

# Mindful Exploration Resilience — Developing Inner Strength



## TOPIC

Resilience —  
Developing Inner Strength  
(Mindful Explorations)

## GRADE LEVEL

9th-12th grade

## DURATION

40 minutes (10 min per lesson)

## SUBJECT AREA

Character Development, ELA,  
Homerooms, Advisory

## DESCRIPTION OF THE LESSON

Mindful Explorations serve as short daily activities to develop introspection. Students are asked to be thoughtful about their accomplishments, challenges, goals, relationships and special moments.

Resilience, while it is an innate human capacity, must be learned and developed. One element of resilience is the ability to call upon inner strength. In this activity, students will consider the significance of accessing inner strength to make mindful decisions when they experience setbacks. Students will listen to testimony and will consider how developing and exercising resilience helps us to progress in life. By the end of this activity, students will reflect on how they can develop and apply their own inner strength for resilience.

## STANDARDS ADDRESSED

CCSS. ELA-Literacy. CCRA. W10.

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

## MATERIALS

*Student Handout Mindful Exploration – Developing Inner Strength*  
Clips of testimony: Leon Bass (2:16 min), Howard Cwick (2:37 min), Paul Parks (2:10 min)

## LEARNING AIMS

Students will:

- Critically analyze testimony and draw conclusions supported with evidence
- Recognize inner strength as a form of resilience and the role it plays in aptly navigating challenging situations in life
- Reflect on approaches to practice resilience when faced with a difficult situation

# Mindful Exploration

## Resilience — Developing Inner Strength

### Consider

---

- 1. ME Purpose:** Explain to students that over the course of four days they will complete three mindful explorations that focuses on recognizing the trait of resilience through inner strength and how they can exercise this skill in their lives.
- 2. Mindful Exploration Handout:** Pass out *Student Handout Mindful Exploration—Developing Inner Strength*. Read the brief introduction and focus question together. Explain that over the course of three lessons the class will listen to clips of testimony that will help them reflect on this topic.

### Collect

---

- 3. Clips of Testimony:** Each day, play one of the three clips of testimony twice. Begin by providing a brief introduction of each individual and the content of the clip. (See clip information and biographies below.)
- 4. First Viewing:** Have students listen to the clips of testimony and answer any clarifying questions students may have. Then, have students read and respond to the first connected question on the *Student Handout Mindful Exploration—Developing Inner Strength*.
- 5. Second Viewing:** In this focused viewing, have students analyze how the interviewee exhibited the trait of resilience. Then, have students respond to the second connected question on the *Student Handout Mindful Exploration—Developing Inner Strength*. Students may share their responses.
- 6. Repeat:** Follow the same format for each clip of testimony

#### Day 1

##### Clip 1: Leon Bass

*In this clip, Leon, US Liberator (Holocaust), discusses how he tapped his inner pain to exhibit strength.*

Leon Bass was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1925. Bass volunteered for the US Army in September of 1943, and served in the 183rd Engineer Combat Battalion. As a black soldier in a segregated unit, he experienced the oppression and humiliation of being a second-class citizen in his own Army. In April 1945, 183rd Engineer Combat Battalion was designated to be attached to the 1126th Engineer Combat Group. On April 11 or 12, 1945, Bass entered Buchenwald camp, which had been discovered by allied troops the previous day, to assist in relief efforts. In his testimony, Bass referred to the people he saw that day as “the walking dead.” After the war, Bass graduated from West Chester University of Pennsylvania and Temple University where he received a Doctorate. He became a teacher at the Benjamin Franklin High School in Philadelphia, eventually becoming its principal, a position he served in until 1981. This interview took place on August 12, 1998 in Newton, PA, USA.

## Collect

---

### Day 2

#### Clip 2: Howard Cwick

*In this clip, Howard, US Liberator (Holocaust), discusses how he called upon his inner strength to counter antisemitism.*

**Howard Cwick** was born in the Bronx, New York, on August 25, 1923, the son of Polish immigrants. After attending Brooklyn Technical High School, Howard worked as a machinist before enlisting in the United States Air Force in October 1942. Following a training crash, he was transferred to the 281st Combat Engineer Battalion at Camp Butner, North Carolina. There Howard encountered an antisemitic sergeant who repeatedly harassed him and other Jewish soldiers. In November 1944, Howard's battalion left the United States. They arrived outside of Weimar around April 10. Howard was ordered to Headquarters Company for an assignment but unwittingly got into a jeep that went to Buchenwald instead. After the war, Cwick graduated from New York University with a master's degree in education. He became an industrial arts teacher and father to two children. This interview took place on September 16, 1997, in Lake Worth, FL USA.

### Day 3

#### Clip 3: Paul Parks

*In this clip, Paul, a US Liberator (Holocaust) reflects on his conversation with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. about keeping his inner strength.*

**Paul Parks** was born May 7, 1923, in Indianapolis, Indiana, the son of a Native American father and African American mother. He attended Purdue University where he studied civil engineering. In the summer of 1942, Paul was drafted into the U.S. Army. On June 6, 1944, he participated in Allied invasion of Normandy. In April 1945, Paul was given orders to go to Dachau concentration camp. Paul knew nothing about German concentration camps and was shocked by what he saw. He and the others with him were angry at the horrific images of death and suffering; Paul recalled that he could not comprehend the atrocities that had taken place. In the summer of 1945, Paul went back to the United States for a short time before shipping off to the Philippines in the Pacific theater, where war was still being waged. After the war, he finished his undergraduate degree at Purdue University and later earned his doctorate from Northeastern University. Paul also became active in the Civil Rights Movement with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He later held the position of Secretary of Education in Massachusetts from 1974-1979. Paul was interviewed on October 23, 1995 in Boston, Massachusetts.

## **Construct**

---

**7. Final Reflection (Day 4):** After viewing and answering questions related to the third clip, direct students to the Final Reflection section of the *Student Handout Mindful Exploration – Developing Inner Strength*. Encourage students to work quietly and respond on their paper.

## **Communicate**

---

**8. Discuss:** To close this Mindful Exploration, ask volunteers to reflect on their responses to the final reflection.

### **Additional Note to Teacher:**

If assigning the Mindful Exploration activity series to students, we recommend asking students to keep a Mindful Explorations reflection journal. Using a reflection journal or folder to maintain their responses will provide them a compilation of their thoughts, enabling them to see how their thinking develops.

