

When you think of Japan, you may think about ancient tradition, beautiful robes, and people bowing when they greet. But do you think of baseball? You should now. Because in Japan, people are crazy about baseball.



CHARACTER QUESTIONS

1. Do you remember a time when at first you felt like showing a bad attitude but instead showed a good one?
2. Say your team just won a game. At the end of the game, what could you do or say to show humility?

TOKYO
JAPAN



In fact, Japan has their own major league baseball teams, and some of the best players who play in America are Japanese. Plus, their Little League teams have won the Little League World Series nine times. The next American division, California, has only won it seven times. And one of the players who keeps the Japanese baseball tradition strong is our fourth kid-athlete, Akira.

It's early on a Saturday morning in Tokyo. Akira and his team, the Giants, step onto a flat elementary school play area for practice. They'll practice from 9am to 5pm. The gray dirt crunches under their shoes like sand, and the players start to play catch. Apartment buildings rise high above the field, and sleepy people look over their balconies to watch the team warm up. The Giants are practicing for a tournament. Akira slowly throws the ball back and forth with his coach, loosening up a recovering shoulder. He hurt it weeks ago and was very upset because he couldn't play. Now, though, he's actually grateful. Why? **BECAUSE WHILE HE WAS HEALING HE LEARNED SOMETHING SPECIAL—HE LEARNED HUMILITY.**

PLAY WITH
HUMILITY

During his injury, he could only sit on the bench and watch the games. But instead of having a bad attitude or not showing up to the games at all, he decided to help his team in the only way he could. **AKIRA, THE CAPTAIN OF THE TEAM, WASHED BASEBALLS, PICKED UP BATS, AND CHEERED ON HIS TEAMMATES.** Most captains don't do that. He realized that other people were serving and cheering for him while he played, so he should do that for others when he's healing. When something went wrong, Akira kept a winning attitude. He put his team first, humbled himself, and made a difference. There's strength in humility.

Now, the captain is back at practice. And he's getting stronger every day, in more ways than one.

AKIRA PLAYS WITH HUMILITY.



CHARACTER PLAY

To help have the proper attitude with others, the Japanese language has nine ways to address someone out of respect. English has one way—Mr. or Ms. (also Miss or Mrs.)

DID YOU KNOW?

In Japanese baseball and in professional soccer, the captain always wears number 10.

ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT

Akira's favorite food isn't sushi—it's spaghetti.

WORLD WORDS

How do you say "homerun" in Japanese? *Hōmuran*.



CHARACTER COUNTS!

ACADEMIC DOMAIN - DECISION MAKING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

Students demonstrate the ability to employ logic, reason, analytical ability and other critical thinking skills to make ethical and effective decisions that produce the best possible result.

When Akira injured his shoulder it would have been easy for him to be upset and not show up to games. But instead he saw the value of the captain always being present, and he helped his team however he could. Akira knew what was best for his team, and he did it.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DOMAIN - SELF AWARENESS

Students demonstrate self-awareness by and recognition of the importance of “know thyself” by:

1. identifying, labeling, and understanding the nature, source, intensity and impact of their emotions, feelings, moods, impulses, mindsets and values;
2. accurately assessing their personal attributes; and
3. maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence and self-esteem.

Rather than ignore his disappointed feelings about being injured, Akira decided to channel his emotions into serving his team by washing the baseballs, picking up bats, and encouraging his teammates.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DOMAIN - LIFE SKILLS AND ATTITUDES

Students develop and demonstrate social and emotional attitudes and skills to achieve personal happiness and school and life success.

Akira makes a great team captain because he has a humble attitude. His humility has also helped him be a great teammate, player, and person.

CHARACTER DOMAIN - RESPECT

Students treat every individual with respect and judge others on their character and ability without regard to race, religion, sexual orientation, political ideology, gender, age, or other physical or personal characteristics based on the belief that all individuals are worthy and that their well-being and dignity is important simply because they are fellow human beings.

After every game, win or lose, Akira's team shows the other team respect by bowing to them. Akira and his teammates know how it feels to lose, and they believe the other team deserves their respect.

CHARACTER DOMAIN - CHARACTER AND ETHICS

Students understand the important role that character plays in all aspects of their lives and accept personal responsibility for building, improving and protecting their character by consistently making ethical choices and developing the moral dispositions, traits and virtues of a person of character.

When Akira hurt his shoulder and couldn't play, he had a choice to make—does he get upset and not show up to games anymore, or does he show character and travel with and serve the team even though he can't play? He chose to show character and continue being the leader of his team no matter what.

CHARACTER DOMAIN - RESPONSIBILITY

Students display responsibility by: doing what they are required to do and what they should do; accepting responsibility for the consequences (i.e., being accountable) for what they say, do and think; and using critical thinking and decision-making skills to avoid rationalizations and excuses and make rational, prudent choices. Students display responsibility by: doing what they are required to do and what they should do; accepting responsibility for the consequences (i.e., being accountable) for what they say, do and think; and using critical thinking and decision-making skills to avoid rationalizations and excuses and make rational, prudent choices.

When Akira became the captain of his team, he knew that his coach expected more from him than just being a good player—he also wanted him to set a good example for the team. It's the captain's responsibility to set the tone for the team.

CHARACTER DOMAIN - CITIZENSHIP

Students recognize and seek to fulfill their civic and social responsibilities by doing their share to contribute to the well-being of the communities in which they are a member (including their school, neighborhood and country).

Even when he couldn't contribute on the baseball field, Akira contributed to the team—he fulfilled his role as the captain by serving his teammates and maintaining his status as an active member of the team.