PERSEVERANCE
Values for Living—Cadet Character Development Forum

INTRODUCTION

Grit is the ability to face life's challenges with a combination of vision, perseverance, and courage. Perseverance is refusing to give up on achieving a worthwhile vision, even when the going becomes difficult.

PRECLASS CHECKLIST

Prior preparation is essential to success. Please prepare the following well ahead of time:

- All media installed and checked out
- Handouts and materials prepared and available as per teacher instruction sheet
- Phase Three cadet orientation/training completed
- Participation awards such as candy or granola bar treats available
- Room arrangements complete

ATTENTION GETTER

LARGE GROUP (USE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING OR DEVELOP YOUR OWN. 5-7 MINUTES.)

Option 1: Media Clip: Sir Earnest Shackleton’s Antarctic Expedition. The media clip includes the entire story of Shackleton’s expedition, so no other introduction is needed. (Video in lesson folder)

Option 2: Without Media—Story of Sir Earnest Shackleton’s Antarctic Expedition

In August 1914, Sir Earnest Shackleton, a seasoned Antarctic explorer, set off on an expedition called the “Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition,” which intended to be the first to cross the Antarctic continent from one side to the other via the South Pole.

In December 1914 Shackleton and his crew of 27 other men set sail from the island of South Georgia, off the coast of Argentina on a ship named Endurance. Their plan was to cross the Weddell Sea to Vahsel Bay on the shore of Antarctica, where Shackleton would lead a team of six men across the Antarctic continent.
Before they could make landfall, they encountered ice, which grew increasingly worse until the ship was frozen fast in an ice floe on the 19th of January 1915. The Endurance and her crew slowly drifted northward in the ice floe for the next several months until warmer weather began to break up the ice in September 1915. Shackleton had hoped the ship would be set free from the ice floe so they could continue their expedition, but the movement of the fractured ice broke the Endurance apart, forcing the crew to abandon ship. On the 24th of October 1915, ice crushed the ship to the point where water began pouring in. Nearly a month later on November 21, the remains of the wrecked Endurance slipped away beneath the ice.

For about the next two months Shackleton and his crew camped on the fracturing ice floe until it finally broke in half and he ordered his crew to set sail through the ice in their three remaining lifeboats. For five sleepless days they labored at the oars until they made landfall on Elephant Island, an icy, uninhabited, mountainous island 346 miles from the spot where the Endurance sank and 780 miles from the help they needed on the island of South Georgia.

Elephant Island was far from normal shipping lanes and they had no means of communication, so Shackleton decided their only hope was for a small crew to set sail in one of the lifeboats and make for South Georgia. They improvised a wooden deck, masts, and sails on the strongest of the three lifeboats, the James Caird. Shackleton chose five men to accompany him on the dangerous voyage, including the two most likely to sow pessimism among the marooned remaining men if left on Elephant Island. They set sail on April 24, 1916, and spent fifteen harrowing days at sea, battered by constant storms as they mostly navigated by dead reckoning, the sky only clearing long enough for four sightings with a sextant.

When the shore of South Georgia finally appeared, they were unable to make land because of weather, and were forced to ride out a hurricane-tossed sea through the night, which constantly threatened to capsize their tiny 20' boat. The next day the sky cleared, and they were able to make land, only to learn they were on the opposite side of the island from civilization. Deciding against another launch of the James Caird, Shackleton and two of his crew set out on foot to cross the 32 miles of glaciated mountains that lay between them and the whaling station at Stromness. No one had ever crossed those mountains before and the only equipment they had was a 50’ rope and a carpenter’s adze they used as a makeshift ice axe. After 36 sleepless hours of travel over uncharted glaciers they stumbled into Stromness.

It took four attempts over four months to finally reach the marooned crew on Elephant Island, but Shackleton got every single man back to England alive. Antarctic Expeditions were known for low survival rates, but Shackleton was a different kind of leader. He refused to tolerate pessimism. He constantly told his men that his job was to get them all home alive and nothing—absolutely nothing would deter him from seeing that goal through to completion. Shackleton’s unwavering demonstration of perseverance over the eighteen months between the wreck of the Endurance on the ice floe and the rescue of his crew on Elephant Island is one of history’s greatest examples of leadership at its absolute finest.

**Option 3: Without Media—Story of Chaplain Robert Preston Taylor**, first “air chaplain” of CAP.

Chaplain Robert Preston Taylor joined the US Army and after an initial tour supporting the Army Air Corps in Louisiana, he was assigned to the Philippines as a Regimental Chaplain. After the Japanese invasion he retreated with the allied forces to the Bataan Peninsula where he was
awarded the Silver Star for bravery. After the surrender of United States and Philippine troops to the Japanese he was subjected to the Bataan Death March. During this march thousands of troops died. Stragglers or drop-outs were bayonetted or shot. When they arrived at the prison camp, he became the chaplain for the camp hospital where he ministered to over 10,000 patients. He was caught smuggling food and medicine to the prisoners and sentenced to fourteen weeks in solitary confinement, a place they called the “Hell Hole.” He survived the punishment and was placed on a ship to be transferred to Japan. Taylor was wounded when the ship was attacked by American forces. His wife had not heard whether he was dead or alive during his captivity and assumed him dead, so she remarried one month before he returned home following his captivity. He only learned of his wife’s remarriage upon his return. Taylor stayed in the military and became Civil Air Patrol’s first Chaplain. He continued his military career and retired as a two-star general.

**Option 4: Without Media—Personal Story.** Share a story from your own experience of how you adjusted your goals, persevered, and eventually were able to overcome obstacles to achieve a personal vision.

**OBJECTIVE**

*Perseverance* is a key character trait for success. The ability to keep going in pursuit of a vision in spite of obstacles is something that is demonstrated by all successful leaders. Perseverance often requires leaders to adjust their goals and “think outside the box” to come up with solutions to problems that seem insurmountable on the surface. If enough problems can be solved without giving up along the way, difficult objectives can be reached.

**UNDERSTANDING THE DESIRED BEHAVIOR**

**Definition of perseverance:** Continuing to do something or to try to do something even though it is difficult or other people want you to stop; continuing beyond the usual, expected, or normal time; not stopping or going away.

**Questions led By Phase 3 discussion leader**

- During the “attention getter” at the start of the lesson, how did you see perseverance demonstrated?

- What situations come to mind in your own life where perseverance would make the difference between success and failure? (Possible answers: Finishing school; promotion in CAP; getting accepted at a military academy or college)

- Who else in history has demonstrated great perseverance and what did they accomplish? (Possible answers: The Wright Brothers, Charles Lindbergh, Abraham Lincoln, Olympic athletes, Sir Winston Churchill, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)
APPLICATION OF THE BEHAVIOR TO THEIR LIVES

LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (15 MINUTES)

Suggested Questions:

• An old adage says, “No plan survives first contact with the enemy.” In pursuing any worthwhile vision, you will encounter roadblocks and blind alleys. As you persevere toward achieving your vision you will probably need to creatively adjust your goals to address the problems you encounter along the way. How did you see that demonstrated in the opening video or story?

• How does perseverance fit in each of CAP’s Core Values? (Have the cadets share if/how perseverance applies to each of the values. Get more than one answer for each value. If someone says perseverance does not apply, challenge it.)

• There are many things involved in progressing through CAP’s cadet program. Which of these many tasks do you see as most difficult for you to accomplish? How do you deal with those roadblocks so you can reach your vision for your CAP participation?

• Have there been times in your life where you had to choose if you were going to persevere or quit? What did you choose? What was the result?

• If someone lacks the positive character trait of perseverance, what kind of behavior do you think you would see?

ACTIVITY: PERSEVERANCE PROJECT

LED BY PHASE 3 CADETS (6 PEOPLE IN EACH GROUP RECOMMENDED. 20 MINUTES.)

• This will require some preparation before the meeting to gather the materials, selecting judges, and obtaining a prize. There should be a bag of materials for each small group of cadets (six cadets recommended per group). The bag should contain some materials such as heavy paper, small blocks of wood, crayons, scotch tape, glue guns if available, masking tape, paper straws, paper cups, and anything else creative you can come up with. The materials will be used to construct a free-standing object.

• Select two or three senior members to do the judging. They should be given a judge sheet with these two entries: best use of materials and how well the object portrays the message of perseverance. Use a ten-point scale for your scoring.

• In your out-brief make note of any groups that thought “outside the box” and made use of materials beyond those provided to construct their object.

• Have a prize for the best group – maybe energy bars or something created to represent perseverance.

**Project instructions for the groups:**

Construct an object that represents your small group’s idea of perseverance. You will have 20 minutes to construct your “object” or “statue.” At the end of that time someone from your small group needs to share with the rest of the squadron how your object portrays the spirit of
perseverance. There will be a group of senior members who will judge the “objects” in terms of best use of materials and message. The object will need to stand on the floor, it cannot be just held. A prize will be awarded for the best one.

LESSON SUMMARY AND WRAP-UP

LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (5 MINUTES)

Listen to this story and see if you can tell me who it is. You have all heard of him.

Let me share the person’s life history with you. There is probably no better example of perseverance in spite of failure that I know of. This was a man who failed in business at the age of 21; was defeated in a legislative race at age 22; failed again in business at age 24; experienced the death of his sweetheart at age 26; had a nervous breakdown at age 27; lost a congressional race at age 34; lost a senatorial race at age 45; failed in an effort to become vice-president at age 47; lost a senatorial race at age 49.

Before you answer, would you call him a failure? (Wait for them to identify Lincoln.) Of course, Abraham Lincoln was elected president of the United States at age 52. Many say he was one of the best, if not the best President in our history. What made him great was he persisted and learned from his failures. With each one he became stronger.

The bottom line from this lesson is you can do the same. Learn from your failures and never, never, never give up.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Frank Worsley, Captain of the Endurance, speaking of Sir Earnest Shackleton: “No matter what turns up he is already always ready to alter his plans and make fresh ones.”

“Victory belongs to the most persevering.” – Napoleon

“Perseverance is failing 19 times and succeeding the 20th.” – Julie Andrews

“If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.

“It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.” – Confucius

“Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.” – Thomas A. Edison

“Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any one thing.” – Abraham Lincoln

“The three great essentials to achieve anything worthwhile are, first, hard work; second, stick-to-itiveness; third, common sense.” – Thomas A. Edison