

# On Care and the Cultivation of Students' Caring Qualities

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**Abstract:** Care is a profound concern and empathy for others, manifested not only in the transmission of emotions but also in actionable support. The caring quality of students refers to a moral cultivation in which students, through daily life practices, correctly understand "care," adopt a proper attitude toward people and things, learn to care for others, and develop a conscious habit of practicing caring behaviors. This quality holds profound significance for the development of students' cognition, emotions, and behavior. To cultivate students' caring qualities, efforts can be made in several areas: strengthening the promotion of social care education, fostering a caring school environment, building harmonious teacher-student relationships, and creating family care laboratories. Achieving a virtuous cycle in education requires not only nurturing well-rounded socialist builders and successors with moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor skills but also cultivating individuals with caring literacy and warmth.

**Keywords:** Care, Students' Caring Qualities, Cultivate.

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## 1. The Connotation of Care

The renowned German philosopher Heidegger defined "care" as human sympathy for the lives of others, considering it the authentic mode of human existence.<sup>[1]</sup> Maslow viewed care as an indispensable element in the process of human growth from meeting basic needs to self-transcendence. It serves as both the foundation for personal growth and a bridge connecting the self with others. Through care, individuals transcend isolation, meet their own needs, and contribute to a healthier and more harmonious society. Noddings, on the other hand, described care as "a relational state of attending to and responding to the needs of others," emphasizing its essence as a two-way interaction—the caregiver's investment and the care-receiver's acceptance, together forming a complete caring process.<sup>[2]</sup> In this article, care is not merely an expression of emotion but the root and source of an individual's virtuous life. As a key driver of human moral life, care empowers individuals to pursue moral ideals. Through care, unity and harmony can be achieved between individuals, society, and nature, thereby constructing a favorable social order for humanity.

### (1) Care as the Foundation of Personality Construction

Personality is the sum of unique psychological characteristics formed through daily life. Care lays the groundwork for personality development. Growing up in a caring environment, individuals feel respected and accepted, fostering a sense of security that enables them to explore the world with openness and confidence. Conversely, a lack of care during growth—marked by indifference, neglect, or even abuse—often leads to deviations in personality development, such as low self-esteem, social withdrawal, or aggression. A sound personality helps students develop a comprehensive and objective understanding of themselves, maintain a positive mindset, embrace a proactive attitude toward life, and enhance their ability to adapt to the times.<sup>[3]</sup>

### (2) Care as a Catalyst for Cognitive Development

Cognitive development refers to the continuous improvement of perceptual, memory, thinking, and language abilities from birth to adulthood. Care significantly promotes

the enhancement of these cognitive abilities. When teachers care for students, it sparks their interest and enthusiasm for learning. In a caring atmosphere, individuals are more willing to actively acquire new knowledge, interact with the outside world, and broaden their cognitive horizons, thereby accelerating cognitive development. In contrast, a learning environment devoid of care can make students feel bored and stifle their motivation and cognitive growth. Thus, care acts as a catalyst, enabling rapid and efficient cognitive development in students.

### (3) Care as a Bridge in the Socialization Process

Humans are social beings, and socialization—the transition from individuality to society—is a crucial marker of maturity. Care facilitates this process by helping individuals integrate into society. In social interactions, care conveys warmth and goodwill, bridging the gap between people. When we extend care to others, we earn their trust and goodwill, establishing positive interpersonal relationships. Such relationships serve as vital support for socialization, enabling individuals to learn social rules, understand social roles, and master social skills through communication and cooperation. Conversely, individuals lacking care often struggle to form close connections, leading to isolation and hindered socialization. Therefore, care acts as a bridge connecting individuals to society, guiding them steadily along the path of socialization.

### (4) Care as the Enlightenment of Life's Meaning

For growing individuals, care serves as an enlightening light in exploring the meaning of life. Genuine care from others prompts reflections on life's value. For example, when someone critically ill receives meticulous care from family, friends, and medical staff, they feel the significance of their existence and recognize their unique meaning to others. Such experiences inspire individuals to ponder life's value, realizing that life is not merely about fulfilling material needs but also about giving love and warmth to others. Through caring actions, individuals gain inner fulfillment and a sense of achievement, deepening their understanding of life's richness. Thus, care is the key that unlocks the door to exploring life's meaning, guiding individuals in their continuous pursuit of life's essence.

## 2. The Essence and Value of Students' Caring Qualities

Noddings, drawing on her female moral experience, advocated for constructing interpersonal relationships through care and making the cultivation of caring abilities the core and ultimate goal of moral education.<sup>[4]</sup> The shaping of students' caring qualities has positive implications for their cognition, emotions, and behavior, laying a solid foundation for their future growth and development.

### (1) The Essence of Students' Caring Qualities

Students' caring qualities are an integral part of moral character. Under the guidance of teachers and parents, students develop a correct understanding of "care," adopt a proper attitude toward people and things, learn methods of caring for others, and cultivate a conscious habit of practicing care in their daily lives.<sup>[3]</sup> This means students can demonstrate concern, understanding, respect, and assistance toward others and their surroundings in cognition, emotion, and behavior.

Students can keenly perceive the needs, emotions, and situations of others, understand their perspectives and feelings, and recognize their interconnectedness with others and the environment. They grasp the importance and significance of caring behaviors, harbor genuine concern, sympathy, and respect for others, empathize with their joys and sorrows, and translate caring cognition and emotions into practical actions. They actively help and care for others, willing to make efforts to improve others' circumstances or maintain harmony in their surroundings.<sup>[3]</sup>

### (2) The Value of Students' Caring Qualities

1) **Enhancing Cognitive Abilities:** While caring for others, students observe emotional changes, analyze situations, and contemplate ways to help. These mental activities promote cognitive development, enhancing their ability to analyze and solve problems. For example, when helping classmates with academic challenges, students must not only understand the material themselves but also consider their peers' difficulties to find effective explanations. This process deepens their understanding of knowledge and improves their logical thinking and communication skills.

2) **Fostering Social Responsibility:** Modernization has increased reliance on technology, leading to growing indifference and a lack of social responsibility, which runs counter to harmonious societal development.<sup>[3]</sup> Cultivating caring qualities helps students recognize their role in society and the interconnectedness of others' well-being and environmental harmony with their own lives. By caring for those around them, participating in community activities, or addressing social issues, students gradually realize their capacity to contribute to others and society, fostering a sense of social responsibility.

3) **Strengthening Moral Cultivation:** Moral cultivation involves developing good moral qualities and behavioral habits, internalizing ethical norms, and externalizing them in actions.<sup>[5]</sup> Through practicing caring behaviors, students better understand the essence of moral principles, internalizing them as personal guidelines. By empathizing with others and helping solve problems, students cultivate values of compassion and altruism, learning to respect life and cherish others' efforts. When faced with moral dilemmas, they are more inclined to make ethical choices.

## 3. Pathways to Cultivate Students' Caring Qualities

The cultivation of students' caring qualities is a process that progresses from awakening caring emotions to forming caring cognition and judgment, and finally to practicing care. Developing these qualities requires the collective efforts of society, schools, teachers, families, and students themselves. Society must foster a caring atmosphere, schools must provide institutional support and practical settings, teachers must offer professional guidance, parents must build emotional support, and students must strengthen their proactive engagement in self-care. The synergy of these elements ultimately helps students develop stable caring character traits.

### (1) Guiding with Core Socialist Values

In today's rapidly developing information society, students are bombarded with distracting online content that distorts the essence of human interaction and hinders the cultivation of caring qualities. There is an urgent need for Core Socialist Values to guide and standardize diverse societal values, steering students' values in the right direction.<sup>[6]</sup> To clear obstacles for students' future development, the government should promote correct values through news media, creating a positive public opinion environment. Additionally, the internet should be leveraged to subtly instill Core Socialist Values into students' minds, encouraging them to align their behavior with these values. Under society's proper guidance, students' caring qualities can be gradually nurtured.

### (2) Creating a Caring School Culture

Moral growth requires a cultural foundation. Schools, as the primary venues for students' learning and life, directly influence their moral and spiritual development.<sup>[7]</sup> Schools must embed care into the collective unconscious, fostering a people-oriented culture. First, they should prioritize care for students' lives, recognizing each student as a dynamically developing individual. Management systems should be flexible and student-centered. Second, care should be integrated into curricula and practices, with teachers incorporating caring goals into their teaching plans. Based on care education theory and the holistic development goals of quality education, schools should establish "people-oriented" moral education objectives.<sup>[6]</sup> In a caring school culture, institutions can nurture compassionate and caring individuals.

### (3) Exemplifying Caring Teachers

Noddings stated, "Role models are crucial for most moral education, but for care-as for character education-it is far more important whether teachers themselves serve as examples for students. We must demonstrate what care means through our actions, not merely demand that they care for others or overwhelm them with textbooks on the subject. We must illustrate our understanding of care through our relationships with them."<sup>[8]</sup> In cultivating caring qualities, teachers must practice care themselves, setting examples for students. First, they should teach care through their caring actions, allowing students to experience and learn care authentically. Second, teachers should demonstrate care in their interactions with colleagues, leaders, and staff, enabling students to observe and internalize caring behaviors. Through such role modeling, students can develop their own caring qualities.

### (4) Adopting Rational Family Parenting Styles

The family is a child's first classroom, and parents are their first teachers. Family education plays an irreplaceable role in

shaping children's qualities. To cultivate caring abilities at home, parents must transform daily life into educational opportunities. First, parents should improve their own moral cultivation, leading by example and avoiding negative habits that could influence their children. Actions like respecting elders, treating friends honestly, and caring for vulnerable groups serve as silent lessons, nurturing the seeds of care in children.<sup>[5]</sup>Second, a harmonious and democratic family environment is essential for fostering students' psychological health and nurturing qualities like kindness, tolerance, and respect-foundations for caring qualities.

#### (5) Strengthening Students' Proactive Self-Care

As Huang Xiangyang noted, moral development relies entirely on voluntary commitment. Imposed morality does not become personal virtue, so moral education must appeal to active exploration, reflection, critique, and discussion of interpersonal and social phenomena and moral issues.<sup>[9]</sup>Therefore, cultivating students' caring qualities also requires self-education, enhancing their proactive engagement in self-care. First, students should improve their ability to discern caring behaviors, distinguishing right from wrong and avoiding conformity. Second, they should cultivate genuine caring emotions, expressing care sincerely to prevent misunderstandings. Finally, they should actively participate in caring practices, learning communication and observation skills through interactions, and refining their caring actions.<sup>[5]</sup>Through assimilation and adaptation, students can truly internalize caring qualities as part of their moral character.

## 4. Conclusion

Care, as the embodiment of human true existence and the core driving force of moral life, encompasses multiple dimensions such as personality construction, cognitive development, socialization process, and enlightenment of life meaning. It holds irreplaceable value for individual growth and social harmony. As a comprehensive moral cultivation that integrates cognition, emotion and behavior, the quality of student care not only promotes the improvement of students' cognitive ability, the cultivation of social responsibility and the enhancement of moral cultivation, but also serves as a key support for them to grow into "warm-hearted people". Cultivating students' caring qualities is a systematic project that requires the joint efforts of society, schools, teachers, families and students themselves. Society creates a positive public opinion environment through the guidance of core values, schools build a growth field with a caring culture and

curriculum practice, teachers set an example through their own words and deeds, families consolidate emotional foundations with rational parenting methods, and students internalize care as a conscious quality through active reflection and practice.

Only through the collaboration of multiple subjects can the quality of care truly be integrated into the growth trajectory of students. This enables education to cultivate well-rounded socialist builders and successors while shaping individuals with humanistic warmth and the ability to care for and be cared for. Ultimately, it promotes a positive interaction between individuals and society, laying a solid foundation for building a harmonious and beautiful social order. This is not only an inherent part of education but also an inevitable requirement of The Times for cultivating "complete individuals".

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