



## Classroom Learning Sheet and Activities for Teachers and Docents

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**Heroes are those who can somehow resist the power of the situation and act out of noble motives, or behave in ways that do not demean others when they easily can.**

– Philip Zimbardo

Most people don't set out to become heroes. It's true that some professions lend themselves to heroism, such as firefighting, law enforcement, the military, and medicine, but most of us rarely find ourselves in a position where we have to "save" a person or a situation. What would you do, then, if you were confronted with a situation where you had to stand up for yourself or another person (possibly a stranger)? Would you take the risk?

Check out the [Heroes Gallery](#). These people are heroes because they stood up for their beliefs—which required them to stand up for others. They lived with integrity: their beliefs and actions were consistent. They acted because they believed others had value, not just themselves.

Heroism is behavior exhibited when fulfilling a higher purpose or attaining a noble end. Sometimes such behavior can be at one's own risk. Although we are not suggesting anyone put themselves in danger for their beliefs, there are many smaller ways to take a stand, defend someone who needs help, or maintain your own values even when facing a larger group that has other beliefs. Taking a stand in the face of opposition is difficult whether you are a teenager or an adult.

Taking a stand requires us to first know ourselves. We have to be certain of our own values and beliefs.

### **Activity 1: What Do You Stand For?**

This is an art activity. Using an unfinished wooden mirror (purchased at a craft store), paint, markers, magazines and glue, paint, draw or collage what you represent on the wooden part of the mirror. Think about your values, your strengths and your own personal boundaries. You can finish it with acrylic gloss medium. The mirror will remind you of who you are inside and what values you stand for each time you see your outer reflection.

#### **Question for students:**

Do you have beliefs that would cause you to stand up for others? Give an example.

## Activity 2: When is standing up for beliefs heroic?

Just standing up for your beliefs in itself isn't heroic. Your beliefs may not involve valuing others. Your beliefs may even be harmful to others. One person's hero may be another person's villain.

### Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think is a good example of heroism today? (This can be in the news, role models in your family or among your friends).
2. Can you think of actions that some people may regard as "heroic" but according to this definition, are not?

## Activity 3: Resolving Conflict

Sometimes, heroism is required because there is some form of conflict. If we understand what is causing a conflict, we can avoid making the conflict worse. We can diffuse it.

It is said that the idea of conflict is neither good nor bad. At times, it can even be a creative source of social change. It's how the conflict is handled that becomes destructive or constructive. Obviously we want to increase the positive responses and eliminate the angry and destructive ones.

### Discussion Questions:

1. What is conflict?
2. What are some types of conflict that you have already encountered in your life?
3. How have they been handled?

The definition of conflict is *incompatibility of goals and values combined with an antagonistic response and desire for control*. That sounds scary.

1. What are some things (big issues or categories of ideas) that can cause conflict?
  - a. Economics—People fighting over scarce resources
  - b. Values— Incompatible ways of life, different ways of thinking, acting, looking.
  - c. Power —When someone chooses the power approach to a relationship, they want to maximize their influence and reduce everyone else's.
2. What escalates conflict?
  - a. Self fulfilling prophecy. Each party believes in the harmful intentions of the other and prepares for it. It breeds mistrust, competition, and fear.

## Activity 4: One Way We Can Become a Hero Is By Helping to Resolve a Conflict

Discuss things we can all do to stop, prevent or lessen a conflict.

1. **Get help.**  
Mediation; third party
2. **Communicate.**  
Understanding another point of view.
3. **Get more information.**
4. **Practice empathy.**  
Try to stand in the other person's shoes.
5. **Negotiate.**
6. **Stand up for what you think is right.**  
Do the right thing.
7. **Surround yourself with folks whom you admire for positive reasons.**  
This can help you stay away from situations that challenge your values and boundaries.
8. **Know your boundaries and respect others' boundaries.**

## Activity 5: An Art Project: Standing in Someone Else's Place

Take a large piece of paper or poster board and markers, ink, tissue paper and glue or other graphic media. Have students stand around the paper in a circle. Use extra paper/boards if there are too many students to fit around comfortably.

Without talking, have each student begin to draw symbols or images of what they stand for (their values, hopes and dreams). After a few minutes, or enough time passes that everyone seems invested in their work, tell them to step to their left one space and continue drawing silently. Continue to have everyone circle the artwork while continuing to draw, until they come to their original spot.

Once they have made a complete circle, you can begin to process.

- Did you wonder what the person/people that drew in that spot were intending and did you try to follow that thought?
- Was this process smooth or did you feel some uncomfortable feelings?
- Was your original artwork improved upon?
- Was your original artwork ignored and drawn over?
- How did your artwork change?
- How did this make you feel?