

VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE

for use with
Program 8

COURAGE

In the Video Series



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 COURAGE?

In this program courage means:

- 🍏 Stand up for what's right, even if you stand alone.
- 🍏 Don't cave in to negative peer pressure.
- 🍏 Don't avoid trying something for fear of making a mistake or failing.
- 🍏 Don't be afraid to express yourself just because some people might disapprove.

PROGRAM CONTENT

We are looking in on the “Dr. Mike Show,” a talk radio show for teenagers. Dr. Mike takes a fax from one listener and a telephone call from another, both regarding personal decisions that require courageous action. This sets in motion an in-depth exploration of what it means to be a morally courageous person. 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 the power of moral courage, both listeners get the help and inspiration they need to make the courageous (and right) decisions.

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 S.E. Townsend, and heeeeere’s Dr. Mike.”

Dr. Mike reads a fax he received from a teenage boy who just transferred to a new high school. He has been befriended by a group of popular kids who, he has noticed, pick on some of the other kids a lot. He’d like to stand up and say something to them, but he’s afraid they’ll turn against him. He wants advice about the best way to handle the situation. Rather than give the boy a simple answer from an adult, Dr. Mike decides to let him hear what other high school students around the country have to say about similar issues.

02:02 **TEEN DISCUSSION: Standing up for Principles**

Dr. Mike poses a hypothetical situation: You just got a great summer job and after a few days someone comes in to apply for work. The hiring director tosses out the application as soon as the person leaves. A co-worker then tells you that they never hire people of that race. What do you do?

The teens are all in agreement that they wouldn’t let that go unchallenged. They would raise an objection, even at the risk of getting fired.

Dr. Mike asks what does it take to speak up like that?

The teens respond that it takes integrity and courage.

Dr. Mike asks why courage is important. One girl answers that someone needs to speak out when something is wrong because if you keep your mouth shut it will just keep going on.

Dr. Mike asks: has there been a time in your life that you've stood up for something you believed in or stood up for someone?

The teens give the following responses:

- One boy tells about standing up to his soccer coach when the coach taught the players how to injure an opposing player. You have to stand up for your morals in order to make a difference.

- To be a courageous person there are certain risks, like popularity, or your reputation.

- It's much easier to be courageous when a lot of people are standing behind you than when you stand alone.

- You also begin to question if it's the right thing to do if no one is backing you up. You're putting yourself out there on an edge and you have to be strong.

- To have one person is like having a whole army behind you. That's all you need and that's what gets other people going. A boy relates a story about when he stood up for a kid who was being picked on. Then the bullies started making fun of him, but he stood firm and eventually they backed down. He learned that after you've done it once it's not that hard to stand up for what you believe in. He realized that bullies have no control over what happens unless people are backing them up.

- A girl says that the hardest thing is to look back on your situation and step aside, like an out-of-body experience. These people may be so cool, the in-crowd. How stupid it is to choose friends whose thinking you disagree with over an innocent person that they are harassing. You have to step back and look at the situation and what's the most important thing to do.

09:19 BACK TO RADIO STATION:

Dr. Mike announces that courage is the subject of the day, and he's ready to take callers.

Marty calls in with a "weird problem." She has always hung out with a wild crowd and cut class a lot and partied. But this semester she has a great algebra teacher and she's fallen in love with math. Now she doesn't want to cut class with her friends anymore, so they're giving her a hard time and

starting to avoid her. She's worried that she may have to choose between her friends and school, and she's wondering if there is some way she can have both.

Dr. Mike says that may not be as important as she thinks. He wants to tell her about a conversation he recently had with some high school kids.

10:44 TEEN DISCUSSION: Peer Pressure

- One girl talks about how she used to cut class with her friends a lot, and it took a lot of courage to give up old friends and get new ones who shared her goals and ambitions.

- Are you going to be less of a person because your friends are? If you keep yourself on a high plateau, the right people will eventually get to you.

- Another girl says she's interested in engineering. Friends tell her that's only for guys, but she disagrees with them, and she's going for it.

- You have to be true to yourself when your dreams collide with so-called friends who bring you down and take you away from your dream.

Dr. Mike asks: What are some of the obstacles that will get in the way of you achieving your goal?

The teens agree that the biggest obstacles are friends and peer pressure.

- A girl tells about how she used to allow the people she was hanging out with to drag her down because she thought they were cool. But eventually she mustered the courage to choose new friends who would encourage her to do her best. Now she is doing very well in school.

- You're yourself. If someone says you have to do something, you just say, "No. I don't have to do that. I am me. You are you."

- Your friends come and go. If they are really good friends, they won't do anything to hurt you.

Dr. Mike says you have to have courage in order to stand up against peer pressure.

- That's right. Courage is important. You would get nowhere without courage. People will kick you down if you don't have any courage.

14:47 RETURN TO RADIO STATION:

Marty says the kid who talked about friends taking you away from your dreams really hit home

because that's the way she's feeling. But changing friends changes a person's whole life, and just because she's gotten excited about one subject in school doesn't mean she wants to burn her bridges with her friends. Dr. Mike tells Marty he has a really good success story to tell her.

15:34 DOCUMENTARY: ARTURO ALVAREZ

The inspiring story of a teenage boy in South Central Los Angeles who leaves a gang and changes schools in order to turn his life around. He becomes a straight A student, gets new friends, becomes involved in Youth In Government, and earns a college scholarship to study engineering.

27:15 RETURN TO RADIO STATION:

Marty is very stimulated by Arturo's story. It "shows what you can accomplish if you have the courage." Dr. Mike adds a few words to Marty's statement: "It shows what you can accomplish if you have the courage to be yourself." Marty considers the meaning of that and concludes that she just has to do what's best for herself and let her friends sort themselves out.

S.E. tells Dr. Mike, "I've seen so many kids get into trouble just because they didn't have the courage to be different from their friends. Marty has a great opportunity here. I hope she pulls it off." Dr. Mike agrees but points out that even though it's a lot more common for people to go along with the crowd than to risk standing up for what's right, kids like Arturo and the others are proof we can be better than that.

S.E. delivers a public service announcement about the benefits of being courageous.

END AT 29:29

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions to ask before the video.

1. Thomas Jefferson said that one person with courage is a majority. What does that mean to you?
2. What is courage?

Questions to ask after the video.

3. How did Arturo's story make you feel? What did you learn from it? What were some of the pressures Arturo encountered and how did he overcome them? What risks did he take, and why? How big a factor was courage in Arturo's success? Is it realistic to think that the average teenager could stand up for him/herself the way Arturo did, or is Arturo just a special case?
4. What is moral courage? What are some historic and recent examples of moral courage or moral cowardice?
5. What things in your life require moral courage?
6. Is peer pressure a very strong influence in this school? Does it take courage to resist peer pressure?
7. What does it mean to have principles? What are some of your principles? How much are you willing to risk for your principles? Would you risk being criticized or losing popularity?
8. What do you think stops people from taking a stand against something they know is wrong?
9. In the Arturo documentary, Joe Marshall distinguished between *fearship* and *friendship*. What do you think he meant by fearship? How does it differ from friendship? Can you give any examples from your own experience?
10. Some of the teens in this video talked about standing up for kids who were being picked on. Have you ever stood up for someone who was being picked on or treated unfairly? Would you do it again? What did you learn from that experience?
11. Are there kids in your school who pick on others? How do you feel about it? Why do people allow that to happen? What could you do about it?

12. Dr. Mike's co-host, S.E., quoted an old saying that you can't discover new continents without losing sight of land. What does that mean to you? Have you ever had that kind of an experience? What did you learn from it?

13. Dr. Mike talked about having the courage to be yourself. What do you think that means? How can it require courage to be yourself?

14. Dr. Mike said that evil will continue to triumph as long as good people do nothing. What does that mean? Do you agree?

15. Is courage something you have to be born with, or can you develop it?

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

*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. Pick any question from the previous two pages and write an essay.
2. Describe a situation in which you showed moral courage. What was hard about it? What did it accomplish? How did people respond before you took your stand? What did they say to you afterwards?.
3. What was the hardest stand you ever had to take with your friends? Did it cost you anything? What were the benefits?
4. Have you ever gone along with the crowd even though you knew it was wrong? How did you feel about yourself? What did you learn from it?
5. Write about a time when you had to give up friends because they became a negative force in your life? In what way did that take courage?
6. In what ways have you demonstrated courage in your life?
7. On page 5 of this guide, we offer a behavioral definition of what courage means. Write an essay on any or all of the points in this definition of courage.
8. Write a letter to someone in the news whose courage has impressed you.
9. Write an essay about a historical event in which courage played a major role. (*The civil rights movement offers many good examples.*)

*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. What does it take to stand up against negative peer pressure? As a class, discuss the kinds of peer pressure that exist at your school. What makes it difficult to resist these pressures? Develop some good strategies for standing up to them. Compile this into a written report for the students in your school.
2. Profiles in Courage: Have the students, either individually or in groups, identify acts of courage by people in the news or by people in your school or community. Then have each individual or group make a presentation to the class and conduct a discussion. What do these selections have in common? What are their differences? What can the students learn about themselves from the selections they made? What have they learned from the people they selected?
3. Have your students bring in articles from magazines and newspapers describing situations in which moral courage is an issue. Conduct a discussion in which they decide who is acting courageously and who isn't. What difference does it make?
4. Role play some typical situations which require taking a courageous stand against a group or an individual. After each improvisation have a discussion. What important principle or issue was at stake? How well did the individual stand up? What could he/she have done better? What did you learn from this?
5. Have your students search the web for quotations and other inspiring or provocative writings on courage. Compile this into a book.

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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