

VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE

for use with
Program 9

DILIGENCE

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 DILIGENCE?

In this program diligence means:

- 🍏 Always do your best; strive for excellence.
- 🍏 Be willing to risk failure to accomplish a higher goal.
- 🍏 Be self-disciplined.
- 🍏 Learn from your mistakes and failures.
- 🍏 Look at the big picture; think long-term.
- 🍏 Set goals and stay focused.
- 🍏 Don't give up just because things seem difficult.
- 🍏 Don't leave things unfinished.
- 🍏 Don't procrastinate.

PROGRAM CONTENT

We are looking in on the “Dr. Mike Show,” a talk radio show for teenagers. Keith calls in with a personal problem that has to do with his athletic eligibility and grades. This triggers an exploration of the relationship between attitude, work habits, and success. 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 girl with disabilities, Keith resolves his problem and learns how to become a more diligent student.

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 says his daughter showed him a passage from a biography of Thomas Edison and he wants to read it on the air. It tells how Edison ran 10,000 experiments before he succeeded in getting a light bulb to work right. But he considered each failure a success because each brought him closer to the solution. This sets the topic for the show.

The first caller is Keith, a high school athlete who is in danger of losing his eligibility because a new principal has raised the required minimum grade average. Keith doesn’t think he can do any better because he’s “just not very academic.” When Dr. Mike asks how he got to be so great at sports, Keith replies that in addition to his natural talent it took a lot of hard work, discipline, focus, drive, and perseverance. Dr. Mike asks why he can’t do the same with academics. Keith replies that he just doesn’t have the same abilities at school as at sports. He gives an example of studying for a test and getting a bad grade anyway. When asked if he did the very best he could to prepare for that test, Keith says it should have been enough to get a B. Dr. Mike suggests that Keith’s problem may be in the way he sees things. He wants to tell Keith about a conversation he recently had with some high school kids.

00:00 **TEEN DISCUSSION: discipline, etc.**
Dr. Mike asks the teens about discipline and goals.

A girl replies that discipline is not just for the future, it's for now. She describes how she is now paying for her lack of discipline as a freshman, when she would cut class, not do homework, and procrastinate. She got side-tracked easily by her friends.

There is some discussion about friends being a diversion, about getting sidetracked, about the power of negative peer pressure, and about procrastination..

The first girl feels ashamed because she knows she could have done a lot better. She says peer pressure was the most important factor. But she has changed. Now she goes to class and studies and she's getting very good grades.

"I think everybody has got to be ready to take that first step towards a goal. You never thought that you could do it. But once you take that first step, you find out."

Dr. Mike asks: What is that first step?

A boy replies: "When you look in yourself and find that self motivation. Just to say, 'I know what this is and I don't need it right now. Let me try something new.' I think that's the first step."

And once you respect yourself, then you'll start working hard and be motivated. You've really got to want to be something. And motivation and respect is really important for discipline.

Dr. Mike asks: What's is perseverance?

The teens give the following responses:
- To keep doing it, even if you don't succeed at first, if you have problems or don't do as well as you hoped, you should continue doing it. Because sometimes even if you are really disciplined, something can go wrong. But you shouldn't feel bad. Just continue doing it and hope for the best.

- Many successful people have gotten lots of rejections and were told they wouldn't make it, but they didn't listen. If you're strong about what you want to do in life, you'll do it.

Dr. Mike asks about giving up easily.

- A girl replies if you tell yourself you aren't going to make it, you won't.

- A boy tells about a quote he heard: it takes 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration. That is so true.

You've got to want it, and you've got to work to get it. And the wanting it is the easy part. It's the working to get it that's the hard part.

- My track coach told me something that I'll always remember and it helped me get past my 9th grade problem. He said if my goal is here then I'm here (she holds her arms apart.) If you pass a class, you're not there yet. But remember, you're one step closer.

Dr. Mike asks whether you should set high goals that challenge you, or lower goals that are easy to achieve.

- Set high goals, but break them into small pieces that you can achieve.

- A girl says the theater program at this school has very high expectations and the productions live up to it. But her acting class in the city has low expectations, so they aren't as good.

- When we set easy goals we don't work as hard, so we don't do as well.

- Everything takes time, effort, will and self motivation. You can get anything in life if you just don't settle for less.

13:34 **BACK TO THE RADIO STATION**

Keith says that even if he has been giving up too easily and expecting too little of himself, and even if he is capable of doing better, he has too many things that get in the way. He identifies a few obstacles he faces. Dr. Mike reminds him that regardless of his obstacles, if he doesn't get his grades up he isn't going to play. To put Keith's obstacles into a better perspective, Mike offers the following:

14:25 **DOCUMENTARY: ANNIE HENNING**

We see an inspiring documentary about a teenage girl with cerebral palsy. Despite the fact that every little task requires a lot of effort, Annie expects and gets a lot out of life. She competes in an adaptive rowing program, practices karate, and works hard in school so she can become a clinical psychologist.

21:26 **RETURN TO THE RADIO STATION**

Keith now realizes that he's been making too much of his obstacles. A coach once told him that his biggest obstacle was himself, and now he's beginning to understand what that meant.

Dr. Mike returns to a question he asked earlier; what would happen if Keith approached school with the same diligence he applied to sports?

Keith acknowledges he would certainly do better, at least well enough to stay eligible for sports.

Dr. Mike asks him what he'll do if he runs into any more obstacles. Keith replies that if that happens he'll just think about Annie.

S.E. says there's an old saying that whether you think you can or think you can't, either way you're right. And Keith is about to learn how much his attitude determines his success.

Dr. Mike agrees, saying that in a world where so many people are satisfied with just getting by instead of doing their best, these teens are proof that we can be better than that.

S.E. delivers a public service message about the benefits of being a diligent person.

END AT 23:55

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions to ask before the video.

1. Successful people get that way by being lucky. Agree, or disagree? Explain.
2. If I try hard and don't succeed it's not my fault. Agree, or disagree? Explain.

Questions to ask after the video.

3. How did the documentary about Annie Henning make you feel? What can you learn from it? Did it give you any insights into yourself, or affect the way you view your own life? How do Annie's obstacles compare with your own?
4. What qualities does Annie have that will help her in reaching her goals?
5. Does attitude have anything to do with success? If so, what?
6. How do your expectations about yourself affect what you will accomplish?
7. At the end of the program, Dr. Mike's co-host, S.E., mentioned an old saying that "Whether you think you can or think you can't, either way you're right." What does that mean? How true is it?
8. In the passage that Dr. Mike read from Thomas Edison's biography, Edison appears to see failures as successes. How can a failure be a success?
9. What do you think causes some people to give up and stop trying? Do you ever do that? Why, or why not?
10. Keith (the caller) says a coach once told him that his biggest obstacle is himself. What does that mean? Have you ever felt that way?
11. One boy in the video suggests that it is better to set high goals that are challenging rather than low goals that are easy. Do you agree? Why bother? How can that help you?
12. One boy in the video said that discipline equals self-respect plus motivation. Do you agree with this equation? How can you apply it to your own experience?

13. Have you ever felt that pressures from your peers prevented you from accomplishing something you wanted? Have you ever been affected by negative comments people have made about your abilities? What can you do about these kinds of external pressures when they get in the way of your success?

14. What is diligence? What is discipline? What is perseverance? How would you rate yourself in each of these areas? How could you improve?

15. How could you personally benefit by becoming a more diligent person?

16. Did this 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. Pick any question from the previous two pages and write an essay.
2. How diligent are you? For each of the behaviors listed below, write a thorough evaluation of yourself:
 - a. I always do my best; I strive for excellence.
 - b. I am willing to risk failure to accomplish a higher goal.
 - c. I am self-disciplined.
 - d. I learn from my mistakes and failures.
 - e. I look at the big picture; I think long-term.
 - f. I set goals and stay focused.
 - g. I don't give up just because things seem difficult.
 - h. I don't leave things unfinished.
 - i. I don't procrastinate.
 - j. I learn from people who have made a habit of all these things.
3. Write about an event in your life in which you succeeded at something which was very challenging. How much did any of the above listed behaviors contribute to your success? What did you learn from that?
4. Make a chart of the things in your studies that are easy for you and those things that seem difficult. Now write out a plan for what you can do to overcome your difficulties.
5. How has negative or positive peer pressure played a role in your successes and failures?

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. Brainstorm ways in which you can all become more disciplined in school. Discuss the problems students face, such as procrastinating and cutting classes. Make a list of the skills and attitudes needed for students to take more responsibility for their own learning, and to reach their goals.
2. Select someone in your community who exemplifies the quality of diligence. Invite this person to speak to your class about his/her own background, any obstacles overcome, and the factors that led to his/her success.
3. Break up into small groups, and conduct a survey in your school, asking questions like these: Where do you want to be in five years, in ten years? What are you now doing to get to where you want to be? What are the most serious obstacles that prevent people from accomplishing their goals? Share what you have learned from this process with the entire class.
4. As a group, research Thomas Edison's life. See what general principles you can glean from his methods and work habits that you can apply to your own studies. Make a list of these principles, and present them in the form of a bulletin board or as a group report.
5. As a group, research resources in your school and in your community that will provide support for students who are having difficulty in their studies. Assemble these resources into a folder and distribute it to all class members. Perhaps share this information with other classes.

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!
(310) 846-4800
www.charactercounts.org

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ELKIND+SWEET COMMUNICATIONS, INC.
273 Ninth St., San Francisco, CA 94103
1-800-359-5437
info@livewiremedia.com

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