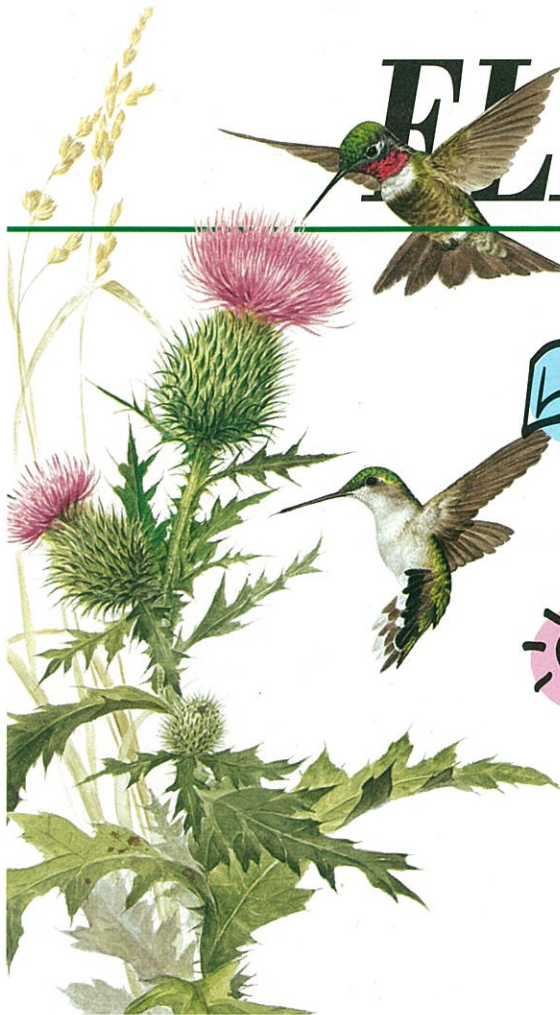


FLEXIBILITY

Character First!® Education Series 3, Booklet 6



Definition

Not becoming attached to ideas or plans which could be changed by my authorities.



Illustration

Hummingbirds demonstrate amazing flexibility. These agile, 3 1/2-inch birds dart from flower to flower. Their flexibility allows them to even catch flies in mid-air. Read on page 4 how the Ruby-throated Hummingbird responds to constant changes in wind, weather, and food supply. There is even an optional challenge at the end intended only for the flexible.

When their country needed them, the 54th Massachusetts Regiment answered the call. But things were not easy for the brave soldiers. Discover on page 6 how more than 1,000 men properly responded to their authorities and dealt effectively with constant change.

I Will:

- not get upset when plans change.
- respect the decisions of my authorities.
- not be stubborn.
- look for the good in changes.
- not compromise what is right.



Application

Children often find themselves in a position with little or no control over their schedule, assignments, or plans. They follow the directions of their authorities, just as adults must. Look at the activities and lessons on pages 8 through 14 to teach children how to properly respond to change.



Praise

Effective praise requires teachers and parents to analyze the attitudes *behind* visible action. When children cooperate, it could be a demonstration of obedience, flexibility, deference, or it could be mere compliance. See page 15 for creative ways to identify and praise children for being flexible.



What Is Flexibility?

Not becoming
attached to
ideas or plans
which could
be changed
by my
authorities.

FLEXIBILITY

vs. Resistance

Flex•i•bil•i•ty *n.* **1:** the ability to make needed adjustments. **2:** the capability of responding to change. **3:** a disposition of openness to new instructions. **4:** adaptability.

The Latin word *flexibilis* comes from the verb *flecto*, meaning “to bend.” Flexible bridges and skyscrapers endure storms because they sway slightly with the wind. Likewise, palm trees avoid destruction by bending in the face of tropical storms.

Flexibility is the strength to flourish in a changing environment. The nature of flexibility is obedience to new directions even though the old ones may seem more favorable. Flexibility differs from *compromise*, which is adapting to any circumstances. *Flexibility* is adapting to authoritative instructions, only.

Flexible or Resistant?

When an authority changes direction, a natural response is often, “You want to do *what?*” Resistant individuals immediately come up with 100 reasons why any new plan won’t work. They begin to organize opposition and manipulate others to maintain the status quo. Unfortunately, resistance promotes division, and division destroys both people and projects.

The flexible response to changing plans requires the following character qualities:

- *Attentiveness* hears the matter out by listening carefully.
- *Sensitivity* sees the situation from another’s perspective.
- *Responsibility* asks questions of things not understood.
- *Obedience* responds cheerfully.
- *Loyalty* makes authorities aware of problems created by the proposal.
- *Diligence* invests every effort to make the new plan work.



The Concept of Flexibility

Change is one of the most dreaded experiences people encounter, yet one of the most valuable. Comfortable patterns, familiar surroundings, and secure environments all are hard to change, yet without such changes people are unable to expand their horizons.

Flexibility helps people hold on to things that *don't* change and let go of things that *do* change. With flexibility comes security. It helps people to look beyond the fear of change to see its value. Flexible people react automatically to changing plans and accept it as an important part of life. They see the bigger picture—which enables them to respond to transitions sensibly, rather than emotionally.

The Role of Leadership

Leaders must often tell others that plans have changed. Taking just a moment to express concern for the sacrifice others may have to make in order to accommodate the change goes a long way toward helping others to be flexible.

When changes come to a leader from above (and they *do* come!), young eyes watch to see how their leader will respond. If a leader resists change with an emotional outburst or defiant remark, children will respond in kind when *their* teacher or parent introduces something new themselves.

The best teaching strategy is a good example.

Bend or Break

Most tree trunks grow wider as they grow older. Each year they develop new growth rings, providing strength and rigidity to a tree. Palm trees, however, are an exception. They grow upward, adding a new growth *disk* each year.

When storms come, the palm tree stands through great gusts of wind because of its ability to bend. Some older and taller palms actually bend all the way to the ground. This flexibility is anchored by roots that are thick and deep. With this combination of strong roots and a flexible trunk, the palm tree is able to withstand tremendous winds without being broken or uprooted.

People should respond to the “winds of change” like the palm tree. They must bend to their authorities’ requests so that they don’t break, but stand firmly anchored on right standards so that they don’t become uprooted.



“The world hates change, yet it is the only thing that has brought progress.”—Charles F. Kettering

Who’s in Charge?

Flexibility involves knowing whose jurisdiction applies at different times and in different situations. For instance, a teacher may ask a student to get a book from the library and return as quickly as possible. A flexible student should put aside his or her own work and cheerfully head to the library.

If, however, a librarian then asks the student to stay and shelve some books, a flexible student should appeal to the librarian by explaining that the assignment was to return as quickly as possible. A flexible librarian will in turn recognize that the student’s teacher has jurisdiction and let the student go.



Flexibility in Nature



There is a bird that is about three inches tall, weighs about as much as a copper penny, and beats its wings so fast that it actually makes a humming noise. That's why people call it a *hummingbird*!

The hummingbird is among the smallest birds known to man. Being so small, it has no control of its environment. Wind, rain, food supplies, and even migration routes are all beyond the little bird's control. However, a hummingbird *is* in control of one thing—it controls how it responds to change.

Miles of Migration

Many hummingbirds in North America migrate every year to warmer climates in the south. This requires most of them to fly 500 miles nonstop across the Gulf of Mexico!

On its trip, the hummingbird encounters many changes. If the wind blows the little bird several miles off course, it has to compensate in order to reach its destination. If a large thunderstorm gets in its way, the hummingbird must adjust and carefully work its way around it.

The hummingbird doesn't know what to expect on its long journey to Mexico, so it prepares ahead of time for change. It stores up as much energy as possible the night before the trip and slows its heart and breathing rates almost to the point of hibernation. It becomes so still, it won't even flinch if something touches it.

When the sun comes up the next morning, the warm air awakens the bird, and soon it takes off on its journey. If winds blow the hummingbird off course, or if it runs into strong headwinds, it has enough energy to make the necessary adjustments.

As a young person, you might feel a lot like the hummingbird—not very big and not in control. The fact is, we follow the directions of our teachers and principals at school. At home we listen to our parents' instruction and follow their plans.

Just as flexibility helps the hummingbird migrate, we have to be flexible to accept the things our authorities change.

Finding Food

I need a volunteer to help us show how the hummingbird is flexible. (Select a volunteer from the audience.) Most hummingbirds in the United States are called *Ruby-throated Hummingbirds*. They have red feathers across their necks that look like a ruby. (Place a red piece of paper across the volunteer's chest with tape doubled-over on the back.)

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds find their food by using a long bill. (Give the volunteer a long tube or rolled paper to hold in front.) To eat, a hummingbird sticks its bill into flowers and uses its specialized tongue to reach in and find sweet nectar or tiny insects. (Hold an artificial flower in front of the volunteer's "bill.")

The problem is that a flower's position constantly changes in the breeze. For a hummingbird to stay with a flower, it has to be flexible. If the flower lifts up, the hummingbird flies up. If the flower bends down, the hummingbird flies down.

If the hummingbird stayed in one position only and the flower moved to the



side, it wouldn't get any food. But what's even worse, if the flower blew toward the hummingbird, it had better back up or...*SPLAT!* It gets a face full of pollen. Yuck!

To be successful, the hummingbird must fly up and down, side to side, forward and back. Repeat that with me. It flies *up and down, side to side, forward and back.*

The hummingbird uses a lot of energy to fly this way. To get that much energy, a hummingbird visits about a thousand flowers in a single day and consumes enough food to equal *half* its body-weight!

To a full-grown person weighing about 150 pounds, that's like eating 50 bowls of cereal for breakfast, 75 bowls of ice cream for lunch, plus 100 slices of pizza for dinner! And to reach every flower, the hummingbird flies *up and down, side to side, forward and back.*

Wings that Work

The ability for hummingbirds to fly in so many directions is due to the shape and movement of their wings. I need another volunteer to join us who can move his or her arms very fast. (Select another volunteer to hold two wings cut out of poster board.)

A hummingbird's wings are flexible at the shoulder like our volunteer's arms.

To move forward, the hummingbird flaps its wings in long ovals that go up and around, and down and around, and up and around, and down and around. (Help volunteer flap the wings in ovals.)

However, the hummingbird doesn't casually flap its wings like most birds, but flaps them at 60 beats per second! *BRRRRRRRRRR!!* That's what makes the humming noise. It's also what makes the hummingbird fly at 30 miles per hour and even 60 miles

an hour in a dive!

Hovering like a helicopter is a little bit more complicated. The hummingbird moves its wings in a horizontal figure eight. (Help volunteer follow the pattern.) In fact, the energy required while hovering is 10 times greater than that used by a man running at full speed.

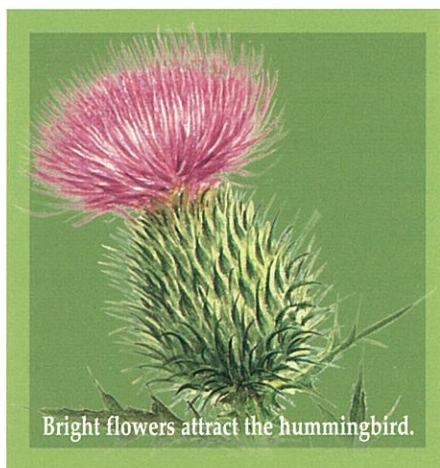
Backwards motion, however, seems the most awkward. The wings move

in circles, but entirely *behind* the hummingbird's body. (Help the volunteer move the wings in circles.) All this allows the hummingbird to fly *up and down, side to side, forward and back.*

When change comes to the hummingbird, it adjusts. Whether it's

wind, rain, or just the movement of a flower, the hummingbird responds immediately to change.

When we face change, let's not be stubborn and difficult, but respond with good attitudes. Let's respect the decisions of our parents and teachers and do our best to make *them* successful. Like the hummingbird, flexibility will help us reach our destinations.



Bright flowers attract the hummingbird.

Flexibility Challenge (Optional)

If appropriate, select two people you have already prepared for a *Flexibility Challenge*. Their job is to keep as close as possible to a whipped cream pie without getting it in the face. Move the pie up, down, and all around until the first person passes the test.

Repeat the challenge for your second helper who *fails* to show the same flexibility and gets a good taste of whipped cream all over the face. Be careful not to splatter whipped cream everywhere.

Use a carton of whipped topping that has been frozen and kept chilled until your story. This keeps it from melting before time to use it. Towels and a drop-cloth are good things to have, too.



Flexibility in History



The United States of America suffered deeply in 1861. Families from all parts of the country sent their sons away to an uncertain future. Soldiers on both sides fought valiantly and wondered how long the Civil War would last.

News broke out in Massachusetts that the Governor wanted black men to join the army. Posters hung all over town inviting men to gather at Camp Meigs if they were willing to serve.

Men came by the hundreds to join the new infantry regiment. "Attention!!" yelled an officer with a deep voice. The men looked up and saw a man on horseback approach the crowd of new recruits. He pulled his horse to a gentle stop and cleared his throat to speak.

"Gentlemen," he said in a loud voice, "My name is Colonel Robert Shaw. I am your commanding officer."

The men paid close attention as the new colonel spoke. "Thank you gentlemen for volunteering with the Massachusetts 54th Infantry. No one is quite sure what we will face in the days ahead. But one thing is certain...we shall fight together for freedom!"

The men cheered and Colonel Shaw ordered everyone to line up in groups. Once in groups, they were ordered to report to their supervising officers. After that they were assigned to their tents, ordered to settle in, and ordered to go to sleep.

The men looked at each other. Did they really have to take all those orders? One after the other, the men obeyed their authority. They respected Colonel Shaw's decisions and trusted that he knew what was best for them.

Did you spot the "I Will"? The 54th respected the decisions of Col. Shaw.

Night fell and the excited recruits tried to rest, but they wondered what would happen to their new regiment. So much was unknown that it was frightening to think about.

BAH-bah-bah, BAH-bah-bah, BAH! The soldiers woke up to the sound of a bugle. They weren't used to that. An officer came around to inspect their tents and they weren't used to that, either.

The soldiers went to breakfast and it was different than their normal meal. After breakfast came time to exercise and practice marching. The sergeant who lead the training shouted his orders, "Left, left, left-right-left!" All morning he made them run and run and run until their legs felt like they would fall off!

Two young soldiers started to complain. They were cut short, though, when several older soldiers in front turned and looked them in the eye.

"Can't you see what we're doing?" they asked, "It's *good* we're doing all these things. Yes, they're different, but we'll be in better shape than anyone else!"

Did you spot the "I Will"? The men looked for the good in exercises, marching, and other changes.

After lunch, an officer passed out new rifles to the soldiers and gave instructions on how to use them. Colonel Shaw stood in front and spoke to the men. "When you're in the midst of battle, you have to load, fire, and reload very quickly. Let's practice!"

The men lined up in groups to try their aim and reloading skills. "Ready, aim, FIRE!" ordered the sergeant. The men shot their guns and started to reload. "Faster!" Colonel Shaw commanded.

The men hurried as fast as they could. "FIRE!" yelled the sergeant. The men discharged their rifles and reloaded again. "Faster!" ordered the Colonel.

"I don't need to be told how to use one of these," mumbled one of the soldiers. "I'm the best shot in my whole town! I'll just do it my way!"

"Better think again," replied the soldier next to him. "Your stubbornness will get you killed out there in battle."

The hot-headed recruit thought long and hard. "I guess you're right," he said, "I'll do it their way."

Did you spot the "I Will"? The soldier decided to not be stubborn.

"Good job, men!" yelled Colonel Shaw. "Keep practicing and you'll be the best infantry regiment in the whole army!"



That evening, the weary soldiers of the Massachusetts 54th slowly walked back to their tents. Each one lay down his head to get a good night's sleep.

BAH-bah-bah, BAH-bah-bah, BAH! The bugle sounded and the soldiers sprang out of bed—but it wasn't morning yet! They gathered together and found Colonel Shaw standing in the rain, waiting to speak to the regiment.

"Gentlemen," he said in a solemn tone, "I have just received a telegram from the Secretary of War. The Confederate Congress has stated that black men caught in army uniform will be executed or enslaved."

The soldiers looked at one another. Why couldn't they help the army like everyone else? "We will give full discharges in the morning to any of you who request them," the colonel said.

The soldiers went back to their tents, deep in thought. Should they get out while they could, or continue their stand that "all men are created equal...?"

Colonel Shaw wondered who would be left in his regiment. The next morning, bugles sounded the call to gather again. *BAH-bah-bah, BAH-bah-bah, BAH!* The colonel slowly stepped forward to see who remained. He couldn't believe his eyes! Not one of the soldiers had left! The entire 54th Infantry stood uncompromised in its desire to serve.

Did you spot the "I Will"? The soldiers didn't allow threats to make them compromise what was right.

After three months of training, word came to the 54th Massachusetts that they were finally going south to join



Soldiers of the Massachusetts 54th Infantry

the war. The men quickly packed their belongings and boarded a ship to South Carolina.

When they arrived, though, plans changed. "We're not going to battle now," informed the colonel, "The army has other things for us to do instead."

For weeks, the only action for the 54th Infantry was to cut down trees, fix equipment, and build roads. Instead of getting upset at the change of plans, the men followed their orders promptly, as disciplined soldiers willing to serve in any way.

Did you spot the "I Will"? The 54th Massachusetts didn't get upset at the change in plans.

Hope was not all gone for the 54th Infantry. Word came again that they would help attack Fort Wagner near Charleston, South Carolina. This time it was true.

On July 17, 1862, Colonel Shaw gathered his men together on the empty stretch of beach leading up to the fort. "We volunteer to lead the attack," he said to the commander in charge.

"My men may be tired, but they have strength in heart."

The bugle and drums sounded and the Massachusetts 54th picked up its flag and moved steadily toward the fort. Cannon fire exploded all around them as they scaled the beach heads and climbed the walls of Fort Wagner. The men fought valiantly and came close to overtaking the fort, but the Confederate army would not surrender.

During the heat of battle, the 54th Massachusetts lost half of its men, including Colonel Shaw. The Union Army failed to capture the fort, but the brave soldiers who gave their lives would not be forgotten.

The United States built a monument in honor of the Massachusetts 54th Infantry that still stands today. The survivors of Fort Wagner went on to fight with great bravery and distinction, earning great honor for their courage.

Despite constant change and difficult times, the men of Massachusetts served their country well and stood firm to the end...for the glory of freedom.



Will to Be Flexible

I Will Not Get Upset When Plans Change.

Children all too frequently cry, pout, complain, and even throw temper tantrums when they don't get their way. The character quality of flexibility recognizes that such behavior is wrong. It is not only wrong, but creates extremely difficult situations for both parents and teachers alike.

Sometimes these wrong behaviors are simply learned. Children learn that when they cry, they get their way and when they pout, parents or teachers give in. Teaching flexibility helps to counteract such manipulative behavior by encouraging self-control, patience, and discretion.

I Will Respect the Decisions of My Authorities.

The fact is that children and students can't always understand why things change. They don't share the same knowledge, experience, or maturity that comes with being a parent or a teacher.

Regardless of how much or how little they do understand, they can still respect the position of authority over them. Flexibility shows respect for positions of authority by listening, asking questions, and controlling emotional impulses.

I Will Not Be Stubborn.

Stubborn means "remaining stiff and fixed in one position." The original meaning of the word was considered a compliment. To use the word implied that someone was resolute and steadfast. In the fastpaced and ever-changing world in which children live today, the term refers to those who are obstinate, opinionated, or refuse to bend. Unfortunately, those who refuse to bend often break.



Character Training Never Ends

I Will Look For the Good in Changes.

Flexibility is optimistic in that it looks for the good in something. The word *optimistic* comes from the same Latin root as *optimum*, which means "best." A flexible child considers a change in light of its benefits and looks for the best to happen as a result of the change.

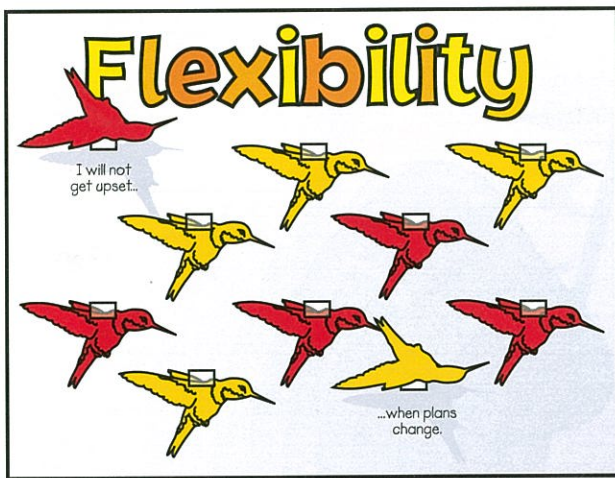
Even cancelled outings or rescheduled activities offer some kind of good. By looking for the good in something rather than the worst, a flexible child usually finds it.

I Will Not Compromise What Is Right.

While flexibility encourages one to accept change, flexibility does *not* yield to changes which are legally or morally wrong. Flexibility never excuses wrong behavior by blaming it on others, including authorities. It doesn't say "I was just following orders," because it knows and holds fast to what is right.

Hummingbird Memory (Game)

Prepare a gameboard by writing *Flexibility* across the top of a piece of poster board. Make five red and five yellow hummingbirds by copying and enlarging a hummingbird from page 16 onto red and yellow paper. Cut out and number the red hummingbirds from 1 to 5, and the yellow ones from 6 to 10. Tape them to the gameboard as shown. Write the first part of the five "I Wills" under the red birds and the remaining parts of the "I Wills" underneath the yellow birds.



How to Play:

Divide the class into teams and prepare the chalkboard to keep score. Choose a volunteer to pick a red hummingbird and read the phrase underneath. Have another member of the *same* team pick a yellow bird and read the phrase. Let the team guess if the phrases match. If they do, remove both birds from the poster board and tape them to that team's side on the chalkboard.

If the phrases don't match, leave the birds in place and allow the other team to try and find a match. Play in this way until all the birds, except for the last two, are placed on the chalkboard. In order to get the last match, the guessing team must say which "I Will" is left without looking. If they get it wrong, the other team may guess.

Supplies:

- Poster board
- Red and yellow hummingbirds
- Tape
- Markers

Flexibili-Tree (Craft)

The following craft requires a bit of preparation, but makes a fun reminder to display in your classroom. Cut a hole in the bottom of a five-gallon bucket and cover the bucket with brown paper. Stick a foam "noodle" (used in swimming pools) through the hole so it fits securely.

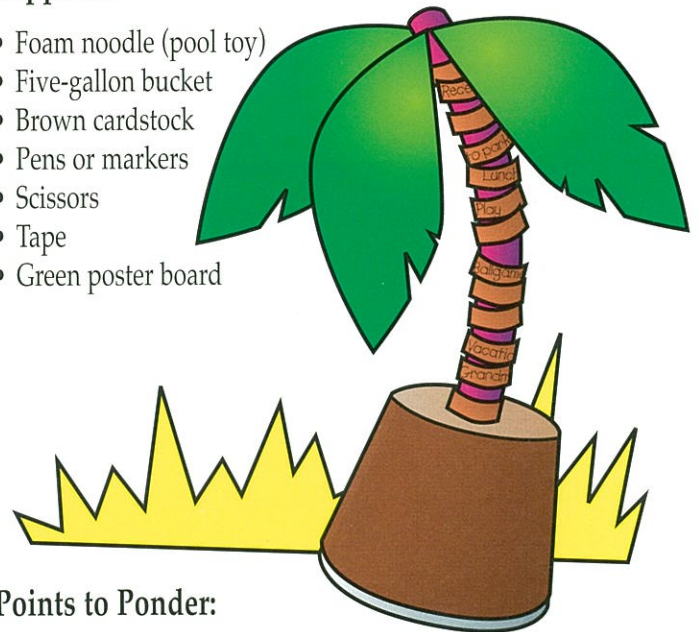
Cut strips of brown cardstock approximately 2" wide and 11" long. Give each student a strip and have them write down a desire, plan, or expectation they have at home or school.

Tape the ends of the strips together forming paper rings. Slide all the rings down the tree trunk and adjust the "noodle" so that only about an inch is visible above the highest ring.

Use a piece of green poster board to form the palm leaves. Cut a hole in the center to fit the poster board snugly around the noodle's top. Draw and cut out leaves with ridges along the edges. Slide the poster board onto the trunk, and your "Flexibili-Tree" is complete!

Supplies:

- Foam noodle (pool toy)
- Five-gallon bucket
- Brown cardstock
- Pens or markers
- Scissors
- Tape
- Green poster board



Points to Ponder:

- Flexibility allows palm trees to survive tempestuous storms as they adjust to the pressures of the wind. Their growth *disks*, instead of rings, serve as bending points, much like the joints in a human body.
- For children to survive the changes and storms of life, they must hold on loosely to their own plans and bend where it is needed.



Activities

A Moldable Life (Craft)

The following object lesson is designed to help children understand the importance of having a moldable life. To begin, place three large lumps of clay (one hard, one semi-hard, and one soft) on a table in front of the class. Explain your plan to mold the three lumps of clay into the shape of people.

Pick up the hard clay and try to mold it first. After squeezing it with all your might, try to pound it into shape on the table. As you work with the hard clay, explain how it represents people who are stubborn and unwilling to change. They hate instruction, react to correction, and complain when they don't get their way. Until they soften, they will never become what they should. (Set the unmoldable clay alone to the side.)

Pick up the semi-hard clay and try to mold it next. Make it obvious that it is difficult to mold while you shape it into a stiff and ill-proportioned figure. Explain how this represents those who mold fairly well on the outside, but still

resist change on the inside. They comply with orders but carry a bad attitude. Their lives are partly shaped the right way but will never be the best until they have an inward change of character.

Finally, mold the soft clay into the shape of a person. Work the clay into a thick cylinder and separate the arms and legs, keeping the shoulders intact. (Practice making the person in advance.) This figure represents individuals who are eager to learn and accept correction with gratefulness. They maintain a good attitude in the face of change, they are a delight to teach, and they learn for a lifetime.



Memory Work

I will look for good in changes,
And will not fuss or fret.

I will trust in my authorities
And not get all upset.

I will bend where it is needed
By not hanging on too tight.
But will not be made to compromise
The things I know are right.

Before me lies an open map,
The choice is mine to make.
I'll live a life of character,
And that's the road I'll take!

At the end of your lesson, ask the children what kind of a person they want to be. Distribute lumps of clay for children to make their own "moldable life" figures.

Note: To harden the first two lumps of clay, place them in cold water. Check them periodically, leaving the harder lump in the water for a longer period of time.

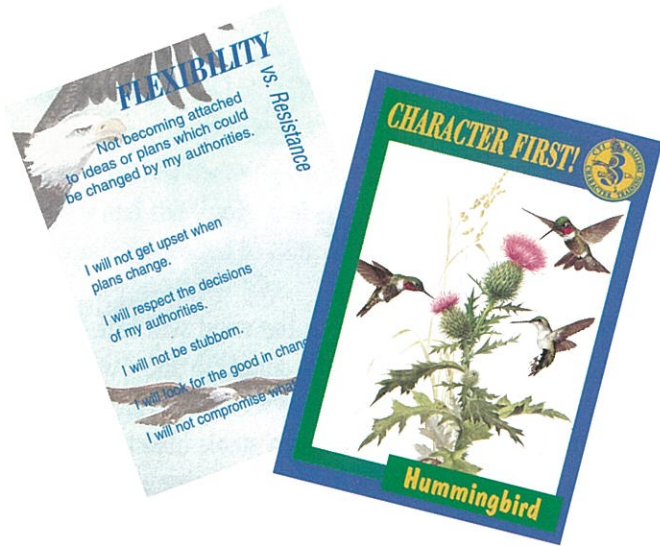
Points to Ponder:

- Everyone knows how to be selfish and stubborn, but good character must be learned. Children can learn good character only if they are teachable and willing to accept change.
- Character development is a life-long process. The more flexible a person is at an early age, the easier it will be later in life.



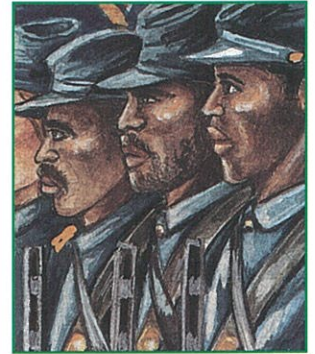
Character Cards

Remind children to attach themselves to the right things by distributing the Flexibility *Character Card*. Review the "I Will" commitments on the back of the card and the lesson of the hummingbird. Make practical applications of the "I Wills" to life at school and at home. Use personal illustrations to encourage others to show flexibility and accept change in the proper ways.



Massachusetts 54th Infantry

No one expected they would accomplish what they did. No one dreamed of the legacy they would create. But the world was in for a surprise when the Massachusetts 54th Regiment entered the stage of history.



Under the command of Colonel Robert Shaw, these brave men distinguished themselves as faithful soldiers. They performed their duties with excellence and adapted well to the constant changes of life in the Army.

On July 17, 1862, the Massachusetts 54th Infantry division led the Union attack against Fort Wagner near Charleston, South Carolina. Though the fort never fell, history records the bravery, determination, and valiant service of these men.

Read the story on page 6, based on the service of the Massachusetts 54th Infantry, to show your students an example of dedication, honor, and sacrifice.

Bend With the Wind



John Cornish

J.C.



1. Once a palm tree stood be - side the sea. And there
2. (Now if we) bend too much we just might break. So, be



came a great ca - ta - stro - phe. When the rains came down and the strong winds blew,
sure of an - y change you make; If you stand for what is right to - day,



This is what it had to do... Bend with the wind. Know where to bow, For the storms are here to
Things will all be A O - kay.



help us grow! Put a smile on your face and you will see... We need flex - i - bil - i - ty! Now if we bil - i - ty!



Activities

Stubborn vs. Flexible (Game)

Use the following two figures to illustrate the differences between stubbornness and flexibility. Afterward, allow children to make their own *Stubborn* and *Flexible* figures as a reminder of the lesson.

Flexible

Cut one-third off a pipe cleaner. Twist the larger portion to form Flexible's head, body, and legs. Twist the smaller piece around the body to form the arms. Bend feet and shape the figure into the desired stance.

Supplies:

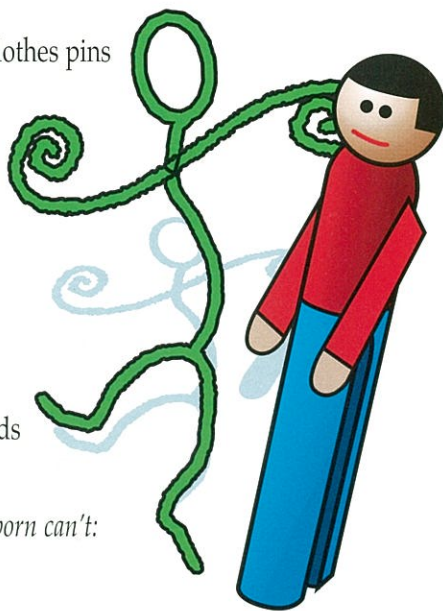
- Pipe cleaners
- Scissors

Stubborn

Draw a face, shirt, and pants on a clothes pin with markers. Cut a craft stick in half and glue to the top part of the pin to form arms. Color the sleeves of the arms to match the shirt.

Supplies:

- "Old-fashioned" clothes pins
- Colored markers
- Craft sticks
- Scissors
- Glue



Comparisons:

They can both:

- Stand up
- Stand on their heads
- Lie down

Flexible can, but Stubborn can't:

- Sit down
- Hold things
- Stand in several different positions
- Hide inside your hand with nothing sticking out
- Hang upside down or right side up from a table
- Bend down and touch feet

Points to Ponder:

- No one can do very much with *Stubborn*, just like it's hard to do anything with stubborn people. They just aren't willing to learn.
- Flexible people are nice to be with and are a joy to teach. They are not afraid of new things but find something good in each situation.
- Stubborn people limit themselves, but flexible people adapt to their surroundings and flourish.

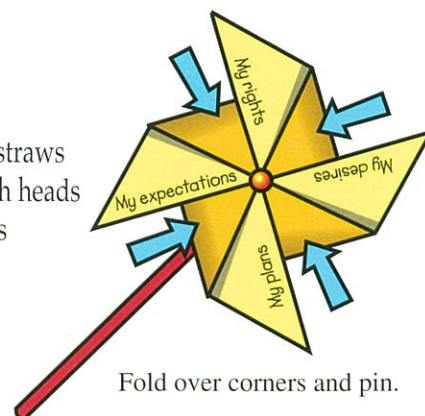
Winds of Change (Craft)

A pinwheel that doesn't turn in the wind will tear. In the same way, children who don't adjust to the "winds of change," will suffer, too. For pinwheels to turn, however, they must be securely fastened to a stable object that does *not* blow in the wind. Likewise, children must attach themselves to principles of character that do not change. Though things revolve about them, at least one point must remain firmly anchored.

Give each child a square piece of colored paper (cardstock works best). From each corner, cut 1/2 the distance to the center. On the edges of the triangles, write *My expectations*, *My rights*, *My plans*, and *My desires*. Bend the other four corners into the middle of the paper and hold them with a straight pin (with a head). Poke the pin through the straw and bend down with pliers to lie flat. Secure the pin with tape to prevent any injury, and your "Winds of Change" pinwheel is complete.

Supplies:

- Colored paper
- Plastic drinking straws
- Straight pins with heads
- Thin-nosed pliers
- Scissors
- Pens or pencils



Fold over corners and pin.



Flexible Flier (Craft)

Illustrate flexibility by making paper kites. Start by giving each child two pieces of colored construction paper. Cut both pieces in half diagonally to make two triangles of each color. Tape the four triangles together as shown and give each child 1 yard of yarn to tape to the kite for a tail. Cut paper bows, space them evenly on the tail, and secure with tape.

With the children's help, make two lists on the chalkboard: one of things that authorities *can* change, and one of things they *can't* change. Ask the children to copy the list on their kites. List the things that can change on one color of triangles and the things that can't change on the other color. Decorate as desired to complete your "Flexible Fliers."

Supplies:

- Construction Paper
- Pens or markers
- Tape
- Scissors
- Yarn

Things that *Can* Change:

- Schedules
- Assignments
- Recess
- Menus
- Privileges/rewards
- Field trips
- Birthday presents

Things that *Can't* Change:

- Obligation to tell the truth
- Need to forgive others
- Law of not stealing
- Respect for authority

Points to Ponder:

- Kites freely move in the direction they are blown. They fly up and down, side to side, forward and back. They stay afloat because they adjust naturally to the wind.
- There is a certain limit to a kite's flexibility. When a person lets out no more string, the kite cannot go higher or farther with the wind. It is anchored and controlled.
- Children should move freely on things their authorities change, yet not compromise or break the character qualities that anchor them to what is firm and right.

Stretch-a-Ball (Craft)

Give each child a sheet of aluminum foil to form into a ball. Give them toothpicks to wrap around the ball without breaking (which is impossible). When they try to no avail, explain that it won't work because the toothpick doesn't bend. It is like being stubborn. When pressure is applied to make it wrap around, it won't yield. It breaks!

Now give the children a large handful of rubber bands and instruct them to wrap the rubber bands around the foil until it is *completely* covered. Compare the flexibility of the toothpick with that of the rubber bands. Stubbornness and resistance lead to failure, but a willingness to change and improve leads to success.

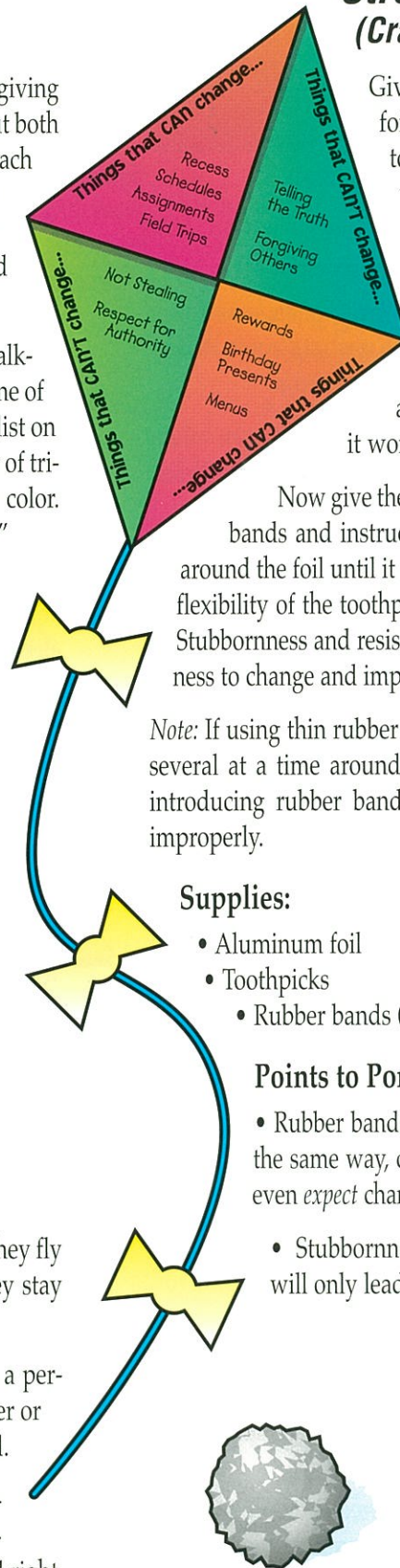
Note: If using thin rubber bands, it might be fastest to wrap several at a time around the foil. Also, be cautious when introducing rubber bands—that students don't use them improperly.

Supplies:

- Aluminum foil
- Toothpicks
- Rubber bands (colorful, if available)

Points to Ponder:

- Rubber bands are designed to accept change. In the same way, children should learn to accept and even *expect* change without anger or bad attitudes.
- Stubbornness and resistance to instruction will only lead to failure.





Definition for Young Children

Flexibility is not getting upset when plans change.

History Alive! (Story)

This story is adapted for younger children from the history story on page 6. Read it through and tell it in your own words. Actions that involve the children are written in parenthesis.

During the American Civil War, a group of 1,000 men volunteered from the state of Massachusetts to fight in the Union army. They were called the Massachusetts 54th Infantry.

The men worked long and hard to become good soldiers. They marched for many miles, (swing arms like you're marching), dug many trenches, (make shoveling motions), and did many push-ups to strengthen their bodies (push hands forward like a push-up).

Day after day the men trained and prepared themselves. They didn't know what to expect, but followed the orders of their officers. Some of the men complained about the training. "Why do we have to do this every day? I'm getting tired of all this marching around! The Colonel doesn't know what he's doing!" they said. (Fold your arms and mumble the complaints.)

Other men in the camp knew that the training was important and told the men to respect their superior officers. The training was hard, but it was good for them!

After three long months of intense training, the men of the 54th Infantry received news that they were finally going to battle. They boarded a ship that took them to South Carolina. The men set up camp and went to bed exhausted and ready to sleep. (Lead the class in snoring.)

A bugle sounded the next morning to awaken the sleepy soldiers. (*BAH-bah-bah, BAH-bah-bah, BAH!*) They climbed out of their tents and stretched their tight muscles. (Reach up toward the ceiling and down toward your toes.)

As the men ate breakfast, they wondered what being on the front lines would be like. Then they received their orders, but they were not the orders the men expected or wanted to

hear. Instead of going to battle, they were ordered to *work*. They cut down trees (make a chopping motion), dug more ditches (pretend to shovel), and lots of other jobs.

Even though their plans changed, the men of the Massachusetts 54th Infantry were glad to help however they could and worked very hard. Finally, after many weeks of labor, they were asked to join the attack on a very strong fort.

The bugle and drums sounded, and the Massachusetts 54th picked up its flag and moved steadily toward the fort. Cannon fire exploded all around them as they climbed the walls of Fort Wagner. The men fought bravely and came close to overtaking the fort, but the Confederate army would not surrender.

The United States built a monument in honor of the Massachusetts 54th Infantry that still stands today. The men's character and flexibility made them a great infantry division and an example for us all.

Flexibili-Feet (Craft)

Have the children trace their shoes onto cardstock and cut them out. Place a piece of tape on the side edges of both feet and punch a hole through the four pieces of tape. Thread long pieces of yarn through the holes and tie into large loops to make a handle for each foot. Label footprints *Left* and *Right* and play "Follow the Leader" around the room, walking in your flexibili-feet. Children must be flexible and change direction according to their leader's instruction—just like the 54th Infantry.

Supplies:

- Cardstock
- Yarn
- Pencils
- Scissors
- Tape
- Holepunch



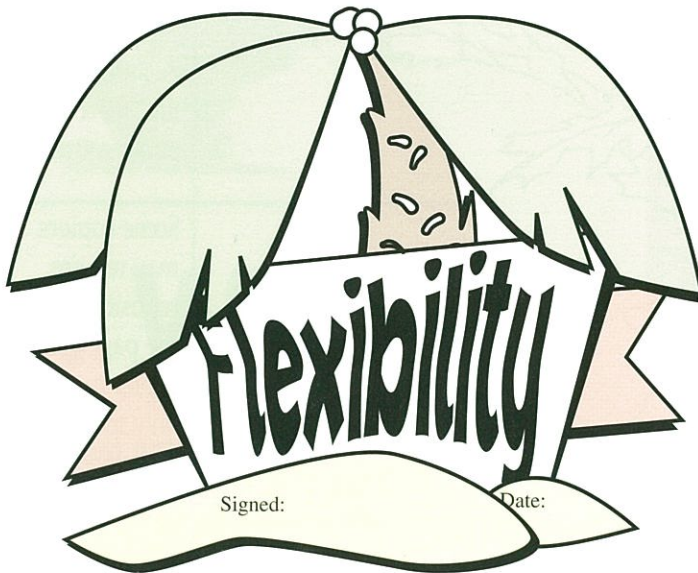


Constant Review

When teachers review past character qualities, students can see how new qualities fit into the overall picture. Every quality builds on the next, working in harmony to strengthen and balance each other.

Recognizing past qualities also motivates students who struggle with a current lesson. For example, a child who struggles with being diligent may show great initiative. By reminding that child about previous successes in taking initiative, it will be an encouragement that success is possible in becoming diligent, too!

It takes constant work to maintain character in all areas. Those who have good character realize that they will never master a quality, but work continually to change the things they can change.



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Ways to Praise

Praise children for the following:

- Receiving changes to schoolwork with a good attitude, even if it means re-doing it.
- Accepting interruptions such as fire drills or errands without becoming upset.
- Not getting angry when recess is changed or replaced with something else.
- Cheerfully stepping aside when the teacher appoints someone else to be first in line.
- Remaining calm when assignments or responsibilities are changed.

Jar of Praise:

As you notice students demonstrating character, fill out a praise award and place it in a clear jar visible to the class. Have a regular praise time at the end of the day when you publicly hand out the awards. The jar will remind students that you actively watch their behavior and encourage them to do the right thing.



FLEXIBILITY



Not becoming attached to ideas or plans which could be changed by my authorities.

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Coloring Fun

Make copies of the picture on the left. Let students color and take home.

Copying guide:

Choose "enlarge"—8.5 x 11 to 11 x 17 (129%) to fill an 8.5 x 11 page.

Be sure to choose the "8.5 x 11" paper source.

Some copiers may require repositioning the page on the copier to copy only the area to be colored.

Teaching Tips

When I Grow Up!

People normally change careers at least several times during a lifetime. Help children prepare for these changes by asking "What things (plural) do you want to be when you grow up?" Don't settle for just one answer.

Think on Your Feet

When lesson plans or schedules change, be flexible. Don't fret or fume! Look for the good that can come from unexpected changes and make the best of each situation. Keep a special lesson in reserve for those times when things get out of control or you need something else to do.