

VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE

for use with
Program 5

CARING

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!

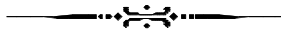
Thoughtful, reflective discussions are essential to getting the most out of these videos. You will find some very fruitful facilitation techniques, including **Socratic Method**, at our special character education website at <www.goodcharacter.com>. The questions in this discussion guide begin on page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

In this program caring means:

- 🍏 Being responsive to the concerns and needs of others.
- 🍏 Treating others with kindness, concern, and generosity.
- 🍏 Being charitable.
- 🍏 Giving of yourself for the benefit of others.
- 🍏 Not being mean, cruel, or insensitive.

PROGRAM CONTENT

We are looking in on the “Dr. Mike Show,” a talk radio show for teenagers. Roberto calls in perplexed that his dad called him selfish and uncaring. He doesn’t know what to make of it. This sets in motion an in-depth exploration of what it means to be a caring person. Through conversation with Dr. Mike and his co-host, Anika; through flash-backs to discussions Dr. Mike has had with high school students around the country; and through a documentary profile of a teenage girl who exemplifies the virtues of caring and altruism, Roberto resolves his problem and learns that caring 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 teen who gave a homeless man a sleeping bag only to learn that the man appreciated the visit more than the donation. Anika recalls hearing a homeless person say that lots of people want to do things for them, but no one wants to do things with them. Dr. Mike devotes the program to the subject of caring.

Roberto calls in about a family conflict. His aunt is getting married, requiring him to be gone for an entire weekend. Roberto wants to stay home and practice with his band. Roberto’s dad wants him to come with the family and calls Roberto “selfish and uncaring.” This reminds Dr. Mike about a discussion he’s recently had with a group of teens. (*We see this discussion in flashback.*)

04:06 **BEGIN TEEN DISCUSSION:**

Dr. Mike says: he often hears people say that teens are “just uncaring and very selfish.” He asks the group what they think of that.

The teens give the following responses:

- There are some kids like that, but some adults are the same way. Not all of us are like that.
- You have to prove them wrong—not just say it.
- Most people will look after themselves first.

Dr. Mike asks: To what extent would you inconvenience yourself for another person?

-For your parents or a close friends you may go to extremes.

-There's different degrees of caring for someone you just met, a close friend, or a family member.

-I care for other people, but I have college to pay for next year. It depends on the situation before I'll give someone money.

-I'd give my gloves to someone freezing on the street, especially a little child or a mother.

-I'll give money to a hungry person on the street.

-I'd buy them food, but I won't give a stranger money.

Dr. Mike asks: How important is it to have caring in your life?"

-When no one cares, you feel alone. But when one person cares about you it's all you need.

-With caring, you can share your feelings with someone you trust and they can help you.

-During these years, having someone who cares for you makes you stronger.

-But there has to be an infrastructure that works. It can't just be based on peoples' kindness.

Dr. Mike says: Fill in the blank, caring is ____.

-Being willing to give something up for someone else.

-It's not just giving up my seat to an elderly person, but also being there when you need me.

-It's showing compassion.

-Having consideration for other people's cultures and beliefs.

-When you care for someone or they care for you it's like a gift. It's special and not owed to you.

-Part of caring is putting yourself second. When you don't care about anyone, you consider yourself more important.

09:20 BACK TO THE RADIO SHOW:

Roberto thinks the teentalkers proved his point: caring is responding to other people's needs, and Roberto does that by helping his younger sister with homework and by playing music for children in the hospital. Anika says that the teens also said caring means giving something up for somebody else and putting yourself second. Roberto agrees, but asks if that means he has to do anything anyone asks of him. "Don't I have a choice?" Dr. Mike says you do have a choice, but sometimes we get so involved in our own lives we neglect our caring side. Dr. Mike gives a hypothetical situation about a "giving tree," where you pull a tag off a Christmas tree. The tag bears the name of a disadvantaged child and a gift request.

10:33 RETURN TO TEEN DISCUSSION:

Dr. Mike continues: Your tag says Susie, age 13, needs pajamas. Your parents give you \$25.00 to buy them, but you see a CD you'd like to have. What do you do?

The teentalkers all agree they'd buy the pajamas, it would be selfish and wrong to do otherwise. Even if they could get the pajamas for less, they'd spend the whole \$25 on gifts for the little girl.

-But I don't think if you're told to pick a name and told what to get it that it shows caring. You're just obedient. The real test is if you spend your own money and you choose to take a name off the tree. If you care, you do it on your own.

13:35 RETURN TO THE RADIO STATION:

Roberto admits he'd try to get both the pajamas and the CD and then he'd feel guilty because, like the kids said, it would be selfish, especially since it wasn't his own money. He agreed that the real test would be if you'd spent your own. This leads Dr. Mike into the story of Gillian Kilberg.

14:23 DOCUMENTARY: GILLIAN KILBERG

We see an inspiring documentary about Gillian Kilberg, a teenage girl who inherited \$20,000 from her grandmother and spent it all to create a summer day camp for disadvantaged kids.

20:40 RETURN TO THE RADIO STATION:

Roberto is impressed. He's always thought an inheritance was a way to get something for yourself, but for Gillian it was a way to give something to others. Dr. Mike asks Roberto what is the most

caring thing anyone has ever done for him. Roberto has to think about it.

21:25 TRANSITION TO TEEN DISCUSSION:

Dr. Mike asks: What's the most caring anyone has ever done for you?

Several teens talk about the ways in which their parents have cared for and supported them.

-The teacher who taught me how to read. Her example helped me to become more patient.

23:44 RETURN TO THE RADIO STATION:

Dr. Mike repeats the question. Roberto recalls how his dad worked overtime so Roberto could take music lessons. Anika comments that his dad must care a lot about him. Roberto recognizes that he's being selfish about the wedding, and says it wouldn't kill him to make this "sacrifice." Anika asks why he calls it a sacrifice instead of seeing it as an opportunity to bring happiness to his dad and aunt, and prove he's not selfish and uncaring. Roberto sees that she's right. But he wishes he and his dad could solve problems without fighting. Dr. Mike suggests that Roberto and his dad aren't really listening to each other. He tells Roberto to show his dad he cares and hear him out. Roberto agrees to try it and thanks Dr. Mike. Anika quotes Kahlil Gibran, "You give little when you give of your possessions, it's when you give of yourself that you truly give." Dr. Mike agrees, saying that in a world when many people are too involved with themselves to pay attention to the needs of others, these teens have shown they're better than that.

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

END AT 26:35

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions to ask before the video.

1. A lot of people say that teenagers are self absorbed and don't care about anything but themselves. Do you agree or disagree?

Questions to ask after the video.

2. How do you feel when people show that they really care about you? How do you feel when you do something really caring for someone else?

3. In what way's is this a caring world? In what ways is it uncaring? What could each of us do to make this a more caring world?

4. When someone is uncaring how does that affect friends, school and community? Give examples.

5. Agree or disagree: It's uncool to be a caring person. Why, or why not?

6. To what extent would you inconvenience yourself for another person?

7. Do you agree with the student who suggested that caring means putting ourselves second?

8. Would you give money to a stranger on the sidewalk who asked for spare change? Why or why not? Would it make a difference if the person were a mother with child, b) very old, c) from a different culture? What does giving money to a stranger have to do with caring anyway?

9. At the beginning of the program Dr. Mike read a letter from Benjy, who said he had learned that listening was a greater act of caring than throwing coins in a cup. Why do you think he felt that way?

10. How could Dr. Mike's advice about listening help solve Roberto's problem?

11. How did the story of Gillian and her day camp make you feel? What did you learn from it?

12. Do you agree with Gillian that "everyone can make a difference?"

13. Is it realistic to think that the average teenager could make such an impact on the community, or is Gillian just a special case?

14. Can you choose to be a caring person, or do you have to be born that way?

15. Agree or disagree: By performing caring acts, we become caring people. Explain.

16. One student said, "Caring needs a government that works." In our country, do government programs show caring for people in need? Do you think we can pass laws that will make people care? Why or why not?

17. Explain the quote from Kahlil Gibran, "You give little when you give of your possessions. It's when you give of yourself that you truly give."

18. What does caring have to do with the quality of your character?

19. Do you disagree with any of the ideas presented in this video?

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. Describe the most caring thing anyone has ever done for you. What effect did that have on you?
2. Dr. Mike reported having heard from one 11th grade student: "I didn't ask to be born. I don't owe anybody anything. Why should I care about you? Why should I care about anyone?" Write an essay commenting on the attitude
3. Write a thank you note to someone in your community who did something very caring. Or, write a thank you note to a historic figure, for instance, Florence Nightingale, to thank her for what she did.
4. Watch a movie or TV program, and then write about how the actions of the characters demonstrated either caring or uncaring. Write a critique of an uncaring character, suggesting how he or she could have been a more caring person.
5. Write about a real or an imagined experience in which you performed a random act of caring, and the results it produced.
6. Imagine that you have just inherited \$20,000, and you want to spend it all to help other people. What would you do with it, and why? What effect would it have on the people you would be helping.

*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 website <www.goodcharacter.com> where they will find opportunities to become involved in community service projects and other activities that involve acts of caring.
2. Divide the class into small groups. Have each group develop a list of do's and don'ts for caring behavior. (*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 caring and uncaring behavior affect our community and society?
3. Service Project: Have the class or groups plan a service project. Consider helping younger children learn something valuable or going and visiting senior citizens. Now go out and make this happen.
4. Brainstorm ways to make your school environment more caring. Create a list of recommendations, and place them in your school newspaper or on a poster. Find a way to deal with the cynics who will sneer at the whole idea.
5. Write two headings on the blackboard: Caring and Uncaring. Take turns listing things under these headings. Then discuss what it would kinds of efforts it would take to move all of the items from the uncaring column into the caring column.

*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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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

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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www.charactercounts.org

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