



THE SCIENCE OF CHARACTER

DISCUSSION GUIDE AGES 15-18

If you haven't watched the 8 minute film *The Science of Character*, you can [watch it here](#). Then dive in:

*Please feel free to tailor the language as appropriate for each age group.

1. Take a look at the periodic table of character strengths at the end of this document. What are your five strongest character strengths?
2. Notice where your strengths lie. Are they all in one particular area (in, say, the Wisdom or Courage column) or are they spread out? What do you make of that?
3. How can you use your character strengths to improve your life? How can you use them to improve your community?
4. Now expand the list of your character strengths to twelve and make a pie chart out of them. Which character strength is your biggest slice? Which is the smallest?
5. The science behind character development shows two things: First, you should focus on the strengths you have, and second, develop the strengths you'd like to have. With that in mind, look back at the table of character strengths. What are three character strengths you'd like to develop?
6. What are some steps you can take to develop those three character strengths?
7. Different cultures value different character strengths. What are the most valued character strengths in your culture?

8. What character strengths are valued most at your school? Are these the same as the character strengths most valued in your home, or are they different?
9. Who do you admire most in the world? And what are the character strengths you admire in them?
10. As the film notes, working on our character strengths has been important since ancient times. Can you think of any myths that illustrate the importance of a particular character strength?
11. What character strengths do you think are important in the digital age? Can you think of something you or someone else posted online that demonstrated a particular character strength?
12. The film quotes a statement Frank Outlaw made in 1977:
 - a. "Watch your thoughts, they become words;
 - b. watch your words, they become actions;
 - c. watch your actions, they become habits;
 - d. watch your habits, they become character;
 - e. watch your character, it becomes your destiny."
 - f.
 - g. How would you update that today?
 - h. Watch your texts, they become _____
 - i. Watch your tweets, they become _____
 - j. Watch your Instagrams, they become _____
 - k. Watch your comments, they become _____
 - l. Watch your Facebook posts, they become _____
13. Given that the Internet allows a lot of anonymity, and permits people to try on different personas, what happens to our character when we're online? Do our character strengths remain constant?
14. The film describes a fixed mindset (when you think you can't change who you are) and a growth mindset (when you believe you can change and improve things about yourself). Is there an area in your life that you have a fixed mindset about, like "I'm no good at sports," or "I just can't do math"? Can you think of a way you can use your character strengths to improve in that area?
15. The film discusses the ways you can develop your character strengths in your day-to-day life. Can you think of some ways you can develop your character strengths in your online life?

16. Think about a time when you failed. What happened? How did you feel about it at the time, and how do you feel about it now?
17. As the film mentions, failure can be a good thing—we learn by failing. Think of an activity you might fail at the first time but want to try anyway: snowboarding, public speaking, a dance class. What would it be? What could you learn by failing?
18. If our character strengths and our abilities aren't fixed, that means we could, potentially, achieve just about anything. Think really, really big: If you could achieve *anything*, what would you do?
19. The film suggests we can affect other people's character strengths, too. Do you agree? Can character be contagious? How?
20. FAIL and EPIC FAIL have become Internet memes. How is failing on the Internet different from failing in real life? Can you learn and develop character strengths from Internet fails, too?
21. The film ends by asking you to complete this sentence: I want to be _____ . What do you want to be? What character strengths will help you achieve that, and how will you use them?

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FOLLOW UP DISCUSSION GUIDE AGES 15-18: CHECK-IN

A little while ago, you watched *The Science of Character*. Let's check back in and see what's changed for you since then

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1. *The Science of Character* discusses the character strength movement and its focus on the things that are going well. What's gone well for you recently?
2. Now let's talk about things going wrong. The film shows that failure isn't always a bad thing; with a growth mindset, it can help us learn and improve. Think of something that didn't go how you hoped it would in the past few months. Can you think of a way it might lead to a success?
3. We get even stronger when we help others strengthen their character too. In the past month, have you done anything to help others be strengthen their character? What was it?
4. Take a look at the "Periodic Table of Character Strengths" below. In the past month, has your own personal periodic table of character strengths changed? Have any character strengths gotten stronger or weaker?
5. Pick a character strength from the Periodic Table that you want to work on. What can you do in the next month to make it stronger?

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FOLLOW UP DISCUSSION GUIDE AGES 15-18: CHECK-OUT

Time for a wrap-up. These questions will help you think about how your own character has developed this year.

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1. What did you do in the past year that you're most proud of?
2. What character strengths did you use to accomplish this?
3. Did you see any evidence of the growth mindset -- for example, did you need to develop new strengths and skills to achieve it?
4. What's your biggest goal for next year?
5. What character strengths will help you achieve it?