

Morality

Syllables
mo•ral•i•ty

Pronunciation
muh-ral-i-tee

Definition

Living according to virtuous (good) conduct.
(*Modesty and honesty were signs of Maxim's **morality**.*)

Simply put: Knowing right from wrong.

Related Terms

Righteousness: Decency.

Fundamental Question:

Why is my behavior anyone else's business?

Students will investigate the idea that while individual conscience plays a role in morality, group morality deals with shared concepts and beliefs, sometimes resulting in rules or laws to regulate behavior.

Objectives

Each student will:

1. List strong personal traits that speak to his or her morality;
2. Identify shared concepts and beliefs of the class's or school's group morality;
3. Identify class or school rules that are based on those concepts and beliefs; and
4. Explain how the class or school might function if the rules were not in place.

Before you begin

- Print out a copy of *For Goodness Sake* for each student.

Suggested Sidebars:

Speaking of Morality (Discussion Idea)

Give your thoughts about one or more of the following:

- An individual may have his or her own opinions about morality (like what makes someone a “moral” person), but to live with others in a community, people have to stick with the general rules of morality that are in place.
- Scientific changes (like cloning and genetically altered foods, for instance) will bring about changes in morality.
- Adults must teach the morality and traditions of the community to their children or the children will become individuals with understandings that do not match the civilization ... and will not be good citizens.
- Tradition, customs, and manners are a necessary part of the community and therefore must be adopted by all citizens.

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Taking It to the Next Level

Ask a grandparent or great-grandparent how morality has changed since (s)he was a kid.

Procedure

1. Divide the class into two equal groups. (Perhaps the simplest way to do this would be to divide the class according to seating arrangement.) Identify the groups as Team One and Team Two to prevent confusion later.
2. Review the terms “morality” (or “moral behavior”) and “immorality” (or “immoral behavior”).
3. Tell the students to close their eyes. Instruct those on Team One to silently brainstorm character traits (e.g., honesty) that would be typical in a person of good moral behavior and those on Team Two to silently brainstorm character traits (e.g., cheating) typical in a person of poor moral (immoral) behavior. Allow three to five minutes for thought.
4. On the board nearest Team One write: *Moral*. Hand the chalk to the Team One person closest to the board. On the board nearest Team Two write: *Immoral*. Hand the chalk to the Team Two person closest to that board.
5. Review the rules of a relay race. Be certain to discuss safety issues peculiar to an *indoor* race.
6. Explain that each person in turn is to use the chalk, passed as a baton, to write one corresponding trait under his or her team’s theme (morality or immorality). (Do not mention that it’s okay to look at the opposing team’s list as an aid to developing one’s own list, but allow the practice.)
7. The game will continue for five minutes, at which time you will call “stop.” As a class, all of the characteristics on the board will be addressed. Only the first occurrence of any word under a theme will be permitted. Words that are challenged for appropriateness, will be discussed and decided upon by consensus. Identify the team that comes out with a greater number of accepted answers. Discuss: “Was it easier to think of moral behaviors ... or immoral behaviors. Why do you think that’s so?”
8. Ask: “Look at the list under *moral*. Think about our class’s (or school’s) rules (standards). How do some of these terms match up with our rules?”
9. **Follow Up:** Distribute the *For Goodness Sake* sheets and assist your students with the directions.

Name _____

Reminder: Morality means living according to virtuous (good) conduct.

For Goodness Sake

People in communities often have very similar values and beliefs. Sometimes rules or laws are passed to help make sure that everyone behaves according to those values. What if your school, community, or world had no rules? Use these panels to draw a comic strip to show what it might be like.

Today's Thought: *Moral cowardice that keeps us from speaking our minds is as dangerous to this country as irresponsible talk. The right way is not always the popular and easy way. Standing for right when it is unpopular is a true test of moral character. — Margaret Chase Smith, Senator*