CHARACTER CORE VALUES by Kay Goodnight

Overview
- What are "Core Values"?
- Lists, lists, lists...
- Positive vs. Negative core values
- Examples from classic books/movies
- Finding your character's core values

Core Values
- Character's moral compass
- Passions in their heart
- Inspires them to fight and never give up
- Shapes their decision-making **throughout** a novel
- Core values are ***NOT*** "goals" (wants, desires)
- Core values determine ***HOW*** they go about accomplishing their "goals"

A Partial List of Core Values (Google 'core values' for additional ideas)

Authenticity	Faith	Peace
Achievement	Fame	Pleasure
Adventure	Friendships	Poise
Authority	Fun	Popularity
Autonomy	Growth	Recognition
Balance	Happiness	Religion
Beauty	Honesty	Reputation
Boldness	Humor	Respect
Compassion	Influence	Responsibility
Challenge	Justice	Security
Citizenship	Kindness	Self-respect
Community	Knowledge	Service
Competency	Leadership	Stability
Contribution	Learning	Success
Creativity	Love	Status
Curiosity	Loyalty	Trustworthiness
Determination	Openness	Wisdom
Fairness	Optimism	

Why a Character Believes
- **Nature**
  - Characteristics 'programmed' into their inherited DNA
- **Nurture**
  - The society your character lives in and their place in that society
  - Their upbringing and childhood experiences
  - The events they have taken part in or experienced (triggers)
  - The relationships (past and present) that have been important to them
  - Values they have learned that they can't unlearn

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A NOTE ABOUT BACKSTORY

You may need to know this. ***Your reader*** might NOT.

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Positive Core Values Examples
- **Dependabe** – leader, reliable, supportive
- **Kind** – nice, selfless, role model
- **Empathic** – compassionate, considerate
- **Courageous** – faces what scares them (evil dude or going back to school)
- **Integrity** – does the right thing no matter what
- **Self-Aware** – humble, grounded, aware of their limitations
- **Affable** – easy to talk to, gets along well with others

Negative Core Values Examples
- Helplessness
  - Personal incompetence
  - Vulnerability
  - Inferiority
- Unlovability
- Worthlessness
- "I'm not good enough because…"
- Applying a negative spin to any positive core value

What Makes Your Character Feel…
- Secure
- Happy
- Loved
- Intelligent
- Mature
- Successful
- Why?

Sidekicks and Antagonists
- Endow additional characters with opposing core values or lacking the MC's core value
- At the least – creates a sense of frustration
- At the most – creates two characters that are diametrically opposed to each other at their inner essence
- It doesn't have to be something life and death
- *Example*: Punctuality
  - MC – obsessed with being on time, so they invariably arrive 15 minutes early for everything
  - MC's friend – always arrives fashionably late

"Good" vs. "Bad"
- Punny vs. Dry Sense of Humor
- Punctual vs. Fashionably Late
- Orderly vs. Messy
- Frugal vs. Extravogant
- Prepared vs. Spontaneous
- Meek vs. Bold

The Hard Decision
- What would make your character go against one of their core values?
- Student needs the grades for medical school
- Character wishes to gain the affection of someone they love
    - Shower them with kindness; buy them expensive gifts; change who they are (Sandy/Danny from Grease); turn stalker; murder rival; hold love interest captive.
- May lose family home due to overwhelming debt
- Other...

CHARACTER ANALYSIS EXAMPLES
Anne of Green Gables
- Orphan, smart, imaginative / Hopeful/Optimistic - "Every day is fresh with no mistakes in it."
Darth Vader
- Luke Skywalker's father / Jedi gone bad / Bad guy controlled by even worse guy
Frodo (Lord of the Rings)
- Kind / Timid? / Brave? / Homebody / "Why do we do it?" (hope)
Harry Potter
- Orphan / Wizard-in-training / Mirror of Erised: deepest desire 'family' / Dumbledore: brave, a certain disregard for rules / Friends: 'saving people' thing
Scarlet O'Hara (Gone with the Wind)
- Attractive / Ruthless / Self-confident
Johnny Nolan (A Tree Grows in Brooklyn)
- Husband / Father / Wedding singer / Alcoholic
Daniel Ocean (Ocean's 11, 12, & 13)
- Charismatic / Thief / Conman / (Ex) Husband
Batman
- Rich alter-ego / Thought of as 'bad guy' by those he's trying to save

Character Creation Practice
- Pick one or more Core Values.
- Rank your character's belief in that value.
- Create a backstory that would justify that value.
- Explore how this value might affect their decision-making.
- What might force your character to make the 'hard choice' between their beliefs and obtaining their goal?

Summary
- Is your character:
    - Positive? Negative? Both?
    - What is their background?
    - What are their inspirations/aspirations?
    - What are their triggers?
- How does this affect their:
    - Beliefs about right and wrong
    - Decision-making
    - Relationship with others