued and imperfect energy; it does not mean stopping short in any good thing, as in love and in faith; but it means the power which governs the most intense energy, and prevents it acting in any way but as it ought.” — John Ruskin