

C2: Character Challenge

Presenters Guide

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Acknowledgements for the second edition of

C2: Character Challenge

By Mark Liston, PhD

A great deal of credit for *C2: Character Challenge* goes to Martin Seligman and Chris Peterson, creators and pioneers in the field of Positive Psychology. I quoted and borrowed heavily from the insights found in the text they edited, *Character Strengths and Virtues (2004)*.

I am also heavily indebted to Dr. Peterson for directing our initial research. His knowledge for character development was only exceeded by his passion for the subject. Thank you, Chris, for giving me permission for my shameless name-dropping. I trust you rest in peace (deceased 2012).

To Bill Gothard for showing me the importance of character in my early years and for all he taught me regarding character.

To Cameron Skinner who took over scripting the movie clips, proofed them, and recruited James Swafford to edit them.

Despite my desire for perfection, the proofreading skills of Beth Dayton were my salvation. Thank you, Beth.

To Rick Starkweather and Jim Snyder, my dear friends who provided support and encouragement that carried me through the tough times.

And to all the little people who made these amazing movies and the studios who allow us to use them: Columbia, Disney, Fox, Paramount, Universal, and Warner Brothers.

C2 Character Strengths, Movies, and Positive Psychology Exercises

Codes: Bold = Movie; Parentheses = Positive Psychology exercises

Achievement Collection

Research shows that the foundation of self-esteem and one's sense of worth is developed through performance. As these strengths develop, students work harder and complete their education.

1. Responsibility = **Captain Phillips** (Positive Introduction)
2. Honesty and Integrity = **Captain America 2**
3. Courage = **The Maze Runner** (Core Strengths and Character Challenges)
4. Grit and Perseverance = **Unbroken** (Best From Worst)
5. Self-Control = **42** (WOOP It Up)
6. Humility = **Cinderella** (Active Listening)
7. Excellence and Achievement = **The Imitation Game**
8. Leadership = **Star Trek: Into Darkness** (Lead with Strengths)

Relationship Collection

As students learn to have healthy relationships, they are more tolerant, secure, and confident. Bullying decreases, cliques diminish, and “bad boys” and “mean girls” are no longer cool.

9. Confidence and Respect = **Divergent** (Savoring)
10. Kindness = **Warm Bodies**
11. Love and Care = **Frozen** (Arrival of Happiness)
12. Trust and Social Intelligence = **Hunger Games**
13. Tolerance and Discernment = **The Hobbit** (My Greatest Strength and Growth)
14. Fairness = **The Help** (Best Self Story)
15. Forgiveness = **Maleficent** (REACH to Forgive)
16. Cooperation = **Avengers: Age of Ultron**

Motivation Collection

Students' academic achievement correlates most with their intrinsic desire or motivation. Motivation is the result of deepening insight and a sense of transcendence.

17. Love of Learning = **Interstellar**
18. Peace = **Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close** (Let Worries Go)
19. Purpose = **Selma** (Life Purpose)
20. Gratitude = **Blindside** (3 Good Things)
21. Optimism = **The Martian**
22. Wisdom and Decision-Making = **Inside Out** (My Favorite)
23. Curiosity and Creativity = **Saving Mr. Banks**
24. Awe and Humor = **Secret Life of Walter Mitty** (LOL)

C2 Concepts, Research, and Results

C2 History

C2 was created because an adolescent judge asked Mark Liston to develop a character training program for teens in state care. He was concerned they had no foundation for flourishing or character. Many had no hope for a future, destined to a life of either crime or dependence on public aid. This program was designed to provide them with an opportunity to develop a foundation of character strength and well-being.

You can find more detail on C2's beginning at "History of C2: 1967 to Today" (p. 47).

C2 Conceptualization

C2 is the first comprehensive character training curriculum based on Positive Psychology according to Dr. Chris Peterson, the director of C2's early research and Arthur F. Thurnau professor of psychology at the University of Michigan. Chris was the co-author with Martin Seligman, the father of Positive Psychology, of *Character Strengths and Virtues*. He generously volunteered to head up C2's initial research in 2007-2009 (See "Research Basis").

Remember when you were a teen? You cared more about what your peers and media said than what your parents and teachers thought.

Traditionally, the students in this age group who lack character don't respond well to character training. It seems to remind them of their failure and it's not "cool." So we targeted them in designing the material, looking for ways to motivate them. We think we found some:

- Focus on student strengths rather than their problems and wrong behaviors
- Brief presentations
- Movie clips that draw students into the subject and capture their hearts
- Provocative Peer Chat questions based on the movies

Middle and high school students are in a critical developmental stage. Psychology teaches that an essential facet of these years is **differentiation**: A time of a) *questioning* what they were told by parents, teachers, their religion, and "old people" in general and b) *determining* their own beliefs, motives, and desires. C2 is designed to provide students an opportunity to think about their values and compare them with good character.

C2 doesn't tell kids what they are doing wrong and what they should do instead. Instead C2 focuses on student strengths, not weaknesses. By casting the questions in the context of character strengths, C2 Briefings aren't as threatening to students. Using hit movies to illustrate the strengths shows them the Cycle of Change evidenced in every dramatic presentation:

1. The Problem of bad character

2. The Process of developing good character
3. The Payoff received from good character

Every C2 movie clip shows this Cycle of Change. Students don't have to be convinced of their need to change or motivated to act. Movie clips have great advantages with teens:

- High interest
- Sharpen focus
- Convenient and save time
- Capture the heart as well as engaging the mind
- Speak to a broad range of students, from the brightest to the challenged

What creates even deeper student buy-in to character development is the Peer Chat. Students spend most class time following the educational agenda required to graduate.

What they prefer is to talk with peers about their own interests. Peer Chat uses that desire and provides discussion material they enjoy. As they dialogue one-on-one, introverts open up and engage in conversation while extroverts reflect on meaning and evaluate their decisions. Transformation and character development result.

C2 was also designed to provide the foundation for well-being and success in life they may or may not get at home. This foundation serves students academically, emotionally, socially, and relationally.

C2 was originally created for at-risk students who lack a good foundation. This population doesn't respond well to character education curricula as it seems to remind them of their failures. We wrote the Briefings with them in mind, looking for ways to engage them. Our design:

- Focuses on student strengths rather than problems and wrong behaviors;
- Utilizes a brief, 3-minute presentation;
- Has proven to provide empathy and positive reinforcement more than criticism through Peer Chat and post-lesson student interactions; and
- Provides the option to "blog" or journal their answers to the discussion questions when they prefer privacy or are "having a bad day."

We believed that designing the training to be highly interesting, interactive, and challenging would appeal not only to at-risk teens but to all teens. Our pilot groups proved this accurate. Our high-functioning adolescents [honor roll students] reported similar interest in and transformation from their experience with C2 as the at-risk students.

C2's latest edition has been upgraded to include conceptualization and research from Positive Youth Development, Social Emotional Learning, and Character Education. These four fields possess the best character conceptualization and research from the behavioral sciences, education, and educational psychology.

Research

Research from these fields consistently supports these truths:

1. Character training increases student well-being, positive emotions, engagement in purposeful living, positive relationships, and academic and non-academic achievement.
2. Encouragement and development of a positive adult culture in schools and youth organizations that models character is the strongest factor contributing to positive youth culture.
3. Character training, adult character modeling, and positive youth culture are three of the highest-impact factors improving academic performance.
4. Character training, adult character modeling, and positive youth culture have a symbiotic relationship: Each one develops and supports the other.

C2 is designed with these Best Practice strategies:

1. Based on the best conceptualization from complimentary fields of research
2. Aligns with Common Core Standards in its cognitive, developmental, and social-emotional training (Famous Quotes, Briefing, and Key Words)
3. Professional Development available to assist training administration, teachers, and support staff in order to develop the professional culture to model character
4. Engaging illustrations (movie clips)
5. Peer discussion (Peer Chat Questions)
6. Life application (Introduction, Life Practice, Peer Chat Questions, and Commitment)
7. User-friendly, intuitive layout designed in Adobe Captivate (C2 Online)
8. Standardized lesson template for ease of use

Though C2 provides comprehensive training in character strengths, it is not designed to be your entire Character Education Initiative. Liston Group assumes schools and organizations interested in C2 have their own program design and see C2 as an important tool within it.

With this second edition, we will begin an experimental (random sample) study of C2 effectiveness to develop character and help students flourish. The Liston Group goal is to have C2 qualify for the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP).

Application of Truth to Life

Character must be “caught as it is taught.” This requires opportunities to practice its principles. C2 designed its Introduction, Peer Chat Questions, and Commitment sections for this purpose. In addition, many strengths have a lesson that includes Life Practices. These are Positive Psychology exercises that have been researched and proven effective in helping adolescents internalize moral values and express character strengths in their attitudes, ethics, and behavior.

C2 Results

Since its publication in 2007, C2 has been used in 32 states and 5 foreign countries. The original edition was published in toolkit form and adapted to be used with a site license and loaded onto a school's server. It is estimated that over 100,000 teens have received character training with C2 materials.

Here are two brief stories:

After the 24th session, one girl said, "Do we have to stop?" In her first semester after the group, her grades went from C's with an F in Math to A's and B's with an A in Math. She also changed her entire group of friends to a healthier crowd. She now has graduated from high school and is working.

Steven was his class president, had a 4.0 GPA, and was depressed and angry. After C2 training, he had started talking to his mom again, improved his relationship with his father, and said the experience had changed his life. His smile had returned and his angry outbursts stopped.

Why do teens engage so easily with C2? We weren't sure so we asked them. Their responses were:

- "The quotes are cool."
- "The Briefings aren't bad. I never heard of some of that stuff."
- "The movies are really cool."
- "The Peer Chat is amazing. That's my favorite part."
- "The [Positive Psychology] exercises are fun and make you think."

So we concluded that C2 is "cool"!

Reports from C2 facilitators has been encouraging. A 17-year old was court-referred to C2 and he wasn't happy about it. He was expelled from school for violence and theft and could barely read. After 8 sessions, he was asked what he thought of C2. "It's cool," he shrugged. By the end of training, he said his goal was to learn to read well and graduate from high school.

Here are some quotes:

- "It's hard enough to get character training into my plan without having to come up with lessons myself. C2 makes it easy." – High school teacher
- "My students don't want me telling them what they should do with their lives. C2 helps them *want* to be good people." – Alternative school teacher

- “We had to change our student culture. C2 was a big part of turning us around. It makes character cool again.” – Middle school principal
- “The movie clips are short but tell the movie’s story while highlighting its meaning and emotion. The kids get it.” – High school teacher
- “My students started treating one another differently by the time we were through the Relationship Collection. Changes were subtle but significant.” – Middle school teacher
- “This has been our most popular project since beginning in 2009. We have six teams that twice a year go to a lockdown juvenile facility one night a week for a month. We never have to ask for volunteers. When they go, the kids meet them at the door with grins on their faces.” – Kiwanis Club leader
- “C2 opens meaningful discussions between and with students. That’s the reason I got into teaching. We had so few before and now they happen frequently.” – High school teacher
- “My students are different. I’m different, too! Frankly, I’m surprised.” – Middle school teacher
- “We thought C2 was for males. After it worked with them, the female officers demanded to use it! They had the same good results.” – Juvenile Detention Officer

C2 Alignment with Common Core State Standards

Forty-two of the fifty U.S. states and the District of Columbia are members of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative. Four states joined but later withdrew and Minnesota adopted the English Language Arts standards but not the Mathematics standards. Other states are debating withdrawal at this writing.

The Liston Group shows C2 alignment with CCSS to offer information needed to justify its purchase and use. In addition, numerous peer-reviewed studies over the past 20 years have shown high correlation between strong, school-wide character education and students' academic achievement.

While C2's primary goal is character development, this goal has many positive academic outcomes according to research: Higher attendance, graduation rates, time on task, and mastery of core content.

The C2 learning activities – Famous Quotes, Briefings and Briefing Keys, Movie Clips, Peer Chat, Blogging, and Positive Psychology Exercises – are listed with the standards they meet.

Anchor College & Career Readiness

ELA Standards Grades 8 – 12

Famous Quotes:

English Language Arts

Speaking & Listening:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.3

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.6

Reading:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.8
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10

Writing:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.1
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2

Language:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.1
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.2
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.3
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.4
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.6

Briefings:

Speaking & Listening:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.5
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.6

Reading:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2

Writing:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.1
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8

Language:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.6

Movie Clips:

Speaking & Listening:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.3

Peer Chats:

Research indicates that guided peer discussion contributes to analytical thinking, decision-making, social skill development, social intelligence, determination of priorities and values, goal setting, public speaking, self-worth, and identity development.

Speaking & Listening:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.3

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.6

Reading:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10

Writing:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4

Language:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.2

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.3

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.5

Blogging:

Research indicates that blogging combines many of the benefits of guided peer discussion with those of creative writing. Blogging promotes writing creative thinking, analytical thinking, decision-making, social intelligence, determination of priorities and values, goal setting, self-worth, and identity development.

Writing:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.5

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.6

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.9

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.10

Language:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.2

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.3

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.4

Positive Psychology Exercises:

Speaking & Listening:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.3

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.5

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.6

Language:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.2

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.3

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.5

Lesson Structure

C2's 24 chapters each cover a primary character strength in six 10-minute lessons (144 total). They are easily infused into core subjects.

C2's 24 movies were carefully chosen and edited to provide illustrations of character strengths while maintaining their story line and artistic integrity. Some facts about them are:

- One third are true stories while eight are sci-fi
- Seven are historical and four of these involve restorative justice
- Ten or more are literary or based on books
- At least nine deal with social-emotional and psychological health
- Three (*Imitation Game*, *Interstellar*, *Martian*) or more involve STEM

Template

Introduction and Famous Quote (30 seconds)

Briefing (3 minutes)

Movie Clip (3 minutes)

Peer Chat/Blogging Question (3 minutes)

Briefing Keys (30 seconds)

Commitment (sixth lesson only)

Definitions and Categorizations of The Character Strengths

Character Strengths and Virtues by Seligman and Peterson (2004) provided the construct and beginning definitions of the 24 Positive Psychology character strengths. Seligman and Peterson's definitions were revised and personalized in 2016 by McGrath.

The following are adapted from Peterson, Seligman, and McGrath's work. Mark Liston's research informed some of these definitions. These edits are in italics. He also added 4 additional strengths with his definitions that may complete comprehensive character training: Responsibility, Awareness, Respect, and Peace.

Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence:

You notice the beauty and excellence around you; you are often awe-struck by beauty, greatness, and/or the moral goodness you witness; you are often filled with wonder.

Bravery/Courage:

You face your fears and overcome challenges and adversity; you stand up for what is right; you do not shrink in the face of pain or inner tension or turmoil.

Creativity:

You are viewed as a creative person; you see, do, and/or create things that are of use; you think of unique ways to solve problems and be productive.

Curiosity:

You are an explorer; you seek novelty; you are interested in new activities, ideas, and people; you are open to new experiences.

Fairness/Openmindedness:

You believe strongly in an equal and just opportunity for all; you don't let personal feelings bias your decisions about others; you treat people the way you want to be treated.

Forgiveness/Mercy:

You readily let go of hurt after you are wronged; you give people a second chance; you are not vengeful or resentful; you accept people's shortcomings.

Gratitude:

You regularly experience and express thankfulness; you don't take the good things that happen in your life for granted; you tend to feel blessed in many circumstances.

Honesty:

You are a person of high integrity and authenticity; you tell the truth, even when it hurts; you present yourself to others in a sincere way; you take responsibility for your actions.

Hope (Part of *Optimism*):

You are optimistic, expecting the best to happen; you believe in and work toward a positive future; you can think of many pathways to reach your goals.

Modesty/Humility:

You let your accomplishments speak for themselves; you see your own goodness but prefer to focus the attention on others; you do not see yourself as more special than others; you admit your imperfections.

Humor:

You are playful; you love to make people smile and laugh; your sense of humor helps you connect closely to others; you brighten gloomy situations with fun and/or jokes.

Judgment/Critical Thinking:

You are analytical; you examine things from all sides; you do not jump to conclusions, but instead attempt to weigh all the evidence when making decisions.

Kindness:

You do good things for people; you help and care for others; you are generous and giving; you are compassionate.

Leadership:

You prefer to lead than to follow; you positively influence those you lead; you are very good at organizing and taking charge for the collective benefit of the group.

Love of Learning:

You often find ways to deepen your knowledge and experiences; you regularly look for new opportunities to learn; you are passionate about building knowledge.

Love:

You are warm and genuine to others; you not only share but are open to receiving love from others; you value growing close and intimate with others.

Perseverance:

You keep going and going when you have a goal in mind; you attempt to overcome all obstacles. You are diligent, industrious, stay on task, and finish what you start despite contrary impulses.

Perspective/Wisdom:

You take the “big picture” view of things; others turn to you for wise advice; you help others make sense of the world; you learn from your mistakes.

Prudence:

You are wisely cautious; you plan and are conscientious; you are careful to not take undue risks or do things you might later regret.

Self-Regulation:

You are a very disciplined person; you manage your vices and bad habits; you stay calm and cool under pressure; you manage your impulses and emotions.

Social Intelligence:

You pay close attention to social nuances and the emotions of others; you have good insight into what makes people “tick”; you seem to know what to say and do in any social situation.

Spirituality/Sense of Meaning:

You hold a set of beliefs, whether religious or not, about how your life is part of something bigger and more meaningful; those beliefs shape your behavior and provide a sense of comfort, understanding, and purpose.

Teamwork/Cooperation:

You are a collaborative and participative member on groups and teams; you are loyal and feel a strong sense of duty to your group; you always do your share.

Zest (Part of Optimism):

You are enthusiastic toward life; you are highly energetic and activated; you use your energy to the fullest degree.

Added Strengths

The following four strengths were added to *C2: Character Challenge* by Dr. Liston’s research. Character strength conceptualization is a nascent field and changes are expected. Until a character taxonomy is finalized by the field, discussions of and research regarding what constitutes the best character construct will continue.

Excellence:

You desire to do things well and accomplish your intended result. Your work is of the highest quality.

Responsibility:

You admit when you are wrong, do what you say you will do, are responsible, have integrity, are reliable, consistent, and dependable

Peace:

You are calm despite trouble and stress. You face difficulty with competency and self-assurance. You remain serene in troubling circumstances.

Respect:

You honor those to whom it is due. You give attention, deference, value, and appropriate conduct toward others, especially those in authority. You honor others ownership, property, and rights.

How C2 Structures the 28 Strengths

Achievement Character	Relationship Character	Motivation Character
Responsibility	Confidence/Respect	Love of Learning
Honesty and Integrity	Kindness and Empathy	Peace
Courage	Love and Care	Purpose and Spirituality
Grit and Perseverance	Trust and Social Intelligence	Gratitude
Self-Control	Insight	Optimism
Humility	Fairness	Wisdom and Decision- making
Excellence and Achievement	Forgiveness	Curiosity and Creativity
Leadership	Cooperation	Awe and Humor

C2 Implementation and Fidelity

For Schools

Schools often struggle to implement Character Development into classroom instruction. Here are some creative ways educators have discovered to infuse C2 into the academic curricula.

Infuse C2 into All Subjects

Each subject area could help choose its own strengths to teach. Display the list of 24 character strengths and movies. Then ask which subjects they believe are best taught in their subject area. Examples: Physical education might want Cooperation because it focuses on teamwork and conflict resolution. History may choose Diligence, Self-Control, and Fairness because they use historically-themed movies. Language Arts may choose Humility, Creativity and Curiosity, and Awe and Humor because both their subject and movies connect to writing and language. This could also involve Science (*Interstellar*, *The Martian*) and Health (at least nine strengths deal with social-emotional and psychological health).

Choose One Subject to Host C2

Character training may be assigned to one subject. Often this is Language Arts or Social Studies.

Split Lessons between Language and History

Another idea is to divide the lessons between these two subjects based on their movies being historically-themed (*Selma*, *Unbroken*, *Imitation Game*, etc.) or literary-themed (*Saving Mr. Banks*, *Cinderella*, *Hunger Games*).

Use an Advisory Period

Others use C2 exclusively during an Advisory Period of 15-25 minutes.

Alternative Education

C2 has been very popular in alternative education, ISS, and detention. Many students are assigned to these due to character issues and staff seek positive ways to discuss these areas. Teachers report that C2, especially its movies and Peer Chat, increases receptivity to instruction, openness to change, and positive decision-making.

Implementation Strategies

Four primary implementation strategies are recommended:

1. Scope and Sequence
2. Professional Development
3. Fidelity Protocols
4. Assessment

Scope and Sequence

The C2 scope involves the grades being taught the C2 material. Most schools choose to teach one C2 collection – Achievement, Relationship, and Motivation – to the same grade each year. The collections are in developmental order, that is, Achievement Character is easiest to grasp and Motivation Character is most complex. Achievement Character should then be taught to your youngest grade.

Schools that have three grade levels (6th - 8th grades) or high schools that teach character to 9th – 12th grades want the entire school to be on the same character lessons throughout the year. They teach one collection to all three or four grades (Achievement, Relationship, and Motivation Character) each year. Developmentally this is appropriate because distinctions between the collections are not dramatic.

Some schools prefer to teach all C2 collections in one year to a certain grade such as high school freshmen or eighth graders.

Here is a structure that conceptualizes character strengths and organizes their instruction. Each of the lessons is listed. The four categories provide a great way to teach C2 in a year-long class. Each category would be taught for nine weeks with four lessons per week. Block classes would need to teach one and one-half lesson each class or two lessons with other instruction added.

Categories	Strengths
Respect	Honesty Humility Insight Courage Fairness
Responsibility	Wisdom Perseverance Leadership Peace Self-Control
Relationship (Love)	Kindness Gratitude Cooperation Social Intelligence Forgiveness
Purpose	Creativity & Curiosity Optimism Gratitude Love of Learning Awe & Humor

Character strengths overlap and correlate to a large degree. This enables the three Collections and the 24 strengths to be sequenced in any order you decide. We recommend you choose your preferred scope and sequence.

Professional Development

C2 was developed as a full-stack character training curriculum to be taught by professional educators and volunteer youth workers. Its Adobe Captivate platform is intuitive and the lesson template is easy to follow.

Professional Development (PD) is still recommended for numerous reasons: PD a) follows the Best Practices model; b) develops staff sense of competency and enthusiasm that empowers students' motivation to grow in character; and c) fosters a professional community that enjoys modeling and encouraging the character strengths they teach. PD is designed to be brief, engaging, meaningful, and fun.

What is the best way to conduct C2 Professional Development (PD)? You are the person in charge and know your students and leaders best. You make the call!

Here are some ideas:

1. Train the trainers. Send your primary leaders or PLC trainers to a regional certification seminar (check our website for upcoming dates) or take it online (available August 1, 2017). Then they train the facilitators.
2. Purchase the C2 Professional Development Kit (available August 1, 2017) and follow #1.
3. Ask facilitators to prepare individually by watching the “Easy-Breezy C2 Overview” video, read the Introductory chapters, run through a lesson, and begin teaching.
4. Hire a certified C2 Trainer to conduct your PD.

The Liston Group provides training materials for all these options.

Fidelity Protocol

Fidelity means the degree of accuracy or faithfulness to a person, cause, or task. Fidelity should be defined by each district, principal, and/or Character Development PLC in the form of a protocol. The purpose of a Fidelity Protocol is to communicate and uphold the teaching expectations regarding C2 in order to optimize character development.

What Does Liston Group provide the C2 Administrator?

In C2 Online, each school will be provided one unique administrator license that grants backdoor access to all the school's C2 usage by each licensed teacher. The administrator uses the backdoor access to view the time-stamped results. The passwords identify the teacher with their usage. The results may be downloaded onto a CSV spreadsheet at the administrator's discretion for analysis and printing reports. We recommend that these are provided to each teacher weekly. This helps prevent getting behind schedule.

When using the C2 Toolkit, fidelity is “OS”: Old school. Presenters who are passionate to help students will do their best to engage them and allow them time in Peer Chat to discuss their

thoughts and buy in to character development. Supervisors can use their normal feedback loops to know how teachers and students are doing.

Another evidence of fidelity is annual assessment using the Character Growth Index (CGI). This handy tool allows large group and (coming in 2018) individual testing of student character development (See below).

Creating the Protocol

How do you create a C2 fidelity protocol? Here is one logical approach:

1. Define the expected C2 lesson frequency (daily, weekly) and duration (10-minute minimum) of lessons, and total lessons taught over the week, quarter, and year.
2. Decide how often teachers will receive a report or how often the administrator will check the teacher's progress.
3. Determine what will happen if a teacher falls behind, what allowances will be made for seasonal complications (testing, school events, etc.), appeal process, and other items. Balance expectations with an awareness of teacher workloads.
4. Make the protocol clear, short, and simple.

Feel free to amend this protocol or create your own. Liston Group would appreciate seeing your unique protocol and perhaps share it (with your permission) with others.

Communicating the Protocol to Teachers

The concept of fidelity protocols is perhaps well-known to your teachers. Use your judgment regarding the best way to tell teachers about the fidelity protocols during Professional Development.

Administering Your Fidelity Standards

While the day-to-day responsibilities are often delegated to others, the principal must keep informed of teachers' fidelity to the protocol.

The C2 administrator license provides backdoor analytics that generate both all-school and individual teacher reports. Most administrators' assistant generates their personal fidelity report and one for each teacher. These are easily emailed.

Assessing Your Students' Character Development

Until recently, the only means of assessing student character and its development were very subjective means: Observation of behavior, discipline referrals, and grades. Determining the effectiveness of character education based on these outcomes is problematic on many levels.

First, these do not tell the school the student's motivation or reason for these actions. They may get a referral because of treatment at home or in the neighborhood or due to lack of food or rest.

Second, these do not differentiate instruction. They cannot report the students' overall character strength or their character level and growth over time compared to others of their same grade and gender. Imagine teaching an academic subject without this ability.

Fortunately the fields of character education and Positive Psychology are making progress to develop character assessments. The **Character Growth Index** (CGI) is the primary tool available for assessing multidimensional character development. See the Liston Group website for more information on CGI.

For Other Organizations

If you are involved with Juvenile Justice, after-school programs, teen prevention programs, or any teen groups, C2 may be for you. This training has stabilized so many at-risk teens, male and female, and has received rave reviews from students and leaders alike. C2's goal is transformation to develop a foundation for flourishing. Our customers say it is working.

Once you see how the lessons are laid out, you will find C2 very easy to use. You can make the lessons as short as 10 minutes (one lesson) and as long as 90 minutes (by doing all 6 lessons in a chapter and giving 8 minutes for Peer Chat). You won't run out of material!

Depending on the level of structure you desire, you can implement some or most of the items mentioned for schools. Most groups simply customize C2 to fit their students' needs.

Email us if you have questions, please: info@ListonGroup.org

How To Teach and Use C2

C2 is designed with these Best Practice strategies:

1. Based on the best conceptualization from complimentary fields of research
2. Aligns with Common Core Standards in its cognitive, developmental, and social-emotional training (Briefing and Key Words)
3. Professional Development available to assist training administration, teachers, and support staff in order to develop the professional culture to model character
4. Engaging illustrations (Movie Clips)
5. Peer discussion (Peer Chat Questions and Life Practice), and
6. Application (Introduction, Life Practice, Peer Chat Questions, and Commitment)
7. Four formats for flexibility of use
8. Standardized lesson template for ease of use

To Grade or Not to Grade C2

Though schools are free to do as they believe is best, we discourage grading C2 assignments. As students develop, they are more motivated to seriously consider character development if they are intrinsically (internally, independently) motivated to do so. If you must grade, please consider doing a participation grade.

Briefings

When you begin Lesson 1 of a new character strength, **please make sure each student has their Student Handbook document that contains the Briefing Keys and Peer Chat / Blogging questions.** Use your school's preferred method of paper or digital copies. We recommend digital copies so students can personalize them, keep them confidential, and it saves trees!

Briefings begin with famous quotes that highlight the strength and inspire or give insight. We suggest that, if possible, you post the quotes in the classroom for the duration of the training for that strength.

Briefings are primarily a script that defines, illustrates, and applies the strength to life. The script can either be read by you or one of the students or presented as you choose. Please feel free to edit the script to include your personal illustrations and additional information you want to add about the strength.

Embedded in each briefing are sentences like this one from the Responsibility briefing: “First, a responsible person is able to choose for oneself between *right and wrong*.”

To aid learning, C2 includes a student handout for each character strength called Briefing Keys. The underlined sentence is included in **the Key Words handout**. **There the italicized words are omitted from the sentence** and replaced by spaces where the students can fill in the words as you emphasize them.

Here is how this sentence appears in the student handout:

Briefing Keys: Responsibility

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1. Responsibility has two parts:
 - a. A responsible person is “able to choose for oneself between _____ and _____.”

Our research on the use of Briefing Keys suggests that they increase learning and student focus. First, they and the Peer Chat/Blogging questions serve as a summary of their character learning. Second, students often discuss this information with peers and parents afterward.

Feedback from both pilot group facilitators in juvenile justice settings and classroom teachers in public schools stated student interest in this simple teaching tool was much greater than anticipated.

One said,

Woe unto me if I failed to share the Briefing Keys! Most students didn't want to leave any 'blanks'.

Another said,

I almost eliminated the Briefing Keys without trying them but thought it might be a good summary of the lesson. I knew they would like the movies and discussion but the students' interest in Keys surprised me.

Some teachers suggest students build a digital journal or log of each character strength. Both the Briefing Keys and Peer Chat Questions are provided as Word documents for this reason. While many won't keep this information, others will value this work. Liston Group will soon have an online Character Portfolio that students may attach to their university or job application with a link.

Movies

Briefings are the “head” of C2 training but the movies are the “heart”. Adolescents are in a developmental stage called Differentiation. They are determining what they think, like and dislike, and believe. Most teens don’t want adults telling them what to do.

C2 shows movies that have three “acts:”

Act 1 shows “the Problem” of life without character.

Act 2 provides “the Process” by which the stars develop the character strength.

Act 3 celebrates “the Payoff” or reward of exercising the strength.

When students see this progression, they “get it” and want to grow in the strength. The movies elegantly develop students’ autonomous motivation.

These films are chosen by

1. Their ability to illustrate the strength,
2. Their popularity with teens, and
3. The willingness of the studio to allow Liston Group to use their movie.

One movie is used to illustrate each strength. Movies are edited into five or six clips illustrating the strength. Material inappropriate for viewing in school are not included. Usually scenes are organized in the order they appear in the movie.

Peer Chat

If the Briefings are C2’s head and the movies its heart, the Peer Chat is its life blood. As you know, teens like to talk to one another! Peer Chats are where students ‘buy in’ to the Briefing and get the most out of C2.

Peer Chat and its introverted partner, Blogging, are the centerpiece of the C2 lesson, **the primary means students apply the character Briefing and Movie Clip to their lives.** C2 uses the terms Peer Chat and Blogging because it is the language teens use and prefer.

Here is where students come face-to-face with their need to grow in character. These questions address specific scenes from each movie clip to help students use the character strength in daily life. As students discuss these in class, they see their need to grow in virtue.

Peer Chat and/or Blogging allow students to **experience life-changing awareness and choices**. Peer discussion and/or reflective journaling improve teen **executive functioning, decision-making, value determination, well-being, intrinsic motivation, and career planning**.

When you begin Lesson 1 of a new character strength, please make sure the students have their copy of the *Student Handbook* document for the collection you are studying. This contains all Peer Chat/Blogging Questions and Briefing Keys for each collection. These are in the same Dashboard section as this document.

The Student Handbook is offered as a Word document so that students can blog, record what they discussed in Peer Chat, and fill in the Briefing Keys with their answers. It also allows them to personalize their Handbook. **Please have a student read the first page of the Handbook when you introduce C2.**

Initially the introduction to each lesson's Peer Chat can be read by you or a student. Once they understand Peer Chat, reading this is unnecessary: *"The purpose of Peer Chat is to give you a chance 1) to talk about the character strength with one another, 2) to see where the truths affect your life, and 3) to decide how you want to grow in that strength."*

They are called Peer Chat/Blogging questions because they may be used one of two ways. **We highly recommend the questions are discussed with a peer unless suggested otherwise in the lesson.** Whether the student is social or shy, they can find someone in the class to discuss these personal questions.

You may explain, "The Peer Chat/Blogging Questions help us apply what we have learned to our life. It is a time to discuss your thoughts with a student you trust. Some questions are more personal and you will be asked to blog or write down and reflect upon your thoughts." You may want to assure students that this is for their benefit and is not graded.

Some students in the beginning may be hesitant to discuss with a peer. Dr. Liston recommends (but use your better judgment):

1. If they haven't already told you, ask the student what concerns them.
2. If they are introverted, don't know anyone in the class, or simply nervous, ask them to try it once and then you will discuss how it went.
3. Encourage them to find someone they think they can trust and only tell them what they believe is safe to share.
4. If they still struggle, you may offer to let them blog (write their answers in a private place) on lessons that are more personal but to chat with a peer on other questions.

While encouraging students to discuss with a peer, **allow them to blog if they are concerned for their privacy or if they are "having a bad day."**

The Power of Peer Discussion

Students will be more open and attentive to your Briefing when they know they will discuss the concepts with one another (or, if necessary, blog). If you believe a better question can be asked, feel free to use it but allow the students to discuss their answers with one another.

Remember to switch from the role of teacher to the role of facilitator for C2. Your job is to encourage them to share their thoughts with one another. Teens love to talk to one another but many prefer not to tell their personal views or feelings to a teacher or in front of a class.

As you know, teens like to talk, especially to one another! Peer Chats are where students ‘buy in’ to the Briefing and get the most out of C2.

We beg you: 1) Please give them this opportunity. 2) Do not omit or cut short this time. 3) Do not ask the questions for students to answer before the entire class.

While all-class discussion is a good teaching technique for factual or conceptual questions, *it is death* for C2’s personal questions designed for reflection, interaction, and life application.

You will see more results from your Briefing when the students have the chance to discuss the concepts with one another or, if necessary, blog. If you believe a better question can be asked, feel free to use it but allow the students to discuss their answers with one another.

Why chat in pairs? Pairing up is done to a) encourage the most focus and interaction by students and b) conserve time. If you have less talkative students or more time for Peer Chat, you are wise to consider having each pair join another pair. We do not advise groups of three students as this often results in two dominating and one feeling like a ‘third wheel’ especially if genders are mixed.

Don’t let them know you are listening in. Better yet, **don’t listen in if you can help it.** Sometimes they may appear to be ‘goofing off’ (sometimes they are!) but often they start out lighthearted before getting serious. As you know, teens can transition quickly from one to the other.

Ask them if they want to set a boundary that **“what’s said in C2 STAYS in C2.”** That is, don’t tell others what your partner told you in C2’s Peer Chat. Another good boundary they may want to adopt is that they don’t bring it up later to tease, accuse, or criticize their partner.

Why “Blogging”? Some questions are very personal and come with either an option or instruction that students “blog” their answer privately. **C2 uses blogging as a term for reflective journaling.** When you read these questions, it will be obvious to you why Dr. Liston,

a psychologist, professional counselor, and trauma specialist, suggests or instructs certain answers to be private.

Some students are introverts who may gain more with certain questions by blogging than discussing with a peer. Others may be having a bad day or not have anyone in the class whom they are close to. Inform students frequently that they may always ask permission to blog rather than discuss.

Liston Group suggests that teachers/facilitators not read student blogs but only see that they complete them. Such confidentiality optimizes student reflection and participation. Again, you are wise to inform students frequently that you will not read their blogs.

Application of Truth to Life

Character must be “caught as it is taught.” This requires opportunities to apply and practice its principles. C2 designed its Introduction, Peer Chat questions, Life Practice exercises, and Commitment sections to help students and teachers develop their character. This helps us flourish by gaining a healthy foundation for life.

Life Practice Exercises

In addition, many strengths have a lesson that includes Life Practices. Most of these powerful Positive Psychology exercises have been researched and proven effective in helping adolescents internalize moral values and express character strengths in their attitudes, ethics, and behavior.

The following section is a detailed description of these exercises with instructions for facilitation of each. Please consult these instructions as your teaching preparation.

“Life Practice”: Positive Psychology Exercises and Explanations

General Instructions

C2 includes these Positive Psychology exercises to increase students’ use of their character strengths in daily life. Each provides insight and an experience involving their strengths. Most are evidence-based and proven over many years’ use.

Each Life Practice exercise is infused into one of the six lessons for a character strength.

As with all C2 lessons, use, omit, or adapt these exercises as is best for your students. You are the teacher and know what best suits their needs.

Modeling Character Strengths

I’ve never been mistaken as a runway model, but I’ve always tried to be a model of character to those I train and with whom I live and work. As your students’ teacher, you have an incredible opportunity to encouraged their practice of these strengths by example. You may see this as a means of your personal and professional development. Research indicates that students show higher levels of motivation to learn, engagement in learning, life application, and positive behavior outcomes when they believe their teacher practices strong character.

You may never have been encouraged to use your strengths in teaching. Are you strong in Humor? No wonder you teach teens! Wisdom? Kindness? Courage? As you choose to use your greatest strengths, students will unconsciously learn these. *Modeling is by far the most effective means of teaching character.*

Focus on Student Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Development

Let the students have center stage for Life Practice. Most involve a peer discussion (or blogging exercise) facilitated by the teacher. In all the other lessons, C2 calls this Peer Chat and it is used in most of these exercises.

You handle Peer Chat here as you do in the regular lessons. Please follow the same guidelines provided in the *Introduction to Peer Chat and Blogging*. This is particularly important regarding boundaries.

Invite the students to pair up or, if time allows, to join their pair with another pair. Encourage everyone to use good judgment in choosing what to share with their partner and to do so only to the level they believe is safe. If you have time, you may want to invite a student to share their response with the class.

When you show the question on the screen, it is important that you tell students how many seconds each one has to share. When time is up, tell them that the second student should begin sharing or “taking their turn.”

Timing and Time-Keeping

Most Life Practice exercises are the first or last lesson of the strength. Each is designed to be completed in 10 minutes and have the students wanting to go longer. *The exception is **Core Strengths and Character Challenges** (described below) that requires students to have 20-30 minutes online before the lesson.*

The introduction to each Life Practice may be read by you or a student. It says: *The purpose of Life Practice is to give you a chance to use the character strength in some fun and meaningful way. Life Practice gives you an open-ended way that you can choose what you want to say, find your best strengths, and learn to use the strengths in a way that fits your personality. Do what you think will most help you.*

Most LP exercises involve individual work and Peer Chat with a partner.

Your Role as Leader/Facilitator

The leader’s purpose is to optimize the participants’ learning experience and application of truth to life. To do so with Life Practice, it is essential that you facilitate discussion and participation more than teach. Here are ways to optimize this experience for your students:

- The leader can creatively draw in each student to participate willingly as these are fun and interesting. If a student doesn’t want to participate, allow them not to but require them to be observers. You may want them to write two or three interesting observations they had during the exercise.
- The leader paces the activity by answering any questions, being the time-keeper, segueing from one aspect of the exercise to the next, and encouraging brief responses.
- Encourage everyone to speak out but also invite specific students to speak when you sense they have something to say.

Preparation for the Second Exercise: Core Strengths and Character Challenges

Though more time-intensive, **Core Strengths and Character Challenges** are perhaps the most important and impacting Life Practice. It requires students to take an online survey called the VIA Survey-Youth. VIAS-Y and the adult version were the first character tests developed in 2003. The VIA surveys have inspired over 7 million participants by showing them their top 5 Core Strengths as well as their lower-scoring strengths or what I call their Character Challenges.

You may have students take the VIAS-Y in class or make it homework. You may want them to view this 3-minute video that explains the concept of core strengths. It is aimed at adults so you

may want to preview it.

<http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Reports-Courses-Resources/VIA-Video-Resources/Me-at-My-Best-Video>

The VIA Survey-Adult is the adult version. Please take this for yourself to learn your strengths and challenges. It should take you 15-25 minutes.

Explanation of the Life Practice Exercises

The explanations below are identical to the ones you will read in class. Each is designed to take 10 minutes to complete though you could go much longer if you have class time available.

Please be familiar with these and anticipate students' questions about them. The C2 chapter and strength where the exercise is found are listed after the explanation in parentheses:

Positive Introductions (1: Responsibility)

Let's have some fun getting to know someone else in a significant, deeper way. It's called a Positive Introduction and involves the C2 character strengths. The purpose of this Life Practice is to encourage you to recognize where you excel, what you do best, and what strengths you can use to achieve your goals and grow in character.

First, pair up with someone you trust and enjoy.

Second, take turns sharing with your partner an experience when you showed your "best self." This is not for achievements but when your character shone through. It could be when you showed Kindness to another, or Courage in a scary situation, or Responsibility when success or failure depended on you doing the right thing. Then explain why you think this is an example of "me at my best".

Third, from the list of C2 character strengths, tell your partner what strengths you heard that your partner expressed in his/her "shining moment.

C2: Character Challenge Collections and Strengths

Achievement Character	Relationship Character	Motivation Character
Responsibility	Confidence/Respect	Love of Learning
Honesty and Integrity	Kindness and Empathy	Peace
Courage	Love and Care	Purpose and Spirituality

Grit and Perseverance	Trust and Social Intelligence	Gratitude
Self-Control	Insight	Optimism
Humility	Fairness	Wisdom and Decision-making
Excellence and Achievement	Forgiveness	Curiosity and Creativity
Leadership	Cooperation	Awe and Humor

If time allows, one or two can share their Positive Introduction with the group.

Core Strengths and Character Challenges (3: Courage)

Though more time-intensive, this is perhaps the most important and impacting Life Practice. It requires students to take an online survey called the VIA Survey-Youth. VIAS-Y and the adult version were the first character tests developed in 2003. The VIA surveys have inspired over 7 million participants by showing them their top 5 Core Strengths as well as their lower-scoring strengths or what I call their Character Challenges.

You may have students take the VIAS-Y in class or make it homework. Make sure they print and/or save their results in a PDF. This is essential because they will use these results for Life Practices in chapter 8: Leadership, chapter 13: Insight, and the optional post-course Besties (shown below).

You may want them to view this 3-minute video that explains the concept of core strengths. It is aimed at adults so you may want to preview it.

<http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Reports-Courses-Resources/VIA-Video-Resources/Me-at-My-Best-Video>

The VIA Survey-Adult is the adult version. **Please take this for yourself to learn your strengths and challenges.** Then you will better understand this exercise and be able to answer your students' questions. It should take you 15-25 minutes.

You or a student may read the following description that is provided in the lesson:

“How do we know what are our Core Strengths? The *VIA Youth Survey* tells us. Research shows that we can use our character strengths to deal with and conquer life’s challenges.

“Our top 4-7 scores on the VIA Youth Survey are our Core Strengths. These are our “go to” strengths we can rely on to help us be happier, strengthen relationships, manage problems, boost confidence, reduce stress, and accomplish goals.

“Our last 4-7 strengths are our “C2’s” or character challenges. We can choose to grow in and develop these strengths to make us better, to develop stronger character and healthier relationships, and to improve our decision-making.

“Pair up with a friend and discuss these.

1. Check out your top 4-7 strengths and read their descriptions. Which did you already know were one of your strengths?
2. Which ones surprised you a little?
3. Which would you say are your Core Strengths? (You don’t have to choose all the first 7; pick the ones you believe are your primary strengths)
4. Look at your #18-24 strengths. Which did you already know were your C2s (Character Challenges)?
5. Which ones surprised you?

“Each of you has only 30-45 seconds to discuss each question. Go!”

Make sure you leave the questions showing during this time so students may follow them.

Best From Worst (4: Grit and Perseverance)

What is the worst suffering you have ever endured? For most of us, it might be missing a meal, or getting really sick or injured, or being treated poorly by parents, family, strangers, or friends. Most of our suffering isn’t as great as most people in the world. We have rarely gone hungry for weeks or months, or seen our parents murdered, or had to run for our lives because our country was being torn apart by war.

Yet all of us have had our own suffering and it was very bad to us. An ancient Jewish proverb says, “*Only the heart knows its own sorrow, and none can share in it.*” This means that, though we may know 10 other people whose lives are worse than ours, it is our own problems that really hurt us. Others may try to sympathize, but only we know how bad *we* hurt. That’s why I try never to say to someone who is suffering, “I know how you feel.” I really don’t know how they feel, but I know how awful I felt when I was suffering. I can say, “I’m sorry you are going through this.”

Often the best things in life emerge from the *worst*. This takes time and perhaps we miss the connection between the best and the worst if we don’t look for it. This is our Life Practice today:

Think of a bad experience you have had in the past. It doesn’t have to be the worst event in your life but one you considered bad at the time. Now think of all the after-effects of that bad experience. Was there some ‘best’ outcome that would never have happened without the ‘worst’ one?”

[If most of the class is struggling to think of one, someone who remembers one could share their story.]

Peer Chat: Pair up, preferably with someone you don't know well and discuss these.

What was the 'best' outcome that would never have happened without the 'worst' one?

How does this help you persevere in hardships and horrible life experiences?

Go Cold (5: Self-Control by Mark Liston)

Sometimes people say or do things that hurt us. Perhaps they do it on purpose. Sometimes they don't intend to hurt us and don't know they have. Often they think they are being funny.

At these moments, we can either react or respond. Reacting is speaking and acting on our first emotions. If we are hurt, our first emotions are usually a "fight or flight" reaction. Either way, our brain tends to shut down and we do things we may later regret. Reacting also deepens the hurt we feel and increases the chance that the experience will hurt us for a long time. We call this "trauma."

When we react from our hurt, we often lose control of our emotions. We do things that, if we thought more, we might not have done. Whether the person wanted to hurt us or not, we let them control us if we react!

Our other option is to respond. Responding is thinking about the situation, making a smart choice, and acting intelligently. Rather than being controlled by others, we are practicing Self-Control.

How can we respond rather than react? One way is to practice a technique called Go Cold. Have you ever noticed that, when you are hurt, embarrassed, or angry, you tend to feel hot? This is our body's way of dealing with stress.

When we Go Cold, we choose to respond rather than react by thinking about the stressful situation. First, we think about what was said and done, what was intended, and was the person right or wrong. Then we decide what our best response.

For this Life Practice, recall a time when someone hurt you. Though it was in the past, it may still make you hot. Choose to Go Cold and answer the three questions:

1. What was said and done?
2. What was intended?
3. Were they right or wrong?

Then decide what would have been your best response.

Perhaps you don't know these answers or what you should have done. Choose the best way to figure them out, either thinking through them in a blog or chatting with a friend.

Active Listening (6: Humility)

Pair up with someone you don't know well. Either can start by sharing in 20-30 seconds something good that happened to them recently. The listener should respond to what the speaker shares in a visibly positive, supportive, and helpful way: a) Look the speaker in the eye the whole time they talk, b) Listen carefully for all details, c) Acknowledge with nods, facial expressions, and with "Uh-huh," "Right," "Really?" etc.

After the first speaker shares, s/he changes roles with the listener. Then if you like, tell the class what you experienced and learned about your listening style.

Some of you do this anytime a friend is talking to you. Others may have never thought about how they come across to someone who is talking to them. By the way, this works great when you are first meeting someone or are attracted to someone and want to get to know them better.

Lead With Strengths (8: Leadership)

Dr. Mark Liston says, "When I was a young counselor, I was discouraged. I sat in my little office all day listening to people's problems but wasn't doing anything great or changing the world. Then an older man looked me in the eye and said that I was a world changer – not by leading masses of people but by leading one person at a time to a new life of inner strength and peace. He changed my life that day."

On our own, we may have trouble seeing how our strengths can be used to lead. Another's insight can help. It's fun and meaningful to help each other come up with ideas for how to better use our strengths.

Right now, you have an opportunity to change a friend's life in a good way.

- Pair up with someone you know and share your Core Strengths with one another (refer to Life Practice in the first Courage lesson).
- Each of you then shares a way s/he has seen the other use one or two of the strengths to lead a group, team, or friends.
- If you can't come up with one for your friend, team up and together think of a way that the strength could be used to lead others.

It's really encouraging when someone we know tells us how they have seen us using our strengths. Enjoy sharing creative ideas you come up with for your partner's strengths.

Savoring (9: Confidence and Respect)

Savor means "to enjoy or appreciate something, especially by dwelling on it." Originally to savor meant to enjoy food but we can savor many things: The feel of sunshine on a cold day, a hot shower, or an A on a test.

Many of us don't take the time to savor our accomplishments or other's recognition of them. Savoring the good we achieve is an important part of building our confidence and self-respect. Savoring others' accomplishments is part of our humility, generosity, and kindness.

We may need practice to learn how to savor. This exercise provides a fun opportunity to talk about our experience and wrap our heads around this concept.

Peer Chat: Pair up and take the tasty treat provided for you (Thanks, teacher!). Eat it slower than anything you have ever eaten and s-a-v-o-r it. Describe its textures (thick, gooey, crispy), flavors (sweet, tart, salty) and distinct ingredients (chips, frosting, sprinkles).

Now think of one accomplishment, experience of awe, observation of beauty, seeing the majesty of a wild animal, or recognizing the excellence and achievements of others. How would it help if you savored your and others accomplishments this way? How would it help you enjoy life if you savored its special moments of beauty and amazement this way?

Arrival of Happiness (11: Love and Care)

Ask 100 people on the street what they really want in life (that's not homework!) and the most common answer will be, "I want to be happy." Then ask them if they are happy and most will say yes, though many with some added comment like, "Most of the time," or "... But I'd be happier if I were rich."

Allan K. Chalmers said, "The grand essentials of happiness are: something to do, something to love, and something to hope for."

This Life Practice involves three questions. Let's read and think about them silently without answering for 15 seconds to allow them time to sink in:

- a. When will you be happy?
- b. What will it take to make you happy?
- c. What prevents you from being happy now?

Pair up but **don't** discuss these questions. Instead, discuss:

What is one thing within your ability, that you could do now, that will result in you being happier?

My Greatest Strength and Growth (13: Tolerance and Discernment)

C2: Character Challenge Strengths

Achievement Character	Relationship Character	Motivation Character
Responsibility	Confidence/Respect	Love of Learning
Honesty and Integrity	Kindness and Empathy	Peace
Courage	Love and Care	Purpose and Spirituality
Grit and Perseverance	Trust and Social Intelligence	Gratitude
Self-Control	Insight	Optimism
Humility	Fairness	Wisdom and Decision-making
Excellence and Achievement	Forgiveness	Curiosity and Creativity
Leadership	Cooperation	Awe and Humor

Gather into groups of four.

First, review the list of C2 Strengths below to answer this: What is your greatest strength? Each shares what they believe is their greatest strength. After each story, one of the other three is a responder who identifies a time when s/he saw the speaker use or show that strength. Hopefully each of you will take an opportunity to be the responder (1 minute/person, 4 minutes total)

Then this is repeated with each sharing what you believe is the strength that was your greatest character challenge when the year began. One of the other three identifies a time when s/he saw the speaker use or show that strength. (1 minute/person, 4 minutes total)

Best Self Story (14: Fairness)

Psychology discusses the idea of our moral belief system as a part of our "best possible self" or BPS. This means that, when we are 'making all the right moves' and choices, we will act according to our ideal beliefs. Our BPS (best possible self) is the person we believe we truly are and the basis of our self-worth.

[Optional story to share if you have time:]

Kody was a quiet guy but a great baseball player who played for a traveling team. Just after their season ended, he went to the neighborhood field where he and the other guys played while growing up. His old buddies were glad to see him and picked teams for a game. A bigger guy named Ben had always been a jerk and hadn't matured much. Ben started picking on Mason, a smaller kid, by calling him names, knocking off his cap, and tripping him.

Everyone was getting annoyed at this when Ben stole Mason's glove and wouldn't give it back. When Mason tried to take it from him, Ben slapped him in the face with the heavy glove.

Suddenly Ben was lifted off his feet from behind... by quiet Kody! While Ben flailed his arms and legs, Kody carried him over the outfield grass to the short fence and threw him off the field. Ben respected Kody but was stunned by this. "What did you do that for?" he whined.

Kody replied, "You are taking the fun out of this game for all of us so you need to leave. Come back when you've learned to treat people the way you want to be treated. Until then, we don't want you here."

The other guys cheered and clapped. Kody was acting as his BPS.

Let's share a story of a time when we were our BPS. Choose ONE of these:

- When were you tempted to do something you believed was really bad but instead chose to do the right thing?
- When did you have an opportunity to do something really good for someone else and you chose to do it instead of doing something fun for yourself like playing a video game or hanging out with friends?
- When did you see someone being treated unfairly and stood up for them and did what you could to stop the injustice?
- When was someone weaker than you and you had the power to help them and did?

Pair up and share. After each story, the listener tells the character strengths that the speaker used while being his/her BPS.

REACH to Forgive (E. Worthington; 15: Forgiveness)

Forgiveness is a deeply personal and, for many, a spiritual experience. You may be ready right now to forgive someone who has hurt you. You may *not* be ready to forgive yet. Because of these truths, this is a blogging exercise instead of a peer chat.

First read through and think about REACH. Then go through the five steps, writing out your thoughts as you want to express them regarding a person who hurt you and whom you resent. Take whatever action you can take at this time. You may have to go through these steps numerous times before you reach emotional forgiveness toward the person.

Please remember that getting over the pain they caused you comes through forgiveness. This exercise helps people reach emotional forgiveness and thus healing.

Each letter of REACH stands for an action step you can use to gain freedom from bitterness. *If you cannot do all five steps*, do those you can and think or pray about doing the next step later.

Recall the hurt done to you as accurately as you can.

Empathize by trying to put yourself in the situation of the person who wronged you to understand why they did this to you.

Altruism is remembering a time when you hurt someone and they forgave you, so you can have strength to offer the gift of forgiveness to the one who hurt you.

Commit by saying out loud or perhaps to another that you forgive this person.

Hold on to your forgiveness by reminding yourself that you made the choice to forgive.

Let Worries Go (18: Awareness and Peace)

When a problem or issue arises in our lives, we must be proactive. This means we don't ignore it or worry about it but *do* something to overcome the problem. Here are proven steps to help you overcome fear and worry.

First, choose confidence. Remind yourself of a similar problem in the past that you overcame. Recall what you did to deal with the issue and say to yourself: "I overcame then; I will overcome this problem now."

Second, use your resources. Think of your strengths that you could use to address the problem. For example, if it's a conflict, think of your Relationship Strengths (Kindness, Forgiveness, Social Intelligence, Respect, Discernment, Fairness, Cooperation, and Love). How could you use one or two of those to deal with the issue? If it's a decision, use Creativity, Curiosity, or Wisdom to figure it out. "Wyatt knows I've been fair with him and respected him in the past. I'll use these strengths to deal with our conflict."

Third, develop your plan to address the issue. Get others help if you need it. "I'll take Jillian with me to ask Wyatt if we can talk through this and work it out." If it is something out of your control, go to the next step.

Fourth, see a good outcome. Imagine all the ways the problem could work out. If it is out of your control, this is the best you can do. If you can affect the problem, follow your plan and see what happens. If you foresee potential problems, revise your plan to make it successful.

Finally, take a deep breath in, then let it out as you let the whole issue go. If you pray, "Cast all your worries on God, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). If you don't pray, use your hands to push the worry and concern off of your shoulders. You could also use self-talk, saying something like, "Let it go. I release it out of my mind and body. I've done all I can and now I'm

glad to let it go.”

Life Purpose (19: Purpose and Spirituality)

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” Ever heard that one? It’s kind of a frustrating question for many. When I was a teen, I had no idea what I wanted to be. My dad was an undertaker and I sure didn’t want to be that!!

Why do adults ask that question? Maybe they want you to think about your **purpose in life**. They know that you will “catch fire when you aspire.” That means you will be happier and more motivated when you *aspire* to accomplish a meaningful purpose.

Let’s use our creativity. A time travel monitor was invented where you can see into the future as if you were watching your life on TV.

You set the monitor to warp 30 years into your future. You are 30 years older and are achieving your ideal life’s purpose. You are successful and make a good living. Take 30 seconds to think through the following questions. Then pair up and discuss your answers.

What are your moral values and spiritual beliefs?

What are you doing to pursue your life purpose?

What have you achieved?

3 Good Things (20: Gratitude)

Write 3 good things that happened to you in the last 24 hours. In “The Good Old Days” when your grandparents and great-grandparents were your age, they often heard people say, “Count your blessings.” This was the title of a popular Christian song and a theme of others.

Interestingly, Positive Psychology research found that a simple exercise of identifying 3 Good Things that happen in your day has amazing effects. In one study, 91% of patients in a psychiatric ward suffering for many months from moderate to severe depression who did this exercise improved so much that their doctors had to change their diagnosis. Some said they were no longer depressed.

As a result, this exercise has become part of Soldier Fitness Training for the US Army. Are you willing to give it a try?

First, be prepared to record a few answers. Write down your current level of happiness, well-being, or sense that your life is good. Use a scale of 0 to 10 with 10 being ‘Fantastic’.

Second, write down 3 good things that happened to you in the last 24 hours. They can be simple, everyday things (“I turned in a tough assignment in Math”) or big achievements (“I made the team!”).

Third, pair up and alternate sharing one good thing and listening to your partner share one. When you listen, “acknowledge” each good thing briefly with a word (Wow, Great, etc.) or gesture (clap, fist pump, thumb up, etc.).

Fourth, now rate your level of happiness or goodness of life again from 0-10. Did it change? Share this with your partner.

(When finished) Here is an easy experiment you can try. Start by writing down your overall level of happiness for the previous week. Just before you go to bed, record **3 Good Things** every day for 7 days. After a week, again determine your level of happiness and compare it to your level a week earlier. How do they compare?

If you have been feeling down, you may be surprised how much this helps. It’s free and easy so why not give it a shot?

My Favorite (22: Wisdom and Decision-Making)

Who is your favorite person in the whole world? This is a fun and meaningful exercise:

First, the person must be someone you know or have known in the flesh, not a religious figure or rock star or famous athlete or actor. Think of your favorite older family member, neighbor, friend’s parent, parents’ friend, or person at church, synagogue, or mosque. It could be your best friend.

Think about them for a while and write down all the characteristics that make them your favorite. Some may not be a character strength such as: The music they love, the way they talk, the way that they are old but still cool, or things that only they say. Others may be expressions of character such as the way they care about you, listen to you, or respect you even though you are young.

Now pair up and discuss which 2-3 of those characteristics or strengths you want in your life. Then tell what you must begin to do now to develop them.

LOL (24: Awe and Humor; by Mark Liston)

Here are the instructions for this lesson:

“Today almost every English-speaking person knows what LOL means.

“For this Life Practice, pair up and join with another pair. Each person who wants to tells a joke or a brief funny story that is appropriate for school. If possible, perhaps you could show a 15-30 second video. The goal is for your joke to make everyone Laugh Out Loud.

“If you have time, your foursome can choose the best from your group and have the person share it with the other groups. Let’s have some fun!”

You can see that this lesson has some danger areas: Inappropriate humor, hurt feelings due to critical humor, and behavior getting out of hand, to name three. Some teaching options:

- Have a humor contest where students who want to participate submit the joke to a small group of peers in the class. The group picks the best for presentation to the class. Of course, you get to review them also for appropriateness.
- Make it a project for each pair to find the joke they want to share. If they choose not to participate, it’s fine. You should get enough to have plenty of laughs.

If you have a better idea, use it and let us at Liston Group know how it went. Please email your optional lesson to info@ListonGroup.org.

Besties (Post-Training Review; by Mark Liston)

C2 is such a large curriculum that many teachers desire a post-course reflection. Here is one that you may adapt to your use. Here is the description that can be read to or summarized for the students:

“Now that you have finished **C2: Character Challenge**, let’s reflect on our experiences with this training. Here is a list of the 24 C2 character strengths to view as you think of your answers to the questions about your ‘**Besties**’. You may want to write down your answers as a record of your character growth during this time.

C2: Character Challenge Strengths

Achievement Character	Relationship Character	Motivation Character
Responsibility	Confidence/Respect	Love of Learning
Honesty and Integrity	Kindness and Empathy	Peace
Courage	Love and Care	Purpose and Spirituality
Grit and Perseverance	Trust and Social Intelligence	Gratitude
Self-Control	Insight	Optimism

Humility	Fairness	Wisdom and Decision-making
Excellence and Achievement	Forgiveness	Curiosity and Creativity
Leadership	Cooperation	Awe and Humor

Best Insight: Which of these 24 C2 chapters do you believe most improved your awareness and insight? What about it was so helpful?

Best Growth: In which of these strengths do you believe you grew the most? What is different about you in this area of character: Your beliefs, thinking, and behavior?

Best Motivation: In which of these areas are you most motivated to grow and improve in the next 6 months? If you grew in this strength, what would be different about your life?

Additional/Optional Question:

Did your involvement with C2 – the Briefings, movies, Peer Chat, or Life Practice – change your life? If so, how? If not, why?

C2 History (1967 to Today)

While *C2: Character Challenge* was copyrighted in 2007, its history began in 1967. Then an abused, bullied, poor seventh-grader with ADHD was without hope. “Sonny” had two shirts, one pair of pants, and shoes with holes. No one would let him sit with them in the cafeteria. He sank deeper into depression, unable to even eat for weeks. The taunt “Reject” haunted him.

Summer break was a relief and a new school helped. One day a cheerleader told Sonny, “You aren’t as bad as you think.” She encouraged him to ask for Divine help and he did.

The help came immediately in three forms:

1. Awareness of his insecurity, words, and behavior that caused others to reject him;
2. Character training that pointed him in a healthy direction; and
3. Support from a few adults though he still had no friends.

In months, Sonny transformed into a teen who didn’t care if some rejected him and enjoyed his healthy relationships. He was more confident and happier. His humor blossomed and his courage and resilience were evident. The nickname, a slur in his Southern town, was dropped as he became well-liked. His last name was the same as a recent black heavyweight boxing champion, Sonny Liston. Now his classmates called him Mark.

Mark enjoyed accomplishments in football, drama, and music during high school. He completed college, seminary, and graduate school with high honors. Mark wanted to help teens, becoming a youth director and later a professional counselor.

In 2005, an adolescent judge asked Mark to create a character training curriculum for teens in state custody. The judge said, “Most of these kids are here because of what their parents did wrong. We feed, clothe, and educate them, but we aren’t giving them a life. We have them for a short window of time. If we don’t help them, they will grow up to be deadbeats or criminals like their parents.”

Mark spent and sacrificed hundreds of thousands of dollars to create, promote, research, and publish *C2*. Completed in 2007, *C2* (as of 2016) is used in 32 US states and four other countries. This is *C2*’s second edition though it has been updated and reformatted numerous times.