

# VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE

for use with  
Program 10

## INTEGRITY

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:

<b>Trustworthiness</b>	<b>Citizenship</b>
<b>Respect</b>	<b>Honesty</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Courage</b>
<b>Fairness</b>	<b>Diligence</b>
<b>Caring</b>	<b>Integrity</b>

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](http://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 INTEGRITY?

**In this program integrity means:**

- 🍏 Always do what's right, even when its costly or difficult.
- 🍏 Be true to your best self.
- 🍏 Live up to the highest ethical standards.
- 🍏 Don't compromise your values by giving in to temptation.

## PROGRAM CONTENT

We are looking in on the “Dr. Mike Show,” a talk radio show for teenagers. Rebecca calls in with a personal problem involving a challenge to her principles. This sets in motion an in-depth exploration of the subject of integrity. 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 montage of six teenagers of exemplary character, Rebecca resolves her problem and learns that her integrity is her gift to herself as well as to the rest of the world.

### 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 an email he received from a listener whose soccer team had been raising money by selling candy made by an environ-mental polluter. He convinced them to change to a different candy company. Mike congratulates him for standing up for his beliefs, and decides to devote today’s program to integrity.

The first caller is Rebecca, a serious clarinet player. She just tried out for the all-city band and was selected over a disabled girl who had played much better. When she asked the band director about it he said, “Don’t lose any sleep over it. We can’t accommodate handicapped kids.” Rebecca is upset and doesn’t know what to do. Dr. Mike says she has to think this through very carefully and make sure that whatever she decides is the best possible decision for her to make. When Rebecca asks how to do that, Dr. Mike decides to tell her about some conversations he’s had recently with kids around the country.

### 03:29 **TEEN DISCUSSION BEGINS: Eulogy:**

Dr. Mike asks the teens how they want to be remembered after they die.

Their responses include: loveable, real, caring, trustworthy, respectful, a good friend, virtuous, helpful to others. They do not consider wealth and power to be admirable accomplishments.

**Dr. Mike asks,** are you living up to your eulogy?

One girl says she's working on it by doing volunteer work with AIDS patients and crack babies. Another girl says she's got a long way to go but is keeping to the path. A boy says he's doing pretty well but has a long way to go. He wants people at his funeral to be able to say good things about him without lying.

**11:17 RETURN TO RADIO STATION:**

Dr. Mike asks Rebecca how she wants to be remembered. Rebecca replies that she wants to be remembered as a good person - honest and fair - and also a great musician. Dr. Mike tells her about a lesson he learned from his grandfather: "If you want to know how to live your life, think about how you want to be remembered and then live your life backwards." But look what happens when we make choices that conflict with how we want to be remembered.

**12:18 TEEN DISCUSSION: Pop Quiz**

Dr. Mike gives a hypothetical situation: You have a great part time job. Your supervisor instructs you to do something you know amounts to theft. He says if you keep your mouth shut there will be something in it for you, too. What do you do?

A few of the kids indicate they wouldn't do it. Others are mainly concerned about the consequences. When Dr. Mike assures them there is no possibility of getting caught, many of them acknowledge they would do it. To those who wouldn't, Dr. Mike asks why not? They reply that it's immoral and wrong. Then Dr. Mike turns to the kids who said they'd go along with the scam and asks them how that choice fits in with the way they said they want to be remembered. They laugh with the recognition that they've just been busted.

Then Dr. Mike selects the boy who said earlier that he didn't want people to have to lie about him at his funeral, and asks him to explain his decision. After several false starts at trying to rationalize his choice, the boy admits that his choice contradicts what he had said earlier. Dr. Mike goes on to a few of the others who had said they would do it. They all get the point that they are making choices that contradict their own higher values.

**Dr. Mike asks** the girls who had made the right decision why they became so quiet. They say that the peer pressure made them feel insecure, so they took a low profile.

Then, one girl sums things up with the observation that, "Spontaneous decisions often reveal a lot about you. Because I immediately said I'd take the

money, I feel like I have to look in the mirror and dig a little deeper and make it so that I won't want to take that money so quickly. I wouldn't just say, 'Hey, I'm not going to get caught.' ”

**Dr. Mike concludes** the discussion with the following: “Good for you. Life is filled with a boatload of final exams. But I'm more interested in how you're going to do on the pop quizzes. The pop quizzes are those moments when you ask yourself, “What am I going to do? Is it the right thing to do? Should I do it?” And, “Is this who I am? Is this who I want to be?” So don't ever forget that.

**18:59 RETURN TO RADIO STATION:**

Rebecca realizes that she is having one of those pop quizzes, herself. And that to be true to her principles she should try to convince the band director that he should take the girl in the wheelchair. But if he just gets angry and throws Rebecca out of the band and still doesn't take the other girl then it's all a big waste and nobody benefits.

Dr. Mike tells her that she will get a lot of benefit out of just doing the right thing. Because she'll be gaining her integrity, and her integrity is a gift to herself as well as to the rest of the world. Rebecca is not sure she understands this point. So Dr. Mike says, “In past weeks on this show we've done stories about kids who have made this world a better place by living up to their highest values. These are kids with real integrity, and I want to tell you about some of them.”

**20:14 DOCUMENTARY MONTAGE:**

We see six inspiring profiles of teenagers who have made a difference in their communities and the world just by living up to their highest values.

**26:59 RETURN TO RADIO STATION:**

Rebecca realizes that if she stands up against the band director's prejudices, she'll be helping to make things better, and that would be a gift to the world. And even if the band director still doesn't pick the other girl, at least she won't have gone along with it.

Anika quotes Gandhi, “We must be the change we want to see.” And she compliments Rebecca for staying true to her principles.

Dr. Mike concludes that we've seen a lot of kids on that path. And, in a world where it is so easy to compromise our principles for personal gain, these kids are proof that we can be better than that. This is

the Dr. Mike Show. We'll be back to take more of your calls after these words.

Anika delivers a public service message about the benefits of being a person of integrity.

**END AT 29:00**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### *Questions to ask before the video.*

1. How do you want to be remembered after you die?
2. Are you that kind of person?

### *Questions to ask after the video.*

3. Dr. Mike told Rebecca that if she did the right thing she wouldn't be losing anything because she'd be gaining her integrity. What does that mean? Do you agree?
4. In what way is your integrity your gift to yourself? In what way is it your gift to the world? Can you think of any examples?
5. Craig Kielburger says that we all have our special gifts. What is your special gift?
6. Does thinking about how you want to be remembered tell you anything about how you should live your life?
7. Have you ever heard the phrase "Let your life speak"? What do you think that means?
8. Is being thought of as someone with integrity important to you? Why, or why not? How would you feel if someone accused you of not having integrity?
9. What does the word "integrity" mean to you?
10. What does the expression "walk your talk" mean? Do you know people who walk their talk? What do you think of them? Do you know people who don't walk their talk? What do you think of them? How do you feel when you hear people say one thing and do another?
11. How do you feel when you see someone who's not willing to stand up for his/her beliefs?
12. Have you ever taken a stand that was unpopular and had to pay the price for that? What did you do? What was the outcome? How did you feel afterwards? What did you learn from the experience?

13. What does "compromising your principles" mean? Give an example. How far would you compromise your principles in order to get ahead?
14. In what ways do you benefit from making choices that are consistent with your highest values?
15. What would you do if you were in Rebecca's place, and the Band Director chose you over the girl in the wheelchair? What does Rebecca's ultimate choice tell us about her as a person?
16. What do you think Gandhi meant when he said, "We must be the change we want to see?"
17. What does integrity have to do with 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](http://www.goodcharacter.com)*

## WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Pick any question(s) from the previous two pages and write an essay.
2. Write your own eulogy, describing how you want to be remembered. Then write about what you will need to do in your life to be remembered the way you would like. Include what challenges or obstacles you will face in order to reach this goal and how you might overcome them.
3. Make a list of your principles, or your most basic beliefs that you wouldn't compromise no matter what. Now select one of these principles, and write a short story (real or imagined) describing a time you did some-thing courageous by standing up for this principle. In describing this experience, you might think of expanding on Dr. Mike's notion that life's choices are like pop quizzes.
4. Encyclopedias don't often have any entry for the word "integrity." Try your hand at writing one.
5. Imagine that you have been invited to give a speech to a group of young children on how and why they should not buckle under to peer pressure. Write that speech.
6. Identify someone in public life who you think has demonstrated a lack of integrity. Write a letter to this person saying what you think of his/her behavior and what he/she should do to shape up.
7. Write a letter to someone in the news who's integrity has impressed you.

*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](http://www.goodcharacter.com)*

## GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. Bring in some newspaper articles about people who you think have integrity and people who you think who do not. What distinguishes one from the other? Who gets more play in the media?

2. Divide the class into small groups. Have each group develop a list of do's and don'ts for being a person of integrity. (*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 integrity and lack of integrity affect our community and society? In what ways can/do young people demonstrate integrity?

3. Many people complain that political leaders lack integrity. Develop a check-list for evaluating the integrity of political leaders, including student body officers. Use this check list, rank political leaders you are familiar with. Does a high-ranking affect how you feel about these leaders? Would it influence the way you would vote?

4. Role play some typical situations in which a group of people try to put pressure on one person to do something that is against his/her principles. Do this several times with different outcomes, such as caving into the group's pressure, or mustering the courage to stand up for what you believe. After the improvisation, discuss what you learned from this. Did you discover anything about group dynamics that you can use if you are ever in a similar situation?

*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](http://www.goodcharacter.com)*

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**www.goodcharacter.com**  
***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](http://www.drmikethomson.com)***

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This video series was produced in association with  
**CHARACTER COUNTS!**<sup>sm</sup>

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](http://www.charactercounts.org)

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