



# Using Quotations for Class Discussions: Simple Tips from *WiseSkills*

Quotations are wonderful tools for having short but meaningful discussions with students about good character. To use quotations as a springboard for discussions, keep these 5 simple guidelines in mind:

## 1. Safety

In order to foster honest and open discussion around quotes, it is important to establish a class environment of safety where students can share their views and experiences without fear of being ridiculed. During these discussions, do not raise up any past failures or specific discipline episodes with students, such as "If you remembered to show self-control, Jimmy, we wouldn't have had that problem yesterday." Students need to feel safe in order to open up and share their feelings. These discussions can then become a wonderful arena to give students advice in how to be successful.

## 2. Substance

Find a quotation that has a powerful lesson or meaning. Students--and adults--love quotations because there are usually key words or phrases that make the quotation thought provoking and meaningful. Quotes usually have repeated word or words, or tangible images that can help unlock the full meaning of the quote. Look for images or pictures within the quote as well as any contrasts or comparisons. Highlight those with simple questions that encourage students to look closely at the language of the quote. As much as possible, use the language of the quote itself rather than just launch into a discussion of the principle the quote teaches.

## 3. Sharing

Have students share their own experiences that relate to the principle the quote teaches. Have students tell about both negative and positive experiences and share any lessons they learned from the choices they made. When students share, try not to lecture them and tell them they did something wrong. This will prevent future sharing. There may be a lot of healthy laughter in these discussions which can have a positive impact on your overall classroom climate. Also, feel free to share any of your relevant life experiences, too!

## 4. Source

Quotations are also great because there is usually an author who wrote or spoke the quote. Tell students a little bit about the author's life--the challenges he/she faced, how he/she overcame them, what contributions he/she made, etc. Students love hearing stories about real people--especially those whose words they are learning from!

## 5. Store

Having students memorize quotations is a wonderful tool for planting the principle in their hearts and minds. While memorizing should not be the focus of discussions, encouraging or expecting them to memorize the quote--after they understand its meaning, discuss it, share relevant experiences, and learn about the author's life--provides a way to help students recall the quotation and principle throughout the year. You can even use the quote when disciplining students privately: "What did the quote from Gandhi say about fighting, Johnny?"

Keeping these 5 general guidelines in mind will help you provide creative and practical ways to teach your students to be wise!

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