

# Teaching values for life!

A six-part series by David Koutsoukis

## 6. Be the community kind!

### Encourage your students to become positive contributors to society.

Tommy Swengo was a refugee from Somalia who had escaped from appalling conditions in his homeland to live in Australia. The values in the refugee camp where he lived were to lie, steal and be violent—just to be able to survive. Tommy hadn't long been in Australia when he had an interesting experience during a shopping trip with his mother. As he walked through the shopping centre he found a trolley with an interesting-looking brown paper bag lying at the bottom. When he opened it he found \$13 000 in cash, a fortune for a recent refugee—imagine all the things he could buy! Well, to cut a long story short, Tommy handed the money in to the police and the rightful owner was found. This was extremely well received in the local community, there was all sorts of media coverage and Tommy became a minor celebrity. A journalist was interviewing Tommy one day and asked, 'Tommy, what made you hand the money in?' to which Tommy replied, 'A voice in my head told me it was the right thing to do'.

This story has two implications for this article. Firstly, the 'voice in my head' is a great metaphor for what positive values are all about: embedded thoughts that guide us towards positive actions; and secondly, 'doing the right thing' is what being 'the community kind' is all about. As educators, we have the great opportunity to help our students develop the 'voice in their heads' and to encourage them to 'do the right thing'.

### Key pointers

How to encourage your students to think positively, and respect and help others.

Encourage your students to:

- 6.1 behave responsibly
- 6.2 respect authority
- 6.3 follow rules
- 6.4 be honest and seek the truth
- 6.5 show integrity—develop a sense of what's morally and ethically right ... and act that way
- 6.6 be useful
- 6.7 get involved in the community
- 6.8 strive for justice and a 'fair go' for all
- 6.9 share with and care for those in need
- 6.10 support reconciliation
- 6.11 contribute to research
- 6.12 support freedom
- 6.13 strive for peace.

Download free 'Be the community kind' lesson plans at [www.sixkindsofbest.com](http://www.sixkindsofbest.com).

### Encouraging responsible behaviour

When the six kinds of best concept was first developed, we actually played with the idea of having a seventh kind of best, 'The responsible kind'. After much discussion, we decided that behaving responsibly was part of being a positive member of the community. So, a key part of being the community kind lies in behaving responsibly.

We need to continually reinforce the fact that to have a positive community everyone needs to behave responsibly, respect authority figures (teachers, umpires, police etc.), follow rules and be honest. And we have to do this in a way that doesn't sound like rhetoric to our students.

### Moving from 'knowing good' to 'doing good'

Getting students to behave responsibly has always been a great challenge for educators, especially in recent years. The trick lies in motivating students to develop from 'knowing good' to 'doing good'. You can't just tell students

what they should do and then expect that they'll do it, and a having a poster on the wall won't change their behaviour. To explain how we can encourage good behaviour I have developed what I call the 'Seven phases of values development'. This outlines a process that students need to understand before positive values are embedded. The seven phases are:

1. awareness – students become aware of what the value is (but not why it is good to 'have' this value)
2. discovery – students discover the benefits of applying this value
3. desire – students actually want to make use of the value (the crucial phase)
4. knowledge – students are taught how to use the value
5. skills – students are given the opportunity to employ the value in real-life situations
6. consolidation – good values are reinforced in context; i.e. 'catch 'em being good'
7. habit – the student displays the value most of the time.

This is just a brief summary of the process, but the main thing to recognise is that we won't get kids to follow rules by just telling them what to do or by putting a poster up on the wall. We are more likely to see positive behaviour if we have strategies in place for each of the seven phases.

### Making a contribution—a basic need of humans

Many years ago, I read *First things first* by Stephen Covey et al. and loved their spin on the 'basic needs' of humans. They talk about the four basic needs as being physical (food, clothing, shelter etc), mental (learning, stimulation, resilience etc), social (to love, be loved etc) and spiritual (identity, purpose, contribution etc). In my work with students who are not coping well with school and life, I often find that it is the spiritual need that is lacking. Being 'the community kind' helps us fulfill this spiritual need. For example, being involved in a community project helps shape our identity, gives us purpose



and allows us to make a contribution. So, by encouraging our students to be the community kind, we are helping them fulfill their basic needs.

## Learning heroes

As mentioned in previous articles, the use of 'learning heroes' as role models are a great way to teach values. There are some great examples in history of people who have demonstrated what it means to be 'the community kind'. These include Mahatma Gandhi with his message of peace, Nelson Mandela with his push for equality and freedom, and the care and compassion of Mother Theresa and her fight against poverty. All three are good role models, but perhaps many of our students wouldn't see themselves making the self-sacrifices that these people made. For this reason, I believe it is also useful to use examples of people who have lead relatively normal lives but have still made a great contribution. For example, Fiona Stanley in health, Fiona Woods in medicine and perhaps you have some 'local heroes' in your area. I have heard some great success stories of students who have been inspired by local heroes they met as guest speakers. Inspirational people can help our students in the 'desire' phase of values development.

## Busy, but happy

I once read that Buddhists consider usefulness to be a key factor for happiness, and, given Covey et al.'s thoughts on the spiritual side of our basic needs, I would agree. My favourite response when people ask me 'How are you?' is 'I'm busy, but happy!' People generally laugh and say, 'Well, that's the main thing isn't it!?' I hope this article has given you a few insights on how you can help your students achieve 'the main thing'. So, all the best in your quest to help your students become 'the community kind'.

## Ten simple things you can do to encourage your students to be positive contributors to society

1. Organise a money chain to raise money for refugees.
2. Perform a concert for a nursing home.
3. Have a '10c jar', with all money going to cancer research.
4. Have a fundraising project to support a community event.
5. Invite a guest speaker from a community service club, such as Rotary or Lions.
6. Write a song or poem about peace. Perform it for others.
7. Celebrate 'Sorry day' or other reconciliation events.
8. 'Adopt' an older person (visit nursing homes).
9. Do a class project on local heroes.
10. Have a class citizenship (community kind) award.

## Give your children 'Six kinds of best'

This article is the sixth in a series of six articles based on the 'Six kinds of best' concept. The concept provides a simple framework to help teachers and parents articulate what good values are and gives students signposts to point them in the right direction when they need to make important decisions. By teaching the 'Six kinds of best' we are giving our children a simple, consistent and meaningful message that helps them remember what they need to do in order to become happy and successful individuals.

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## The Six kinds of best affirmation



[www.sixkindsofbest.com](http://www.sixkindsofbest.com)

## Seven ways to teach children to 'be the community kind'

1. Teach children the 'Six kinds of best' affirmation so they internalise the core values.
2. Articulate what 'being the community kind' means. See the key pointers. Put up a poster to remind students.
3. Teach lessons on the key pointers from the *Values education toolkit* books. Free downloads are available at <[www.sixkindsofbest.com](http://www.sixkindsofbest.com)>.
4. Use 'Six kinds of best' language; for example, if someone is doing the 'right thing' or making a positive contribution, say things like, 'Thanks Brian, that's being the community kind'.
5. Catch children acting responsibly or being community oriented. Give them an 'I am the community kind' sticker or certificate. Better still, get children to praise each other when they see examples of other children being the community kind.
6. Use an individual or class progress chart to reinforce positive examples of good behaviour or contribution.
7. Create a 'Be the community kind' class display.