



## ***What's Your "Level of Concern"?***

### **Talking with Teens About COVID-19, Online Schooling, and Surviving the Chaos of 2020**

#### **Discussion Guide & Suggested Companion Activities**

The 4 parts of this webinar are designed to be used as a teaching tool in high school and middle school classrooms, or in smaller group settings where that is feasible. Although each of the episodes may very well provide some insights and encouragement to students merely upon being viewed, our greater hope is that each of the videos can be used as a catalyst for the students to open up and share with one another and the adults in the room about their own challenges and frustrations with life and school in a world of pandemic-related restrictions.

This Discussion Guide contains *suggested* questions that a teacher, guidance counselor, social worker, or other helping professional can use to engage the students about what they saw and maybe learned or were encouraged to think about in each part of the program. We would encourage the use of these questions as a *starting place*, but also want helping professionals to feel the freedom to depart from these questions, or substitute their own. What is most important is meeting the students wherever they are—whether it is similar to or different than what the Student Roundtable members have described experiencing. Whatever reaction they have can become a great jumping off place for a good discussion, so we'd encourage the use of active listening skills to help guide the conversation go wherever their little hearts and minds want to go.

We would suggest asking open ended questions first, to assess what the kids remembered or liked or even disliked about each part. Once they are engaged and talking or laughing about the things the Student Roundtable participants did or said, we hope that will pave the way for a more purposeful conversation regarding what *your* students themselves are feeling and experiencing. Our intent in developing this program is that the drawing out of their expression of feelings and thoughts should be prioritized over and above the communication or imparting of any specific guidance or wisdom.

Following the discussion guide is a list of **Suggested Companion Activities** to consider using as well, if time and resources are available. We'd love to know which of these resources you find most helpful, so please send us any suggestions for additional activities, or any other responses or feedback on the discussion guide as a whole, by email to [chris@reeltimecle.com](mailto:chris@reeltimecle.com).



**Discussion Guide for Part 1:** *“How long have I been here?”*

1. One of the round table members said that there have been ups and down to dealing with COVID. Have you had that experience? What has it been like for you?
2. What do you miss about not going to school?
3. Who are the people that you miss spending time with the most?
4. How can you tell when learning at home is getting to you, really “taking you off your game”?
5. What kinds of effects has the relative isolation required by COVID had on you? On your mood, your energy levels, concentration, your outlook, your sleep etc.?
6. Some people say that being bored can be a good source of creativity. Have you experienced that? How do you cope with being bored?
7. What are some of the things you like to do when you are alone?
8. What is it like to be alone with your thoughts? How do you respond to negative self-talk? What works to reduce the negative impact on your mood?
9. Do you have a “Karen” in your life ? (*Someone you can trust, and with whom you can speak freely about your concerns.*)



### **Discussion Guide for Part 2:**

*“Pretty standard Spider-Man stakes... You get used to it...”*

1. How has the COVID-19 pandemic, with all its precautions and changes, affected your stress level?
2. How can you tell when you are getting “stressed out,” or that stress is starting to get to you? Where do you notice it in your body?
3. When you are stressed how does it change your interactions with other people? What do your friends and family say happens to you when you are stressed?
4. How can stress be both helpful and harmful sometimes?
5. What is it that helps Miles relax? What helps you relax?
6. Do you take care of yourself? What does that look like, in practice?
7. How has taking care of yourself changed in the COVID-19 era? What have you tried that maybe didn't work as well, and what have you tried that works well?
8. Is there any new habit or practice that you have started during COVID that you might want to continue when and if things return to “normal”?



### **Discussion Guide for Part 3:**

*“Time to swing, just like I taught ya....”*

1. Miles has to develop new skills, on the fly, “under intense life-threatening pressure.” How can you relate to what he is experiencing in this scene?
2. Miles gets even more overwhelmed with all the commands and instructions that “Janky Hobo Spiderman” is giving him, as they swing thru the woods. Do you ever experience information overload? What is that like?
3. Have you experienced times where you have figured how to cope, only then to be faced with new challenges, or new restrictions and rules? What has that been like for you?
4. Where do you get your information about COVID-19? Are you getting conflicting messages? When that happens, how does it leave you feeling?
5. How do you decide whom to trust? When and how do you know to trust your own instincts?
6. One of the students on the roundtable said it is important to reach out for help. What is it like for you to ask for help? Who is most helpful for you to reach out to? What means of reaching out seem to work best? (i.e., texting, emailing, calling, in person)?
7. What kinds of qualities would you want to have in a mentor or person you are going to for guidance or encouragement?
8. Why might it be important to figure out what it is you want before seeking out someone to speak to (i.e. support/venting, brainstorming solutions)?



### **Discussion Guide for Part 4:**

*“Come on Peter. Come on, Spiderman!”*

1. What helps you get out of a “rut” or deal with challenges?
2. Think of a time you have accessed inner strengths and qualities when you didn’t think you had them. What was that like? How were you able to do that?
3. Peter uses self-talk to help him succeed. Is self-talk (whether out loud or to yourself) helpful for you? Is it sometimes not helpful (such as when you say negative things about yourself)?
4. How does (or could) self-talk help you in dealing with COVID-19 or other sources of stress?
5. How do you deal with things that are out of your control? What works to help calm you when you are feeling anxious, overwhelmed, or exhausted?
6. One student on a roundtable suggested trying to “get into a creative mindset” when responding to making mistakes or responding to stress. What does that mean to you? What are some things you could do that might help you get into a creative mindset?



## **SUGGESTED COMPANION ACTIVITIES (to go with any part)**

- Have the students work together (as a class or in small groups) to make up a poem, a song, or even a rap that helps them remember the helpful things to do to take care of themselves and deal with their difficult emotions (And if you happen to record them doing anything like this and want to, email us a link or a copy: [chris@reeltimecle.com](mailto:chris@reeltimecle.com) )
- Have students make a list of all the things that make them happy or grateful—either on lists to hang in the room, or privately, in their own journals or notebooks
- Try some deep breathing, or very simple stretching together
- If you have the facilities and the resources (and can do so safely!) have the students all bake something simple together. Talk about the stirring and the measuring and the smells as you lead them through the various steps.
- Have students draw a picture of themselves when they are any of the following: sad, afraid, lonely, nervous, or angry/frustrated. Then have them draw a picture of something that helps them feel more happy or grateful at the same time.
- Have students draw a picture of themselves going to school online (if they are doing that).