

MEDIA REVIEWS

Reviewed by Hank Stanley for *Training Media Review*

Six Pillars of Character, video, 2000, 24 minutes, Time Frame Productions: 888.282.3020, www.tfvideo.com. Purchase US\$395. Other material: leader guide, student workbook, and audio CD.

In 1994, I wrote a *TMR* review about a training video that dealt with workplace violence. I remember thinking how regrettable it was that we needed to train businesses on how to spot employees with a proclivity to arbitrate with their supervisors from behind a 12-gauge shotgun. At the same time, it's comforting that someone recognized the problem and did something concrete so businesses could become aware and safeguard their employees.

I was similarly struck by the new video from Time Frame Productions, *Six Pillars of Character*. It seems a shame that people need to be instructed to be trustworthy, respectful, and fair. But after viewing the video lecture by Michael Josephson, founder of the Josephson Institute of Ethics, I thought it was great that someone addressed this issue. The existence of the video isn't an indictment; it's encouragement. "One doesn't have to be sick to get better," says Josephson.

In previous reviews, I've been critical of videos that offer character training without specifying what *character* means. Whose character traits should we go by? Who sets the standards for character? In such videos, character is usually exemplified by hard work or rising early. Josephson would tell us that those aren't examples of character but behaviors. Laudable, perhaps, but only behaviors.

So, what did Josephson do to establish the standards he uses as the basis for character? He made them up. The merits or relevance of Josephson's standards may be argued, but there's an acknowledged starting point for doing so.

To arrive at his standards, Josephson convened a board of 30 acknowledged leaders from schools, family-support organizations, faith communities, youth-service groups, and so on. Their purpose was to determine whether they could agree on the absolute rock-solid tenets of ethics and character. The result is six core ethical values "that transcend cultural, religious, and socioeconomic differences." The six pillars not only answer the question "Whose val-

ues shall we promote?" but they also provide a checklist to help us make ethical decisions.

The group resolved to involve more than 400 U.S.-based organizations dedicated to placing greater emphasis on the character-building potential of education, sports, and other youth activities. The program, Character Counts, is a youth-oriented parallel to seminars and conferences for business and government entities and is used as the focal point for *Six Pillars of Character*.

What have we learned about ethics from a generation that often proclaims evil good and good evil? What grade do we give an education system that, by and large, is progressive, values-free, and morally impoverished?

Six Pillars of Character

★★★★	Holds viewer interest
★★★★1/2	Acting and presenting
★★★★	Diversity
★★★★	Production quality
★★★★	Value of content
★★★★	Instructional value
★★★★	Value for the money
★★★★	Overall rating

For example, are we teaching our kids gamesmanship—doing whatever you can get away with to win—or sportsmanship—pursuing victory with the greatest zeal but realizing there's no victory without honor? Or in business, if you can't win without cheating, do you become a cheater?

"Every dishonorable act is a time bomb," says Josephson. "A lie doesn't do any harm when it's told. As a matter of fact, it likely does some benefit; that's why we lie, to gain something." The cost of a lie, however, is paid later if it's found out. And the payment is rendered repeatedly in the thoughts of the person lied to because he or she will always wonder, "What else have you lied to me about?"

Josephson insists that "ethics are the ground rules by which you pursue other legitimate objectives. And there is

RATINGS KEY

★★★★
★★★★1/2
★★★
★★1/2

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Above average

★★
★1/2
★

Average
Below average
Poor

always a gap between what we know we should do and what we want to do. Often, that's precisely the gap that ethics is designed to fill. That gap must be bridged by something called character. Character is ethics in action based on the six core values."

Josephson best sums up the video when he concludes: "There is nothing sacrosanct about the six pillars. The terms simply represent discrete ethical concepts that function as moral truths. They show that a common lexicon is possible, and indeed necessary, so that people can see what unites our diverse and fractured society. So that the challenge of ethical relativism can be tackled. So that ethical decisions, while not necessarily made any easier, can nevertheless become more

consistent and defensible."

It's gratifying that a group of people had enough foresight to reach a consensus on the six pillars and then start a national dialogue. I hope it permeates bottom-up and top-down into the crooks and crevices where it's needed most. And by the way, what do you think are the most important aspects of character? What are your six pillars?

Recommendation


Six Pillars of Character is a complete training program consisting of a 24-minute video and an audio CD of the soundtrack. Its 75-page student guide for note taking is in a 5-inch-by-8-inch format, making it handy in a purse or brief case. There's also a 63-page leader guide with instructional out-

lines, hints, and suggestions for customizing video-training sessions. For this package, the producer is charging US\$395, an exceptional value.

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