

VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE

for use with
Program 6

CITIZENSHIP

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 CITIZENSHIP?

In this program citizenship means:

- 🍏 Being socially responsible—civic responsibility.
- 🍏 Doing your part for the common good.
- 🍏 Making our democracy work by voicing your opinions, voting, and participating in the decision making process.
- 🍏 Performing community service.
- 🍏 Helping to take care of the environment.
- 🍏 Obeying the laws.

PROGRAM CONTENT

We are looking in on the “Dr. Mike Show,” a talk radio show for teenagers. Kiko calls in with a personal problem that requires making a tough choice. This sets in motion an in-depth exploration of citizenship. Through conversation with Dr. Mike and his co-host, through flashbacks to discussions Dr. Mike has had with high school students around the country, and through a documentary profile of a teenage boy who exemplifies good citizenship, Kiko resolves her problem and learns that citizenship 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 heeeere’s Dr. Mike.”

Dr. Mike begins with an anecdote about his niece’s high school class selecting the janitor as their graduation speaker because of his strong contribution to the school community.

They take their first caller, Kiko. Kiko’s problem has to do with a group project in her social studies class. She’s supposed to give an oral report the next day on the subject of citizenship, and she doesn’t understand the topic. She’s considering not showing up.

Dr. Mike suggests that she prepare her report instead of letting down her group. To help her understand the topic, Dr. Mike tells her about a discussion he had with a group of teenagers on the subject of citizenship. (We, the viewers of the video, see this discussion in flashback.)

03:40 **TEEN DISCUSSION BEGINS:**

Dr. Mike asks: are you a good citizen?

The teens give the following responses:

-Yes, I have a really good heart, whether it’s giving money to a needy person on the street or supporting the people’s struggle in Mexico.

-Yes, I’m a caring person. I help people a lot.

-Yes, I’m law abiding, but I don’t give back. I’m preparing for my future. I hope to give back someday. I’m prepping to be a perfect utopian human being.

Dr. Mike asks: what does citizenship mean to you?

-Being responsible. Making sure my community works right. Helping people out. Fix the things that are going wrong.

-Realizing your actions are going to affect everyone around you. Help out. Make a positive mark on your community.

-Citizenship is having a green card - being a member of a nation.

-It's all of us working together.

-Make a positive impact. Leave something behind. Balance between looking out for self and doing something for the world around you. Whether it's helping one person or winning a Pulitzer Prize - something changed because you were there.

08:06 BACK TO RADIO STATION:

Dr. Mike asks Kiko if what she heard helped. Kiko now sees that there is a difference between simply being a citizen and being a good citizen. But when it comes to making an impact, she's skeptical. There are so many problems in the world, how can she possibly make a difference?

Dr. Mike replies with a story about a young boy on a beach littered with thousands of starfish. While he's telling this story we match cut to Dr. Mike telling this same story to a group of teens.

08:50 BEGIN TEEN DISCUSSION:

(Continuation of story) The boy is throwing starfish back into the ocean one by one. He is not daunted by the immensity of the task because he knows he is making a difference to each individual starfish he throws back.

The teens respond to the story:

-When it comes to big problems a lot of people feel that one person can't make a difference, but I think we can.

-A lot of people think their individual vote doesn't matter, but it does.

-The little boy is focused on what he can do instead of worrying about what he can't do.

-If more people felt the same as the boy who threw back the starfish, it would make a difference.

10:58 **DOCUMENTARY: DAVID LEVITT**

We see an inspiring documentary about a teenage boy who made a difference. David Levitt started out volunteering to deliver surplus food to homeless shelters, and ended up getting legislation passed to improve food distribution for the needy throughout the state of Florida. He tells us that if everybody believed they couldn't make a difference nothing would ever get done. Someone has to take responsibility.

19:03 **RETURN TO RADIO STATION**

Kiko says if that's what citizenship is, it's very intimidating. She asks what she could do that would make a difference.

19:48 **TEEN DISCUSSION - community service:**

Dr. Mike asks: what do you do that makes you a good citizen?

-I have conflicting motivations. I participate in service projects because it looks good on my college application. Even though I feel good about doing it and it helps people I wonder if I'm being a good citizen.

-Even if initially we do this for other motives, once we see what a difference we are making, it changes us and we want to go back and do more.

-A girl talks about how much her volunteer work at a children's hospital means to the kids, and how much it has meant to her.

- It doesn't matter what your initial motivation was. What matters is that the experience has changed you and now you do it because that's what you want to do. You are a good citizen.

- I was asked why I do volunteer work without being paid. My initial reason was to get the credit. But when I saw the horrible conditions I was helping to alleviate I knew what I was doing was right and my initial intentions didn't even matter any more.

- If people can just take an hour out of their day and see what an impact it makes, it gives you the best feeling in the world inside your heart.

Dr. Mike asks: do you think it's good that schools push you to do community service?

- Yes, once you start you don't want to stop. Duncan tells about his experiences helping to rebuild houses for poor people. He relates what a

difference it makes to these people and how gratifying it is for him. The feeling is “priceless.”

26:57 RETURN TO RADIO STATION:
Kiko now believes that she could do something to make a difference and she understands what citizenship is. She’s ready to prepare her report.

Anika tells us that Aristotle said that we become good people by doing good things, and these kids showed that when you act like a good citizen, that’s what you become.

Dr. Mike says that in a world where people take and take without ever giving back, these kids have proven they can be better than that. “This is the Dr. Mike Show, and we’ll be back after these special words for your next call.”

Anika delivers a public service announcement about what you can do to make your community a better place.

END AT 28:30

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions to ask before the video.

1. Agree or disagree: I don't have any responsibility to my school, my community, my nation, or anything else. My only responsibilities are to myself.
2. What is social responsibility? What does it have to do with being a good citizen?

Questions to ask after the video.

3. Dr. Mike started out with an anecdote about his niece's classmates choosing the school janitor to be their graduation speaker. What were their reasons for selecting him? Do you think those were good reasons? Why, or why not?
4. Some of the kids in the video suggested that helping needy people is an important part of being a good citizen. Do you agree?
5. The people in the video identified several aspects of citizenship. What were they? Do you agree with them? Can you think of any others?
6. Do you think you are a good citizen? Why, or why not?
7. What are the benefits of being a citizen of a country? What are the civic responsibilities that go along with citizenship? What will happen to our rights and privileges if we don't meet those responsibilities?
8. Is it important for citizens to voice their opinions and participate in the decision making process? Why, or why not?
9. Agree or disagree: Rosa Parks was guilty of poor citizenship when she refused to sit in the back of the bus because she violated the law. Under what circumstances can civil disobedience be justified? (*You might think about the Declaration of Independence and Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement.*)
10. What does good citizenship have to do with the Golden Rule? What does it have to do with good character?

11. What are the benefits of good citizen-ship?
How do you benefit from the good citizenship of others?

12. How did David Levitt's story make you feel?
What did you learn from it? What were some of the problems he encountered and how did he solve them? What attitudes helped him succeed? Is it realistic to think the average teenager could make such an impact, or is David just a special case?

13. Preparation for a Jewish bar mitzvah usually involves doing something of service to the community. Should something like this be required for high school graduation?

14. What are some of the things in your community that need improving? What could you do about it?

15. Some of the kids in the video talked about the good feeling they get from helping others who are in need. Have you ever had a similar experience?

16. 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. Identify a good citizen in your community. Write an essay describing why he or she deserves that title.
2. Write a letter to the editor of your news-paper about a problem in the community that needs to be addressed. Lay out a plan for rectifying the problem.
3. From a newspaper, magazine, TV show, or movie, identify an act of poor citizenship displayed by an adult who should know better. Write a letter of criticism to this person with the intention of trying to convince him or her to shape up. Provide specific ways in which this person can improve his/her behavior.
4. Write a speech describing the essential balance of rights and responsibilities in our democracy. Try to convince your fellow class-mates that in a democracy the preservation of our rights depends on our exercise of responsibility.
5. In ancient Greece, people felt that it was important for all people to try to leave Athens better than they found it. Write an essay in which you apply this principle to your own community.
6. Think of some kind of volunteer work you might like to do. Describe it and tell why you think you would like it. If you have done volunteer work in the past describe what it was like and what you got out of it.

*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 community service projects and other activities relating to citizenship and civic responsibility.
2. Divide the class into small groups. Have each group develop a list of do's and don'ts for good citizenship. (*See our definition on page 5.*) Have them make oral reports to the class addressing the following questions: What happens when people live in accordance with these guidelines. What happens when they don't? In what ways does apathy or failure to act as good citizens affect our community and society? How can young people demonstrate civic responsibility?
3. Identify some individuals or organizations who are making a positive difference in your community. Work in groups to interview these people and then give class reports on how they got started, why they do what they do, how they have accomplished what they have.
4. Service Project: Have the class (as a whole, or in groups) evaluate real needs in the school or community and plan a service project to meet those needs. Then, implement the plan and document its activities.
5. Have a brainstorming session about ways to improve your school. Then, develop a comprehensive plan for carrying out these changes. Be sure this plan considers the students, teachers, administrators, and everyone else who has a stake in the school.

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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