Character Trait of “Good Judgment”  
Jan Gunter, Community Relations Specialist

The character trait for the month of January is “good judgment.” It means, “To choose worthy goals and set proper priorities, thinking through the consequences of your actions; and basing your decisions on practical wisdom and good sense.”

When one has developed the character trait of “good judgment” then the ability to choose worthy goals and set proper priorities becomes attainable. And that leads to a future filled with possibilities and opportunities – the stuff “dreams” are made of – or at the very least the “deal maker” which leaves the doors of opportunity open and available down the road. Good leaders consistently show good judgment in their decision making!

Good judgment can be described as the act of “discriminative thinking”. It does not mean being discriminatory or “judgmental” toward others. Rather, it involves analyzing both the short term and long term consequences of our actions, and then basing our decision-making and actions on the practical wisdom and good sense of that analysis when deciding our paths in life.

What others have chosen as okay behavior or thinking patterns for themselves, may not be okay for us. Unfortunately though, many folks don’t give themselves permission to opt for a different course from what others are choosing to do. That proverbial “but everyone else is doing it!” becomes the mantra of those who don’t stop to use good judgment on a consistent basis. Add to that the fact that many of us tend to act on impulse, and you can see how one might have a “disaster” waiting to happen after a hasty decision!

So how do we begin to exercise “good judgment?” While there aren’t any “set formulas”, there are “commons sense” guidelines that anyone can follow; keeping in mind that exercising “good judgment” is a learning process.

1. Give yourself time to “think things through” before making a decision. This is the time to ask: Is this the right thing to do? What might happen if I do this? What will I lose if I choose this path? What will I gain? What will I lose if I don’t choose this path? What might I gain? Do I have any other choices? What might the long term consequences be? And is it really worth pursuing?

2. Listen to your “gut feelings”. If “something” deep inside of you is giving you a bad sense about the situation, then listen to your gut. At the very least, the situation/decision you’re facing requires more analysis on your part before you act on it. It is okay to analyze the answer to this question: Am I being pressured by others, or by my own fear of rejection from others, to do something I wouldn’t ordinarily choose to do?

3. Learn from others. Has someone else been faced with the same decision making process that you are faced with now? What choice did they make? How did that work out for them? What consequences did they face? Were those consequences “worth it?”
Over the course of our lives, there will be thousands of judgment calls to make. Some will be inconsequential (i.e. what kind of shampoo should I use?) while others will be monumental (who should I marry? Or, what career path should I take?). Those will affect our lives far beyond the “here and now”. Our ability to make the right call is of significance and consequence! Good Judgment is a character trait that is worthy of our pursuit and is a valuable trait to teach our children.

###