

## Character Trait for August, 2013 – Endurance

*Jan Gunter, Community Relations Specialist*

The character trait for the month of August is endurance: the ability to withstand hardship, adversity, or stress, with persistence. And how appropriate is it that this Character Trait should come at the *opening* of another school year; for we all need to be reminded that it's not how fast we start, nor how exciting the circumstances all seem to be *when we begin something new*. It's about enduring to the end and *finishing* what we've started! Another way of putting it is this: Endurance is the ability to keep going when everything is telling us to give up.

As Booker T. Washington once said, "Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome."

This is a great time to teach our children – and remind ourselves – that when putting the character trait of endurance into practice in our lives we *can* overcome the "inconveniences" and the hurdles that crop up as we move forward towards those proverbial finish lines we seek – no matter what they might be: a new career, a higher level of education, a new skill or any kind of personal improvement.

Our society has become one that emphasizes and encourages "new starts" and "fresh beginnings". Just think about how many commercials you've seen on TV, or read in magazines or heard on the radio that have the emphasis of acquiring a "new this" or a "better that". Ads for new diets come out all of the time with the same message: "become a new you!" But how many times do you hear about the "endurance" aspect of these new beginnings? Who sings the praises of enduring to the end to attain the goals we set out for? "The start" is so much more fun and exciting to talk about than all of the hard work, the sometimes mundane hours, and keep-at-it discipline it will take to make it to the finish line of whatever goal we've set for ourselves. But as Darcy Kimmel states in her internet *MomLife Today* article from March 24, 2011, "finishing is what separates the 'also ran's' from the winners. It distinguishes the 'good ideas' from the great works of literature and science. Finishing takes good intentions and turns them into life-changing results. And unless we develop the character trait of endurance in our children's hearts, we are setting them up for a life of disappointment and failure."

So how do folks incorporate this positive character trait of endurance into their lives – or in the lives of their children - if it is not already there? First and foremost, we need to understand that it begins with an *attitude* of "I CAN DO WHAT IT TAKES!" Here are some easy steps to help you create a "map" to follow in developing the positive character trait of endurance.

1. Start with the "big picture". What is the accomplishment you want to achieve? Define it and mark out its entire scope so you can see all of its various aspects.
2. Ask yourself: "Do the ends justify the means? – or put in another way, count the cost! Is the goal worth the commitment? Will this pursuit have meaning for your future or will it end up being a waste of time? Not all "I wants" are worthy of becoming goals. Part of

being successful in learning “endurance” is to develop the sense of what is worthy of our time, effort, and sacrifice – and what is not.

3. The ENTIRE goal does *not* have to be accomplished at once! So break down the pathway to achieving your goals by breaking it down into smaller steps on a “pathway” to success. And then, check off each step as you proceed. The check marks will be a psychological “plus” in keep your endurance momentum going, while giving you a “tangible” vision of progress!
4. Remember this: Hurdles don’t have to be “walls” – they can be stepping stones to success! So make the decision ahead of time that you will learn from the obstacles you will face – and not let them defeat you! It’s not a question of “if” you will ever face adversity in life, it’s a question of *when will adversity show up?*
5. Decide from the start that giving up is *not* an option! Too often our culture teaches “If at first you don’t succeed, just quit and move on to something else!” That’s *not* the attitude of successful people! Truly prosperous folks don’t give up! Even when the going gets tough (and it does for everyone!) they learn to take a deep breath, figure out how to keep moving forward, and then go for it!

Those who have developed the positive character trait of endurance have learned to accept instruction – and even correction – from others. Their mindset is that the “hurdles in life” are merely inconveniences that will pass; that as they keep on “keeping on” they will eventually achieve the goals they set out for themselves. Those with “Endurance” have also learned this important truth: Success is not always measured as finishing “first” – sometimes it’s simply measured by *finishing* what you set out to accomplish to the very best of your abilities.

###