**Unit 3: Lesson 14**

**Shine On**

**Goal: To learn that the social and emotional positive action of managing our talents helps us feel good about ourselves.**

STORY:

*Ka-WHOMP!*

*Kendra’s dad jumped and almost dropped the puppy he was holding. “Kendra’s practicing her tennis again,” he explained to the little springer spaniel.*

*Ka-WHOMP!*

*The puppy trembled in Gary’s hands. Gary gently placed it on the stainless-steel examining table and stroked its down head. “It’s okay, little fella. She doesn’t aim at animals. Just garage doors – and base lines.”*

*When he’d disinfected the examining table, he strolled to the door of his office and looked around with satisfaction, feeling like the luckiest man alive. He watched his daughter Kendra hit tennis balls against the garage door. At Kendra’s age he’d been riding horses, roping calves, and training his cow dog, Punch. When he was 16, his parents sold the ranch, and he’d been afraid that the life he enjoyed so much was lost forever but his love of animals had led him to a degree in veterinary medicine. And now he had this tidy acre with his vet office and his home side by side.*

*Ka-WHOMP!*

*Sometimes Gary felt sad that Kendra preferred a morning on the tennis court to walking the dogs. She actually slept through the midnight birth of a colt because she had an important match the next day. But he recognized that everyone has different talents.*

*“Hey, you.” Gary’s wife, Sandy, dashed up, then slowed to a stop, huffing. She’d been jogging with Rip, a Labrador retriever they boarded. Rip was almost a member of the family. “This guy gave me a run for my money today.” Gary smiled. “I’m sure you caught his every move.” Sandy was a photographer for an outdoor magazine, and she never went far without her camera.*



*Ka-WHOMP!*

*“Look at Kendra’s serve. Wow!” Sandy said.*

*Gary nodded. “She’s got talent, all right.”*

*“I can’t believe how hard she works.” Sandy shook her head.*

*Gary laughed. “And why wouldn’t she? Look at her stepmother! You roam the countryside all day taking pictures, then stay up late at the computer perfecting them.”*

*Sandy grinned. “You’re not so bad yourself, big guy.”*

*Gary put an arm around his wife. Rip watched Kendra’s tennis balls fly, whimpering as if to say, “Just give me one chance, I’ll block that serve.” Sandy reached down and scratched him behind the ears.*

*Ka-WHOMP!*

*“Way to go, Kendra!” her proud parents called. “That last one was a winner!”*

**Managing our talents** is a positive action that helps us feel good about ourselves. Talents include everything from having the patience to listen attentively while others speak to being able to sing at the top of our lungs, from being able to settle a dispute to making a house a home. Talents are natural abilities that enable us to do certain things well.

**We all have talents.** Our talents are a big part of us. They help us identify who we are and what we like to do. They are a key to our self-concepts. In order to lead successful, happy lives, we need to develop our talents and share them with others.

Being talented requires more than just having talent. Although talents are natural abilities, **we must identify and develop our talents before we can take advantage of them.** Teachers, managers, equipment operators, computer programmers, veterinarians, photographers, and tennis players all spend time and energy learning to use their abilities skillfully. They all use positive actions to **manage** the talents they have.

We manage our talents by identifying and then using them. We often find our talents in things we like to do, in activities that seem fairly easy for us, and in what we dream of creating. The narrow view of talent includes obvious areas such as sports or the arts where talented people get all the glory.

But talents such as a loving nature, the ability to negotiate peace, sensitivity to others, or the patience to care for the sick or teach children, may be more important to individuals, families, and communities. Many people are talented at communicating, designing, building, organizing, and managing. Successfully managing our talents can provide opportunities for us to do something we really like to do, including opportunities to make our living and to share our talents with others.

Once we identify which talents we have, we can take positive actions to train our minds and bodies to use them. Using or practicing our talents daily helps us develop them more quickly. Taking lessons or classes can be helpful. Studying with those who have become expert in the area of our talent is an important way to make the most of our abilities and the learning of others at the same time.

As we develop and use our talents, we have more to contribute. In fact, **we have a responsibility to manage our talents in such a way that we can contribute to the well-being of ourselves and others.** In doing so we are less inclined to get involved with things that are harmful to ourselves and others such as alcohol and other drugs, acts of violence, or other criminal behavior.

Whether our talents provide us with pleasure or necessities or both, we become the best we can be by developing skill and accomplishment. When we share our talents, we give our best to others. When we combine our talents with others, new and wonderful things happen as a result of our team effort. Think of an assembly line or a group brainstorming session. A team can accomplish things that individuals using their talents separately cannot achieve.

Our talents are so important to who we are and what we do because they represent the best of our self-concept. By developing and sharing our talents, we feel fulfilled and good about who we are. We are most successful and happy when we are using them. So…Lights, camera, action! Let’s spotlight our talents whatever they may be. And let’s learn to make the most of them. We can really shine.

QUESTIONS:

* What is talent?
* Why isn’t talent limited to musical and artistic abilities?
* How can we identify talents?
* What are some ways we can develop talents?
* Why is it important to develop talents?
* How does managing talents affect self-concept?
* What talents or natural abilities do you recognize in yourself?
* How do you feel about yourself when you are using your talents?
* How could you develop your talents further?
* How would you adjust your schedule to give yourself the time and energy you need to develop your talents?

Think about how your life could be if you developed your talents. Discuss what you need to do, what classes you could take, what you need to practice and learn. What does your life look like if you do these things.

FAMILY POSITIVE ACTIONS:

DISCUSSION:

* How do your talents contribute to your family?
* In what additional ways could your talents be used to benefit the family?
* How can we as family members use our talents as a group?
* In what ways do we appreciate each family member’s talents?
* How can we encourage one another to develop and use talents?

*parent positive acctions*

**Ask Yourself:** What do you like to do? How do you use your talents? In what ways do you share your talents with your family? How do you encourage your children to explore their talents? What books, lessons, and other materials are available in your home for their use? How does encouraging your children to explore their talents encourage you to explore your own?

**Plan and Do:** Concentrate on helping your children manage their talents this week. Have a private talk with each child to help him or her identify some talents. Make sure each one understands that talents need to be developed.

Develops a plan to provide your children with as many materials and opportunities to explore their interests as you can. Consider getting them started in lessons, in a class, or in a club. If that is not possible, encourage them to do as much as they can on their own. Introduce them to others with similar talents and encourage them to ask questions. Urge them to keep a practice routine, if appropriate.

Encourage your children to develop talents but be careful not to over-schedule them. Remember that the work of a child is play. Give your children time to explore who they are and what they do well through the discovery allowed by playing.

Let’s hold a Family Talent Time. This will be a chance for each of us to share his or her talents. It might mean performing music, giving a speech, or sharing anything that we’re good at. It might mean showing something we have created or teaching others a skill we learned. Whatever we like to do – whatever we do naturally well – is fair game for our Family Talent Time.

As part of sharing our talents, we might choose to explain how we are developing them and how we intend to use them later in life. Each of you is responsible to select and prepare what you want to share.

We can invite members of our extended family, friends, or neighbors to attend and to share their talents, too. We could make it really fancy with snacks, special lighting, or decorations.

COMMUNITY POSITIVE ACTIONS

Let’s practice our talent management on behalf of our community. We can look for ways to share our talents at work, at school, our church, and so on. We might want to use our talents to benefit community groups or nonprofit organizations. Let’s decide how we will help the community by sharing our talents.

SUMMARY

In the story at the beginning of our lesson, Gary recognized that everyone has different talents. He and his wife strongly encouraged Kendra to practice her tennis because they knew she would feel good about herself as she developed her talent.

We’ll feel good about ourselves as we manage our talents, too. Our talents play an important role in defining our self-concepts. They help us become who we are since they define what we like to do.

We must manage our talents if we’re to take full advantage of them. Know which talents we have helps us put our time and energy into developing them. Regular practice and use develops them more quickly. By developing our talents, we have something to contribute to ourselves and others. Managing our talents successfully is one of the best ways to enhance our self-concepts. Having something we can contribute always helps us to feel good about who we are and what we are doing.

**Word of the Week: Talent**

A natural ability that can be developed.