

VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE

for use with
Program 4

FAIRNESS

In the Video Series

IN SEARCH OF CHARACTER™

Produced by Elkind+Sweet Communications, Inc.
in association with Character Counts!

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INTRODUCTION

In his landmark book, “Educating for Character,” Dr. Thomas Lickona asserts that:

“Good character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good. . . . When we think about the kind of character we want for our children, it’s clear that we want them to be able to judge what is right, care deeply about what is right, and then do what they believe to be right—even in the face of pressure from without and temptation from within.”

The purpose of this video series is to support educators, parents, and others who work with young people in their efforts to achieve this vision.

“**In Search of Character**” focuses on ten virtues commonly named by parents, educators, and community groups concerned with character education:

Trustworthiness	Citizenship
Respect	Honesty
Responsibility	Courage
Fairness	Diligence
Caring	Integrity

While each of these words evokes its own meaning, what counts most, like colors on a canvas, is the way they interact to paint a complete picture. “In Search of Character” is not about teaching individual virtues, it’s about helping young people **construct a vision of themselves as good people** and then live up to that vision. It’s about showing them that, in a world where poor character is so commonplace, **they can choose to be better than that.**

***In Search of Character* has important historical roots.** In 1992 the Josephson Institute of Ethics convened a diverse group of 29 educators and youth organization leaders in Aspen, Colorado, to hammer out a framework for character education that would be agreeable across political, religious, and social divisions. As part of their task, the conference participants attempted to identify a concise, yet comprehensive, list of core ethical values they could all embrace. What they came up with is now known as **the six pillars of character**. They are: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.

We found these six pillars to be a very useful foundation on which to build our new video series. Additionally, as we looked more closely at these pillars, we found they contained several important virtues which we felt deserved to be singled out for individual attention. And so, from the **trustworthiness** pillar we extracted *honesty*, *courage*, and *integrity*, and from the **responsibility** pillar we took *diligence*. Hence, the ten titles on the previous page.

In Search of Character was created and produced by David Elkind and Freddy Sweet, Ph.D., producers of such well known youth guidance videos as *The Power of Choice* and *Big Changes, Big Choices*. Elkind & Sweet are the authors of many journal articles on conducting classroom discussions for character education. They are members of the Character Education Partnership, the Josephson Institute of Ethics, and Educators for Social Responsibility.

HOW TO USE THIS VIDEO

**Use in classrooms, libraries, youth groups,
or view it at home.**

This video, along with the guide and website, is designed to help teachers engage students in classroom discussion and other activities leading to deep, meaningful reflection about the kinds of people they are and want to be.

Have a great discussion!

Thoughtful, reflective discussions are essential to getting the most out of these videos. You will find some very fruitful facilitation techniques, including **Socratic Method**, at our special character education website at <www.goodcharacter.com>. The questions in this discussion guide begin on page 10.

www.goodcharacter.com provides a wealth of helpful material including questions, assignments, and activities for special topics such as **sports, workplace readiness**, and others. Please utilize this very valuable resource.

PRINCIPLES

The following principles are emphasized throughout this video series:

- ◆ Your character is defined by what you do, not by what you say or believe.
- ◆ Every choice you make helps define the kind of person you are choosing to be.
- ◆ Good character requires doing the right thing even when it's costly or risky.
- ◆ You don't have to adopt the worst behavior of others as a standard for yourself. You can choose to be better than that.
- ◆ What you do matters, and one person can make a big difference.
- ◆ The payoff for having good character is that it makes you a better person and it makes the world a better place.



WHAT IS FAIRNESS?

In this program fairness means:

- 🍏 Treat others the way you want to be treated.
- 🍏 Treat people equally and impartially.
- 🍏 Consider the feelings of all people who will be affected by your actions.
- 🍏 Be open minded and reasonable.
- 🍏 Play by the rules.
- 🍏 Don't take advantage of others.

PROGRAM CONTENT

We are looking in on the “Dr. Mike Show,” a talk radio show for teenagers. Jill calls with a problem that requires her to make a fair decision, and she’s confused about how to do that. This sets in motion an in-depth exploration of fairness. Through conversation with Dr. Mike and his co-host, Anika; through flashbacks to discussions Dr. Mike has had with high school students around the country; and through a documentary look at one teenage boy’s crusade for fairness and justice in the world; Jill resolves her problem and learns that fairness is a pillar of good character.

00:38 **START OF RADIO SHOW:**

“What’s up, we’re back, and this is the Dr. Mike Show, talk radio for the under twenty crowd. I’m Anika Noni Rose, and heeeeere’s Dr. Mike.”

Dr. Mike reads a letter from a teacher about two kids who figured out how to fairly divide a candy bar in two. He remarks that it’s very tricky to achieve real fairness, and asks listeners to call in with problems concerning fairness.

The first caller is Jill, a high school senior who is directing a play. Her lead actress, Ally, keeps breaking the rules about rehearsal attendance. The other members of the cast are getting fed up, and the understudy, who isn’t as good an actress, always shows up on time. She’d love to have the role. Jill knows it’s unfair to keep Ally, but she also has a responsibility to make it the best production she can. What should she do? Dr. Mike tells Jill he recently had a discussion with some high school kids about a similar issue. . .

03:37 **BEGIN TEEN DISCUSSION:**

Dr. Mike gives this hypothetical situation:

You are a little league soccer coach. You have a rule that the kids attend all the practices. If they miss, they have to sit out the first half of the game. The week before the championship game two of your best players miss practice. What do you do?

The teens give the following responses:

-It depends on the other players. If we really need them, they should play.

-Follow the rules. Even though they're the starting players, they should still have to suffer the consequences. If the team loses, it's the two players' fault.

-Bench them because it's not fair for the others.

-You could look at it two ways. You could stay true to your own rule. If you really want to win you'll have to play them. You'd have to cheat to win.

-But then all the players would wonder what kind of coach you are. They'll lose faith in you.

Dr. Mike adds to the story: It's the end of the first quarter and you're losing. The parent of one of the benched players, who happens to be your summer employer, urges you to put his kid in the game, implying that if you don't, you won't have a job next summer. What do you do now?

-Put him in. (Laughter)

-We can talk about it here. But if you're there you wonder how you're going to support yourself. Though you'd know the moral thing to do, it's different when it's real life.

Dr. Mike asks: What happened to your principles?

-I guess I lost my principles, they're going to the side for a while. I don't know why.

-I would rather lose my job and stick with my morals than be untrue to myself.

-If you stay by your word, then in the future people will know it. It might not be victory at first but in the future it will be.

08:56 RETURN TO THE RADIO STATION: Jill is impressed with the student who would rather lose his job than his principles, but she disagrees that losing would only punish the kids who missed practice because their teammates also have a stake in winning. Jill has a stake in the success of this production because she is counting on it to help her get into a good drama school. And she thinks it will be a better production with Ally. They identify the other people who have a stake in the decision, especially Ally's understudy. When each factor is viewed individually, it seems clear what's fair. But when taken together, Jill can't sort it out. "What is fairness, anyway," she asks.

10:10 TRANSITION TO TEEN

DISCUSSION:

Dr. Mike asks: What's unfair? Define fairness.

The teens grapple with this question, and finally decide that fairness requires that all people be given equal treatment.

Other responses include:

-Being open minded and opening your heart. Be sensitive.

-You have to see things from the other side.

Dr. Mike asks: Do you consider yourself to be a fair person?

-No, not all the time.

-It depends on the way I'm treated. I'll treat someone the same way they treat me.

-If they treat me fair, I'll be fair, the golden rule.

-But you could change it by being nice to them.

-Kill them with kindness.

-If I'm kind to you, maybe you'll be kind to someone else. You can make a ripple of good things. But you have to be fair; even if they were unfair to you, you have to take the first step.

-You can't always be fair. That's how life is.

-Sometimes whatever you choose you're hurting someone. It's a lose-lose situation. But it's beyond your control. The decision of what's fair should come from your heart. If you make the wrong decision, learn from it. But be true to yourself.

16:17 BACK TO THE RADIO STATION:

Jill reluctantly admits that the only fair thing to do is stick by her rules and let Ally's understudy have the role. But, Jill points out, whatever she does will be unfair to someone. "Shouldn't I just look after my own best interests and keep Ally in the part? . . . It's an unfair world and nothing I do will make a difference." Dr. Mike says that all of our actions affect whether the world is more or less fair, and it's up to each of us to take responsibility. To illustrate the impact one person can have, he tells the following story . . .

**17:33 DOCUMENTARY: CRAIG
KIELBURGER**

We see an inspiring documentary about a teenage boy who, upon learning of the abuses of child labor in third world countries, felt compelled to take action. He founded an international organization, *Free the Children*, which is fighting to end slave child labor and which is providing direct help for exploited working children of the developing world.

27:05 RETURN TO THE RADIO STATION: Jill is inspired by the story and admits it makes her problem look small. She decides to stick by her rules even if it hurts the production. Anika explains that sometimes the understudy makes magic happen; not everything is under Jill's control. Dr. Mike points out that Jill's decision will be an example to everyone in the cast. "If you think the production is on the line, think about your character." This decision will define who you are and how you're regarded. Anika quotes Aristotle, "All virtue is summed up in dealing justly." She thinks Jill is learning that right now. Dr. Mike says that in a world where so many people think only of their own immediate interest, these teens have shown they're better than that.

Anika delivers a public service announcement about the benefits of fairness and justice.

END AT 29:30

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions to ask before the video.

1. Agree or disagree: It's an unfair world, and nothing I do is going to change that.
2. How do you know when something is unfair?

Questions to ask after the video.

3. What does treating people fairly mean? Does fairness mean everyone gets the same amount, like an equal piece of a chocolate bar? Does fairness mean enforcing the rules for everyone, even if it means losing a game? Is it possible to treat everyone fairly?
4. In the video one kid said that fairness involves putting yourself in another person's shoes? Is this true? How is it possible to do that? What does the golden rule have to do with fairness?
5. What does it mean to be open-minded? What does it mean to be impartial? What do these things have to do with fairness?
6. Is it possible to be fair without considering everyone who will be affected by your decision? Give an example.
7. What does intolerance have to do with unfairness?
8. Most people think fairness requires us to treat people equally. What does it mean to treat people equally? Give examples of equal and unequal treatment.
9. Can you think of a situation in which it might be right to give someone a special advantage? Are there ever good reasons to give unequal consequences for the same offense?
10. What if being fair to others means sacrificing something important of your own, like time, money, or even your job? How can you determine what's fair when you have to choose between yourself and others?
11. How should you treat people who are not fair with you?
12. How did the Craig Kielburger story make you feel? What did you learn from it?

13. Do you agree with Craig that "Once we realize a problem exists, it's a call for action"? What kinds of actions did Craig take? Is it realistic to think the average teenager can take meaningful action, or is Craig just a special case?

14. Craig said every person is born with a special gift. What gift do you have that could be used to bring about more justice in the world?

15. What do you think Aristotle meant when he said, "All virtue is summed up in dealing justly"? Do you agree with him?

16. What does being fair have to do with the quality of your character?

17. What are the benefits of being a fair person? How do you benefit from the fairness of others?

18. Did the video present any ideas you disagree with?

*For additional questions, or to share your own ideas with others, or for questions relating to **special topics such as sports, workplace readiness, etc.**, visit www.goodcharacter.com*

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Think of a time when you've taken unfair advantage of a person or a situation, or when someone has taken unfair advantage of you. Describe it. What was unfair about it? How did it make you feel? What did you learn from the experience?
2. How is fairness related to having respect for others? How is it related to honesty? To being reliable? To being a good citizen?
3. Craig Kielburger has written a book about his experiences called "**Free the Children**" (Harper Collins). It is very powerful, inspiring, and beautifully written. Have your students read it and write a book report.
4. Describe an unfair situation in your community and what you think should be done about it.
5. Research and write about how the legal system in a democracy attempts to administer fairness or justice. What are the elements of the legal system that are designed to make justice work?
6. Dr. Mike said that to make a fair decision you have to consider the stakeholders—all the people affected directly or indirectly by your decision. Set up a situation in which you have to make an important decision. For instance, choosing someone for a job. Are there more stakeholders than just the two applicants? How can you tell who has a stake in your decision? How does considering the stakeholders help you make a fairer decision?

*For additional assignments, or to share your own ideas with others, or for assignments relating to **special topics such as sports, workplace readiness, etc.**, visit www.goodcharacter.com*

GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. Have your students visit our special web-site <www.goodcharacter.com> where they will find opportunities to become involved in activities and issues relating to fairness and justice. For students interested in child labor and human rights, our website provides links to Free The Children and other organizations involved with these issues.
2. As a class, make the following two lists: a list of things we sometimes do in our personal lives that are unfair, and a list of things we do as a society that are unfair. What could be done to rectify these injustices so we can cross them off the list? Whose responsibility is it to correct the injustices in our society? How could you contribute to the effort? How could we do better in our personal lives?
3. Invite a judge to come and talk to your class about how he/she makes a fair decision in the courtroom.
4. Bring in articles from newspapers and magazines describing situations in which fairness and justice is an issue. Decide who is acting fairly, and who is acting unfairly in these situations.
5. One aspect of fairness is equal opportunity. Do a research study in your school to see if students feel that they have equal opportunities. Are there groups of students who don't think they do? Consider race, class, and sex in your study. Is there a group of "outcasts" in your school who feel that they're being treated unfairly? What could be done to address these complaints. Share the results of the study with the staff and other students.

For additional activities, or to share your own ideas with others, or for activities relating to special topics such as sports, workplace readiness, etc., please visit www.goodcharacter.com

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A Cyber Supplement for
“In Search of Character”

Please visit this website to find:

- * **Facilitation techniques** for conducting meaningful, productive classroom discussions, including **Socratic Method**.
- * **Additional discussion questions, writing assignments, and learning activities** contributed by teachers and youth group leaders who are using “In Search of Character.”
- * **Opportunities for your students** to become involved in activities and issues relating to the topics in these videos.
- * **Links** to key character education organizations and resources.
- * **Articles** and other writings on educating for character.
- * Special discussion guide supplements for use with **sports programs, workplace readiness programs**, and other areas of special interest.

This website is updated frequently, and you are invited to check it often. We welcome your requests for specific items to include, and we will appreciate any contributions you make by sharing your own ideas or experiences as a character educator.

ABOUT DR. MIKE. . .

Michael Thomson, Ph.D., is a youth counselor, teacher-trainer, lecturer, and author unlike any you have ever seen. Whether doing a school as-seemly, parent evening, or staff in-service, “Dr. Mike” leaves the audience with a lasting and powerful message. His audience-interactive techniques are entertaining, fun, and most of all educational. Through his naturally warm, humorous approach to important issues, Dr. Mike reveals the consequences of good choices and poor choices, and provides people with tools to take control of their lives.

Dr. Mike received his Ph.D. from The Ohio State University. He has been a high school hockey coach, a Supervisor in the Dept. of Psychology and Psychiatry at The Mayo Clinic, and Director of health care centers in Minnesota, Ohio, and Sweden. He is Head Clinician with the Ohio High School Athletic Association, and consultant to The Ohio State University athletic department. He is a Certified Reality Therapist and a certified trainer for Character Counts!™.

Dr. Mike is the author of several books for teen-agers, parents, and teachers. He lives in Ohio, with his wife, Carol, and their teenage son and daughter.

Dr. Mike is available for school assemblies, in-service trainings, and speaking engagements. He may be reached at 1-800-359-5437, or by visiting his website at www.drmikethomson.com

This video series was produced in association with
CHARACTER COUNTS!sm

The CHARACTER COUNTS! coalition is a consortium of the nation's largest and most influential educational and youth-serving organizations united in one overriding mission: strengthening the character of America's youth.



CHARACTER COUNTS!
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