

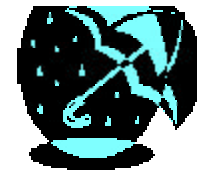
# *Self-Control*

Only you can  
practice it.

He who conquers himself  
is greater than he who  
conquers an army.

Oriental Proverb

## April Character Connection Theme: Self-Control



### Definition

Self-Control is “control of one’s emotions, desires, or actions by one’s own will.”<sup>1</sup> A person with self control thinks about consequences before taking action. Wendy S. Grolnick, associate professor of psychology at Clark University in Worcester, Mass says, “There’s more long-term value to children learning self-control and problem-solving than in their besting peers in childhood competitions.”<sup>2</sup>

### Quotes

“Only the best behavior is good enough for daily use.”<sup>3</sup>

“Patience is active. It is concentrated strength. To learn to wait is a great secret of success.”<sup>4</sup>

“Self-control is the ability to count down, before blasting off.”<sup>5</sup>

“We are creatures of habit. We succeed or we fail as we acquire good habits or bad ones.”<sup>6</sup>

“Self-control is the ability to idle your motor when you feel like stripping your gears.”<sup>7</sup>

“Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet.”<sup>8</sup>

“Win without boasting—lose without excuse.”<sup>9</sup>

“Saving money soon grows to yield more pleasure than careless spending.”<sup>10</sup>

“I may not be able to change my circumstances, but I can change my attitude toward them.”<sup>11</sup>

“He who reins within himself and rules passions, desires, and fears is more than a king.” –John Milton

“He that would govern others, first should be the master of himself.” --Philip Massinger

“To enjoy freedom we have to control ourselves.” –Virginia Woolf<sup>12</sup>

*“America, America, God mend thine every flaw;  
Confirm thy soul in self-control,  
Thy liberty in law.”—2<sup>nd</sup> verse of “America the Beautiful” by Katherine Lee Bates*



<sup>1</sup> “self-control,” The American Heritage Dictionary, page 1176

<sup>2</sup> “Parenting, an Evolutionary Idea” Holly VanScoy, [http://kevxml2a.infospace.com/1\\_300313\\_info.valent/health/hltstory.htm&qid=502065&qt=4](http://kevxml2a.infospace.com/1_300313_info.valent/health/hltstory.htm&qid=502065&qt=4), accessed March 9, 2002

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Petty, Jo. Pathways, page 40

<sup>4</sup> Petty, Jo. Pathways, page 39.

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Petty, Jo. Pathways, page 44

<sup>6</sup> Petty, Jo. Pathways, page 58

<sup>7</sup> Adapted from Petty, Jo. Pathways, page 44

<sup>8</sup> Petty, Jo. Pathways, page 44

<sup>9</sup> Petty, Jo. Pathways, page 52

<sup>10</sup> Petty, Jo. Pathways, page 59

<sup>11</sup> Petty, Jo. Pathways, page 60

<sup>12</sup> Cyber Nation International, [http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes\\_selfcontrol.html](http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_selfcontrol.html), accessed March 9, 2002

## Activities

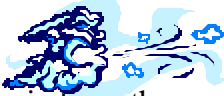
**\*\*Balloon Demonstration:** String, balloon, straw, tape, and labels are needed. Thread the straw onto the string. Attach the string to two objects (desks or chairs), keeping the string taut. Label one end “start,” the other end “finish.” Now, blow up a balloon. (Do not tie it.) Hold the blown-up balloon next to the “start” label. Let it go. Notice that the balloon flies in unexpected directions, wherever the escaping air propels it. Now, blow up the balloon and tape it to the straw with the mouth end toward “start.” Release the balloon. Notice that the balloon is now propelled toward “finish.” *What conclusions about self-control can we draw from this demonstration? How does self-control apply to the words that we speak?*

**\*\*Give each student a piece of bubble gum.** Have them notice that it is difficult to chew the bubble gum at first, just like learning a new habit or practicing self-control in a trying situation is difficult at first. “A person with self-control understands consequences and ‘chews’ (chooses) carefully.” *What does self-control have to do with blowing bubbles?*

**\*\*Play a game such as Pick-Up Sticks, Jenga;** or have a contest to see who can build the tallest tower of blocks. *What does self-control have to do with winning games? What does self-control have to do with winning in life?* Divide the class into teams for relays and use activities that require some skill such as walking a balance beam. *How does your self-control contribute to the success or failure of those around you?*

**\*\*Collaborative Countdown:** Have class sit in a circle. Without signaling or cuing, have students randomly count down from 10. At no time may two voices overlap. If they do, the game starts again. *What does this game illustrate about self-control and working with a group on a goal?*<sup>13</sup>

## Stories



### Aesop’s Fables: The Wind and the Sun



The wind and the sun were having an argument. Each thought that he was strongest. They soon spied a man below them. He was dressed in a warm coat and hat.

Said the sun, “Whoever makes the man take off his coat must be the strongest. You may try first.”

The wind blew from the east and the west, then from the north. But, all of his blustering only caused the man to fasten his coat more tightly and pull his hat down around his ears.

Soon the wind stopped to rest. The sun came out from behind a cloud and shone brightly.

The man enjoyed the sun’s rays and began to feel warm. He took off his hat and coat and sat down beneath a tree to bask in the beauty of a day.

“I’ve won,” smiled the sun, “And without any bluster.”

*A gentle person may do better than somebody who is too rough.*



### Aesop’s Fables: The Mouse and the Weasel

One day a hungry mouse spied a tin cylinder full of corn. He managed to squeeze into the cylinder through a small hole. Then he greedily began to eat and eat, enjoying a wonderful feast. Soon he wished for a drink of water. However, when he tried to leave the cylinder, he discovered that he was much too fat to pass through the small hole.

In despair he squeaked and squeaked. He made such a noise that a passing weasel stopped.

“My friend,” said the weasel, “The best thing for you is to stay where you are and go without food for a while. If you want to get out, you will have to become as thin as you were when you wanted to get in.”

*It is unwise to take more of anything than you can manage.*

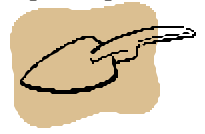


### Thomas Jefferson: A Life of Self-Control

Thomas Jefferson was asked by a friend to give some advice to his young son, Thomas Jefferson Smith (the President’s namesake.) President Jefferson replied with counsel, a poem, and “A Decalogue of Canons for observation in practical life.” His advice showed the value he placed on self-control and included such lines as: “Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day” and “Never spend your money before you have it.” *Read the entire letter at <http://www.americanpresidents.org/letters/03.asp>. Gandhi was also known for his*

<sup>13</sup> Dramatic Arts, Additional Support Materials <http://www.code.on.ca/Lessons%20pdf/ADA3M.pdf> page 7, accessed March 18, 2002

extreme self-control in hunger strikes and non-violent opposition of unfair practices. Read about the principles behind Satyagraha at <http://dfong.com/nonviol/basicsat.html>



## **Writing or Discussion Topics**

\*\*Write a **garden** of self-control. For example: If you **carrot** all about others, hold your tongue when you are angry. **Beet** out foul language. **Turnip** on time. **Squash** out selfishness. Never be **green** with envy. Using kind words often helps you get **ahead** in life. **Pear** away gossip. **Berry** ideas of revenge.

\*\*We often read about college basketball players suspended from their team because of possession of illegal drugs. Sometimes, sports team members are ejected from games because of misconduct. Russian gold medallist Larissa Lazutina lost her medal when she tested positive for a performance enhancing drug.<sup>14</sup> Have students look for other news articles that highlight the consequences of self-control. *What does self-control have to do with sports? What possible results does one player's self-control (or lack of it) have on their team or fans? What rules encourage self-control in the sports arena? (Celebration rule for football, some tackle rules, technical foul rules.)*

\*\*Ask students to discuss with their parents the role self-control has in the work place. How is self-control important to family and student life?

## **Role Plays**

\*\*At recess, Joe's best friend, Ike, called Joe a "baby." Joe's feelings were hurt. Later, as Joe walked up the sidewalk to his front door, still thinking about Ike, Joe poked his little sister, Jane. Upset and hurt, Jane burst into the house, accidentally knocking the toddling baby to the floor with the door. Mom ran from the kitchen to see what was wrong with the baby. As she was comforting the baby and trying to listen to Joe and Jane, she heard a noise from the kitchen and realized the soup was boiling over. In her hurry to get to the kitchen, she tripped over Snowball the cat. Snowball leaped into the air scratching Joe. . . *What are some of Joe's behavior choices, now? Where in this scenario could "self-control" have made a difference? How does our own self-control help or hurt other people? Explore various endings to this story as the various people had use self-control. What similar chain reactions have you been a part of?*

\*\*It is the basketball championship game for the boy's city league. The winner of this game will go to the region championship playoffs. The score is 40 to 43 with 2 minutes to go until the final buzzer. The Eagles have had 3 fouls called on them this half. However, Brian's team, the Jaguars, have had 11 fouls called on them, with 3 of them on Brian. At the Jaguar's end of the court Brian goes up for a lay-up, but is hammered from behind and no foul is called. The ball goes to the Eagle's end of the court and a foul is called on Brian for "over the back." From Brian's perspective, it was a clean play. *What are some of the choices and consequences of Brian's actions? If Brian yelled back at the referee and a technical was called, how could this call change the outcome of the game? If Brian's team eventually won the game despite a technical on Brian, how might Brian's personality develop? Do the fans in the stand have an influence on the ballgame? What happens if a fan expresses his feelings by throwing something onto the court?*

\*\*Mrs. Bartholomew is in her garden. She looks up and sees some children walking home. Thinking of last week when some school children ran across her flower patch, she scowls. The week before, someone had picked all of her daffodils. She wonders if these were the children that had used so little respect with her property. Lacey is walking home from school with her friends and notices Mrs. Bartholomew's usual scowl. *What does self-control have to do with Lacey's response? How might Lacy respond and what might be the consequences? (Some of Lucy's action could be: scowl back, ignore her, smile, wave and say "Hi.")*

## **Book List**

Gelman, Rita Golden. More Spaghetti, I Say. New York: Scholastic, 1993 *Minnie eats so much spaghetti that she becomes sick of it.*

Berenstain, Stan and Jan. The Berenstain Bears Get the Gimmies. New York: Random House, 1988. *With help from Gramps and Gran, Brother and Sister Bear learn self-control while shopping.*

Polacco, Patricia. Babushka's Doll. New York: Scholastic. *With help Babushka's doll, Natasha learns to be more patient.*



**May: Worth and Potential**

**June: Family Spirituality**

**July: Family work Ethic**

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<sup>14</sup> "Austrians admit to Olympic ski blood doping: Swedish TV" <http://sg.sports.yahoo.com/020307/1/2kiww.html>, accessed March 9, 2002

# Self-Control Cryptogram

a = ✓	j = ✈	s = ?
b = 🚲	k = 🌸	t = 🏠
c = □	l = ✨	u = 🚗
d = 🛡	m = !	v = 🚚
e = 📺	n = ●	w = 🎵
f = 🚗	o = 🚗	x = ⊗
g = ■	p = 🚗	y = ⊖
h = 🚗	q = ⌚	z = cursive
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*Thomas Jefferson*  
(Thomas Jefferson)

from “A Decalogue of Canons for observation in practical life.”<sup>1</sup>  
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<sup>1</sup> C-span home, <http://www.americanpresidents.org/letters/03.asp>, accessed March 11, 2002