



## PURPOSE

To distinguish humans from other living beings with their power to choose.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson students will be able to:

1. Recognize the power **to choose** as one only we humans have.
2. Apply their power to choose to growth in excellence.

## MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- ***I Pour into Buckets*** worksheet (see Materials)
- Supplementary materials:
  - ***14-year-old's mission to end hunger*** video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTI5J0mSxAw>)

## VOCABULARY

- **to choose**: the human ability to knowingly select between options
- **intentional action**: an action knowingly chosen by a person
- **non-intentional action**: an action not knowingly chosen by a person

## PROCEDURE

**Step 1:** Review the previous lessons. Repeat with students the ***Dignity Statement***, along with the sign language and gestures:

Human dignity is the special value, or importance, that:

- we humans have,
- we always have,
- just because we're human.

Explain: We've learned about human dignity, which is our unique value as human persons. We've also learned about the powers that all living beings—plants, animals, and humans—share: the powers to eat, grow, and reproduce. We've learned about the powers we share with animals—including feeling emotions and using our external and internal senses.

Let's see if we can remember the internal senses we have. Close your eyes, and see if you can see in your mind the last time that you used any sort of transportation, such as a bus or a car. Ask: What internal sense are we using now? [We are using our memory.]

Now, close your eyes, and see if you can picture in your mind the place that you would go visit if you could visit any place in the whole world! Ask: What internal sense are we using here? [We are using our imagination.]

Finally, let's say you're playing kickball, and the ball comes flying at your face! Ask: What internal sense would you use to dodge it? [We are using our instinct.]

**Step 2:** Teach the power to choose, and start with a hook. Pair students up, and ask them to play Rock, Paper, Scissors? Then, ask: How did you choose whether to show rock, paper, or scissors?

As a group: Remember the last time you laughed so hard your stomach hurt? Did you make a choice to laugh so hard?

Then: Your teacher asks you to bring a box of crayons from one side of the classroom to the other. On the way, you trip on the rug and drop the box, scattering the crayons across the floor. Ask: Did you make a choice to listen to your teacher? To trip? To drop the crayons?

Then, ask: What is the difference between listening to your teacher and accidentally tripping?

Write on the board:

- **to choose:** the human ability to knowingly select between options

Explain: Humans have the special power to choose, to choose one action over others, knowing which action they are choosing and why they are choosing it. Our power to choose divides the actions that we take into two categories. One category includes the actions we choose, such as listening to the teacher, and another category includes the actions we did not choose, such as accidentally tripping.

Write on the board:

- **intentional action:** an action knowingly chosen by a person
- **non-intentional action:** an action not knowingly chosen by a person

Explain: Our actions to participate in the game and to listen to our teacher were intentional actions—they were actions that we chose. The actions of blinking and tripping were non-intentional actions—they were actions that we did not choose. Today we will learn more about our power of choosing intentional actions.

**Step 3:** Teach the importance of taking excellent intentional actions.

Draw two large buckets on the board—an “excellent” and a “not excellent” bucket—and explain: Actions for which we used our power to choose in the right way we can put into the “excellent” bucket, and actions for which we didn’t use our power in the right way we can put into the “non-excellent” bucket.

Model an answer under each category for the students:

excellent: comforted a sad friend                      non-excellent: lied about the number of cookies I ate

Our goal should be to grow in human excellence as much as possible! The way that we do that is by taking excellent actions.

Hand students to pieces of paper—one for an excellent action they took this week, one for a non-excellent action. Upon completion, students should add the pieces to the right bucket.

Read student answers, and ask:

- Why is this an excellent action?
- Why is this a non-excellent action?

**Step 4:** Summarize: In our last lesson, we learned that we have the power to think: about ourselves, about the world, about ideas! We can do a lot of good for the world when we put our power to think to good use, and think about excellent things. We also have the power to choose, which lets us take intentional actions to put our ideas into action. Doing this, we grow in excellence ourselves, and can help others grow in excellence also.

## FOLLOW-UP & HOMEWORK

Ask students to complete the *I Pour into Buckets* worksheet and practice one of their actions.

If time permits, model answers for students on the board:

1. Actions Respecting Myself—brushing my teeth every morning
2. Actions Respecting Family—helping with dishes after dinner
3. Actions Respecting Friends—making my sick friend a get well card
4. Actions Respecting Teachers—listening to what the teacher says

## SUPPLEMENTS

**Supplement 1:** Teach the creative power of action: The most important thing to remember about our power to choose is that, when used with intention and purpose, it has amazing power to “create” in the world in accord with what we envision as individual persons.

We can choose to make changes to our bodies, to our traits, to the way we spend our time; we can choose the way we relate to other people, and the way that we help or don’t help them; the way that we interact with the world around us. Each action that we take generates an effect in the world, and every action affects us because it contributes to developing our pattern of actions.

Tell the story of Trevor McKinney, a character from a novel titled *Pay It Forward* by Catherine Ryan Hyde, to illustrate the creative power of human actions.

Trevor McKinney is a seventh grader in Las Vegas. His social studies teacher assigns the class an assignment: to put into action a plan that will make the world a better place.

Trevor comes up with a plan he calls “Pay It Forward”: whoever receives a favor has to do a favor for three other people rather than pay back the original one. These new favors have to be major favors that the person who receives them cannot have accomplished alone. First Trevor lets Jerry, a homeless man, live in his garage. Jerry later does car repairs for Trevor’s mother, then helps a woman who is in danger.

The pay-it-forward project grows into a network of people doing good things for others, until, after a series of interactions among many, many people, a man even gives away his car to a journalist in Los Angeles who is in a car accident. In the end, Trevor defends his friend Adam against bullies who have ganged up on him, and gets accidentally killed. At the vigil held for Trevor’s death, hundreds of recipients of pay-it-forward favors show up to pay their respects: an exponentially great effect, that started with one seventh grader!

**Discussion questions:**

- How does this story demonstrate the power of one human action?
- Why did Trevor’s project work so well? Why is affirming another person’s human dignity so powerful?

**Supplement 2:** Demonstrate the importance of taking actions that intentionally respect the dignity of others.

Introduce students to Katie Stagliano, founder of Katie’s Krops.

Katie Stagliano is a young 14-year-old American girl.

When she was nine years old, she grew a cabbage for a school project (one that grew to nearly 44 pounds!), then donated it to a local soup kitchen where it helped to feed nearly 300 people!

That's when Katie realized the great impact she could have on poverty in her town, with her own individual effort! She established vegetable gardens in order to donate what she grew to the people who needed it most. Today her group is called Katie's Krops, and Katie and her organization continue to grow crops and donate thousands of pounds of produce to organizations that feed the hungry.

Show the [14-year-old's mission to end hunger](#) video to conclude.

Explain: Katie's story is one example of the way that a simple choice on the part of one individual person can have immense repercussions on the lives of other people. The first excellent choice was Katie's donation—while she grew the cabbage for school, instead of keeping or destroying it, she donated it where it would be needed and where it could help respect the dignity of others, by providing for their basic human needs. She then continued this work, and it has spread to affect for the good the lives of hundreds of people in her community.

**Supplement 3:** Share [The Legend of the Dipper](#).

Once upon a time, a young girl lived with her mother in a tiny village. They were very happy together, and all was well. But then, one day the mother fell gravely ill. She laid in her bed for days because she was so sick, and the little girl tried her hardest to make her mother feel better. Eventually, the little girl needed to go to the spring in the forest to collect more water for her mother to drink, but the girl was so tiny that she could only carry a small, tin dipper. Even though the dipper was small, the little girl knew that it would help her mother, so she grabbed the dipper and she began to run towards the forest.

The little girl ran and ran for what seemed like forever. She finally reached the spring, and she filled her dipper to the brim with the sweet, cold water. Then, the young girl began her long journey home. The way home was long, and the young girl was so tired. She would trip over rocks and stumble over bushes, and some of the water fell out onto the ground. As she was walking, the young girl spotted a small dog in the woods. He looked so tired and hot, and the young girl felt sorry for him. She knelt beside the dog and offered him a little bit of the precious water meant for her mother. As she did this, her small, tin dipper turned into a beautiful silver dipper, but the girl did not even notice. When the dog had drunk enough water, the young girl continued on her way home.

After a while, she encountered an old man walking along the road. The sun was so hot, and the man was very thirsty. He asked the young girl for a drink of water. Even though there was only a little bit of water left, the young girl knew that she should be kind, so she gave the man a drink. As she did this, the dipper changed from silver to gold, but the young girl did not notice. Once the man had finished his drink, the young girl continued her journey home, but eventually she too became thirsty. She was thirsty and weak from her long journey, but she didn't drink any of the water because she knew her mother needed it more than she did.

Finally, the young girl arrived back at her house. She ran inside and gave the dipper to her mother. As the mother drank, she became healthy and whole once again, and the dipper changed from gold to diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and sapphires. The dipper began to glitter with such beauty, and it was taken up into the sky. Up and up it went until it finally nestled amongst the other stars so all the world could see it. And now, every night when you look up to the stars. Look for the little dipper shining so high up above, and remember the story of the little girl who was brave and kind.

Ask:

- What is excellent about the girl's choice?
- How do choices like this help bring good into the world?
- How can we imitate her choices?



## MY BUCKET OF EXCELLENCE

**Directions:** For each option below, list two intentional, excellent actions that you can take to pour more excellence into your bucket.

**1. ACTIONS RESPECTING MYSELF**

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**2. ACTIONS RESPECTING FAMILY**

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**3. ACTIONS RESPECTING FRIENDS**

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**4. ACTIONS RESPECTING TEACHERS**

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