



## OPEN - HEARTED

To fully express and display warmth and kindness.

**“The true philosopher and the true poet are one, and a beauty, which is truth, and a truth, which is beauty, is the aim of both.”**

– Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nature

In order to understand the truth one must possess an open-heart and be willing to learn and experience the world as it exists. What inspires you to lead with your heart and openly connect with family, friends, and classmates? When your heart connects openly with others and you allow the world in, you are able to experience love, kindness and vulnerability. There is truth and beauty in an open-heart.

## Conversation Starters

- What does it mean to have an open-heart?
- One way to maintain an open-heart and accept what is true about yourself is to reframe negative experiences. This means taking a negative experience and changing how you think about it. It means changing your thoughts. So a negative thought is something like “I can’t do this”, “this is impossible”, “I’m not good at this”, or “Other people are better than me at this”. A positive thought is “I can do this”, “this is definitely possible” “I am good at this” or “I’m just as good as anybody else”.
- Have your students share ideas for how to maintain an open-heart when negativity enters into the classroom. How can thoughts be reframed so everyone has a positive experience?

## The Learning

Have the students answer these questions for themselves and a character they have been introduced to through their reading. Maintaining an open-heart allows us to understand and connect with others and to experience the world with love and kindness. This creates safe spaces for individuals to show up vulnerable and willing to share their true selves.

1. **How do you let people know you care about them?**

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2. **What emotions come up for you the most during the day? Do you allow yourself to truly feel them?**

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3. **What does it mean to be vulnerable and how have you/ a character demonstrated vulnerability?**

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4. **What tools/ strategies do you/ a character use to help you feel better if you feel stress or worry?**

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**“Feeling is not selective, I keep telling you that. You can’t feel pain, you aren’t gonna feel anything else, either.”**

– Judith Guest, *Ordinary People*

**“This self-respect and sense of self-worth, the innermost armament of the soul, lies at the heart of humanness; to be deprived of it is to be dehumanized, to be cleaved from, and cast below, mankind. Men subjected to dehumanizing treatment experience profound wretchedness and loneliness and find that hope is almost impossible to retain. Without dignity, identity is erased. In its absence, men are defined not by themselves, but by their captors and the circumstances in which they are forced to live.”**

– Laura Hillenbrand, *Unbroken:  
A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption*

### Open - Hearted Assignment

Have your students write a letter to their five year old self. Ask them to share what they have learned about themselves, the world around them and the importance of practicing self-respect and knowing their self-worth.

The assignment is designed to get students thinking about who they are, what is important to them, how they view themselves (their self-perception) and their place in the world. They are exploring how and where they fit into their school community.

While building this awareness they are hopefully coming closer to their truth, more confident in who they are and their ability to communicate their truth.

