



A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1803).

Virtue is both a habit and disposition – what we do and who we are. When we act virtuously, we are “giving the best” of who we were created to be. This exercise is focused on you and your top virtues. By writing and speaking about times when you were at your best, you discover your innate goodness – the image of God within. By sharing these stories, it helps others not only to understand the core of who you are, but also encourages them on their own journeys – helping to deepen relationships.

How do I write my “Virtuous Story of Self”?

Prerequisite: you need to have taken the Education in Virtue Strengths survey and know your top three virtues to complete this exercise.

Read the “Story of Self” example below. • • • • •

What strengths do you notice in the story?

Write your own Virtuous Self Story.

After reflecting on your virtue strengths, think about a time when you were using one or more of your top virtues and were at your best. It could have been overcoming a challenge, or it might have just been a response to make something better. Write your story as detailed as possible, allowing the story to showcase your top virtues. (Note: this could be a story about something monumental and life changing, or it simply could be a small daily example of when you were at your best. This is not meant to be a resume, but a story of character.)



Share your story of self with others!

Example: Story of My Virtuous Self

I started playing soccer before I could read, or so it seems. I can't actually remember the first time I kicked a ball. Growing up, my family was that “soccer family”. We all played the sport—moving from house leagues to travel and select teams. I loved to play the game. I could spend hours outside, by myself, juggling soccer balls, kicking the ball off the wall and practicing traps, or playing mini soccer in heated games with my siblings and neighbors in my basement. Playing soccer brought me so much joy. There was nothing like the smell of fresh cut grass before the start of a morning soccer game, the taste of concession stand food during a soccer tournament away, or the sheer excitement after scoring the game-winning goal.

While I bounced to a few different teams during my middle school years, I joined a travel team around 7th grade and stuck with this team throughout high school. A couple years in, I was named captain of the team and held this distinction for most of the off season. For two years during high school, I played for my school's junior varsity team. During that time, I was also named captain and had one of the highest scoring/highest assist records on the team. I was really proud of myself—I was a shoo-in for varsity come my junior year, for SURE.

During tryouts that summer, I was excited about the possibility of playing on the varsity team and finally making it to the “big leagues” (our team was pretty good—I think we made states, and won states for a number of years). On the last day of tryouts, our coaches came to announce the varsity lineup for the fall

¹Adapted from Peterson, C. (2006). “Positive Introduction” in A primer in positive psychology. Oxford University Press.

Example: Story of My Virtuous Self continued

season. I can remember that day like it was yesterday. We were all sitting down in the hallway at the school. I was next to my best friend and a few other individuals from my team in the off season. One by one, they called off the names for the team. As each name was called, girls cheered and stood up to go join their new squad. I heard a number of individuals from my off season team get up, as they proudly went to go stand with their new teammates. I had played with these girls for a long, long time – and in most cases, was captain of the teams they were on. Name after name. Finally, they got to the last one, and said, “and finally...” My heart was pounding really fast at this point. Was it my name? Was I going to make the team?

“Stephanie Jackman”. Cheers went up all around me but all I could feel was emptiness and disappointment. What had happened? Why hadn't I made the team? I had some of the highest stats in the program and yet I was one of the very few juniors who hadn't been called to play on the team. As tears were streaming down my face, I left feeling hurt, disappointed, and upset. When I got home, I told my parents what had happened. They hugged me and asked, “Well, what are you going to do, keep playing or quit and do something else?” I wasn't sure. In that moment, I felt like my pride had been hurt, my ego wounded. But wouldn't it be embarrassing to continue to play on JV this year? My younger sister would be playing with me. My older sister was on varsity, why wasn't I? What did everyone else think about me? “But she was captain of the team...and she didn't make it...what a loser...” All of these thoughts were running through my mind. It would be so hard to go play these games because most of the JV games happened right before varsity games, and most of the varsity players were in all of my classes. I would be reminded of my defeat and failure constantly...what was I going to do? Over the weekend, I spent a long time thinking about my decision. In order for me to continue to play this year and continue my love for the game, I would need to swallow my pride and be humbled. Could I do that? It would be hard. As I thought about it that weekend, I knew in my heart what would be the right thing to do. What my best self would do.

On Monday morning, as I was leaving for school, my mom asked me what time I would be needing a ride. As I swallowed the lump in my throat, I said—“5:30 mom...right after practice”.

What virtues do you notice in this story and how were they practiced?

On a separate sheet of paper or in a new document, write your own virtuous self story to be shared with others. (See directions before the example story above.)