

Reflecting on PERSEVERANCE

#32

Building
Character
& RESILIENCE



Self Mastery

Perseverance is the strength to see something through till the end without giving up or losing heart. Having perseverance doesn't mean you never feel discouraged, have moments of doubt or fear, or face adversity. It means pressing on *despite* these obstacles.

Perseverance is:

- Not quitting until the job is done and done well
- Overcoming laziness and distractions to finish a task we have begun
- Knowing how to give ourselves reasons to stay on task

People who persevere see the bigger picture and are willing to delay instant gratification for long-term fulfillment. Developing this character trait often means doing the exact opposite of what you naturally feel like doing. Tempted to ditch your assignment due tomorrow to go out with friends? Perseverance says to sit down and focus until the task is done and *then* go have fun.

Why do we need perseverance?

Those with the character trait of perseverance tend to lead happier, more fulfilled lives because they finish things (whether it's a tough soccer game, an assignment or even a university/TAFE qualification) and reap the benefits of a job well done. Defining your long-term goals (what you want out of life) means that you will be more willing and motivated to make wise, short-term decisions and necessary sacrifices to achieve your dreams.

Suggested Activities

For All Students

- 1 Ask your students to think about:
 - a. Do I push through to finish a task or get frustrated and give up when things don't go my way?
 - b. When was a time I displayed perseverance? How did it make me feel?
 - c. Is there anything that I regret quitting? Can I take it up again and finish it?

Junior-Middle School Students

2 Hard won success

'Many of life's failures are people who didn't realise how close they were to success when they gave up.'
Thomas Edison (1847-1931)

Research

- a. Investigate the struggle, life and achievements of Thomas Edison, inventor.
- b. Come to class with five facts.



Reflecting on PERSEVERANCE

3 What takes perseverance?

Activities most needing perseverance					
	School work and study	Family life	Sport and fitness	Other interests	Friendships and social life
1					
2					
3					
4					

Group work

- Compare notes with your friends.
- What were the most common responses in each category?
- Compare your best strategies to persevere to find the most common response.

4 What is will power?

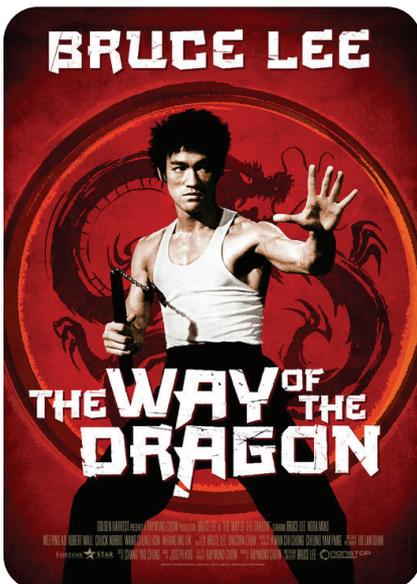
Consider the following view:

'There is no such thing as a personality with a weak will... rather it comes down to clear recognition of goals, honest resolution, and a certain degree of training in making decisions.' Viktor Frankl (1905-1997)

Forum

- Do you think there is such a thing as will power?
- Frankl breaks will power down into clear goals, honest determination and practice. Does that work for you?
- What can we learn from these comments below?
 - 'I am weak willed when I want to be, and when I don't want to be, I am not weak-willed.' (Comment of a patient to his psychologist)
 - 'I lack self-motivation when it comes to getting my work done!' (Comment of one secondary student.)

Senior High School Students



5 Bruce Lee on perseverance

About will power and perseverance he wrote:

'Recognising the influence of my subconscious mind over my power of will, I shall take care to submit to it a clear and definite picture of my clear purpose in life and all minor purposes leading to my major purpose, and I shall keep this picture constantly before my subconscious mind by repeating it daily.' Bruce Lee (1940-1973)

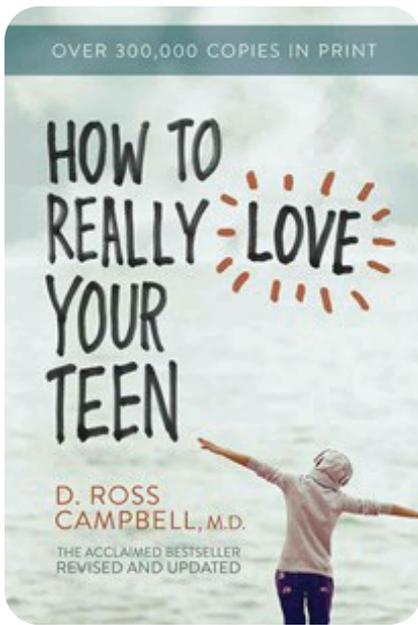
Many regard Bruce Lee as the greatest ever practitioner of martial arts.

Here is Bruce Lee speaking: <https://youtu.be/cJMwBwFj5nQ>

Here is one fan's understanding of these words: 'Here's my take: Empty your mind - Get rid of all distractions and focus. Listen, be formless, shapeless - don't be rigid and tense. Easily knocked over. Water takes the form of its container - Improvise. Adapt. Overcome.'

Reflect

- How can you apply this determination to your studies?
- What is your clear purpose in life? Does it reflect another important truth about human beings that we are happiest if we learn how to live for others? Are all your other goals subordinated to your clear purpose? Or are they competing?
- Can you summarise your clear purpose in one sentence?



6 Keep working on relationships

'Most adolescent problems can be alleviated or rectified by correcting tensions in the parent-child relationship.' Dr Ross Campbell. *How to Really Love Your Teen.*

Discuss in groups

Elect a spokesperson to report back positive strategies to the class.

- Dr Ross Campbell's advice is for parents, but what can you do?
- What can teenagers do to keep trying to improve the communication at home?



7 Keeping a sense of humour

'When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on!'
Franklin D Roosevelt (1882-1945)

Franklin D. Roosevelt knew a little about coping in adversity. Despite the fact that he spent much of his time in a wheelchair, he was the US president during the darkest days of the Second World War. See his words here in response to the attack on Pearl Harbour. (NB the Japanese attack was masterminded by a militarist clique that controlled Japan after murdering their way to power in the early 1930s.) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IK8gYGg0dkE>

Forum

- When have you witnessed the humour of others in difficulty?
- Has it helped?
- Why is it important to keep calm and have a sense of humour when things get tough?