

A true story

It is snack time and the toddler class is all ready to enjoy some delicious fruit that had been prepared, washed, peeled and chopped by two of the children. Two-year-old Zhaxi gets up and picks up the water pitcher. He loves to drink water, but, instead of pouring the water in his glass first, he takes great

smiles and says "You are welcome." When he finishes pouring for everyone, he fills his own little cup. The class directress goes over to Zhaxi, smiles and says: "When you gave your friends their water first you were serving them and that was wonderful to see, Zhaxi. Thank you." Zhaxi's smile widens. He is tired but

as parents and educators. It takes knowledge, skill and constant vigilance to develop in children the desire and motivation to practice such human qualities as service, generosity, truthfulness, obedience and self-discipline. These and hundreds of other virtues are what make us human. They are the

varying levels. As a pitcher would fill the glasses to the same level so can we work to practice our challenge virtues and raise them all to similar heights.

Although we know what we need to do, many of us are at a loss when it comes to how to develop the virtues in our children. We influence our children

motivations we can better model the virtues in our daily lives. For example, we are ready to offer help and friendship to all without expectation of recognition and reward. We are willing to forgive a friend or associate who has hurt our pride or feelings.

Language is the next most important tool for character

language start from birth.

Suggestions when speaking to children:

Capture opportunities to praise and encourage children. Praise should be genuine and specific. We encourage the children by making them aware of exactly what it is they have succeeded in. Instead of using general labels such as "Good Girl!" or "You are the best!" try: "It took a lot of courage to go to the dentist", "You drew the shape of the bird very accurately".

Corrections should be given gently, sparingly, and precisely. Our aim is to guide the children to new success, allowing them as far as possible to discover the means themselves. Where you notice an opportunity for improvement that a child is unaware of, you can share it with them with appropriate excitement. Shaming a child, especially in front of others, is not ideal. Try: "What could you use to clean up that spill?" instead of: "That's wrong, don't do it like that!", or instead of "Stop running in the classroom!" try: "Please walk peacefully in the classroom".

Motivation should be engendered through considerate and precise guidance. Where goals are given, these should be for an individual or the whole group, not for competition. Strive to build unity. You would not say: "Let's see who can finish first", "I want to see everyone

sitting nicely like Jane", "It seems that the girls are singing much better than the boys. Come on boys!". You might say: "When the floor is clean, we can begin to dance.", "Let's be united and use our most beautiful voices all at the same time", "When I notice everyone is sitting peacefully on their



mats, we will continue." Positive language can be a powerful tool for parents to encourage the virtues within their child to grow.

More character development strategies and practical tips will be provided in our next issue. If you have any questions regarding character development that you would like answered in our next column, please send an e-mail to Shiva Yan at character_ed@thefamilylearninghouse.com

BY SHIVA YAN

pride in serving others. His little hands are trying very hard to hold the pitcher steadily. His face beams with joy and confidence. His classmates courteously say "Thank you" and he stops,

very happy to have served his friends before himself.

Virtues are ancient and universal, revered in all cultures. Cultivation of character is an essential part of our responsibility

building blocks of our character. We are all born with different strengths and challenges in our characters, as glasses with various levels of water, we each have all the virtues within us at

in two important ways: our actions and our words. First and foremost is our action. As parents and educators, we are living examples for our children. In examining our own behaviors and

development. Just as the child's initial understanding of concepts and language starts long before he learns to pronounce his first word, the understanding of the virtues and the virtues of

