

PERSONAL HERO

A hero is someone who makes a sacrifice or takes a risk, however small, to help others.

Can you name someone who you consider to be a hero of yours?

If you can think of someone right away, you are fortunate!

If not, it's worth understanding the value of having at least one **PERSONAL HERO**. A personal hero is someone you admire, someone you look up to. It is someone who is very wise and compassionate, someone you might want to be like.

- A personal hero can be someone you know, like a family member, a teacher, or a friend, whether or not that individual is still alive.
- A personal hero can be someone you don't know *personally* but have learned about, like a historical figure, such as Marsha P. Johnson (who is sometimes referred to as the "Rosa Parks of the LGBTQ movement").
- A personal hero can also be an athlete like Abby Wambach, a musician like Lady Gaga, a YouTuber like Brendan Jordan, or an actor like Elliot Page.
- Another example of personal heroes might be Adam Bouska and Lee Parshley, who created the NOH8 campaign to promote equality in marriage.
- A personal hero can also be a fictional character, like Dumbledore from *Harry Potter*, Charlie from *Supernatural*, or Quentin from *The Magicians*.

You might think: Why is it important to have personal heroes?

Researchers have found that having personal heroes has many benefits.

Heroes give us hope.

Even if our lives are happy and peaceful, we can't help but recognize that the world is a troubled place. Heroes bring light into a dark world. Heroes prove to us that no matter how much suffering there is in the world, there are still good people around us. We can count on them to do the right thing.

Heroes provide dramatic, entertaining stories that teach us about *ourselves*.

Through their stories, we learn that all heroes make mistakes, doubt themselves, and confront their own vulnerabilities and fears as they make their way to greatness. They persevere and grow through their struggles.

While enjoying heroes' stories, we can learn important lessons right alongside them.

Heroes pick us up when we are down and remind us we are not alone in our struggles.

Studying our heroes' stories can help us understand what it means to be human -- that we ALL face challenges at some point. Some of these challenges include feeling alone, not being accepted for our sexual orientation or gender identity, or feeling lost in how to help others who are struggling, too. Our personal heroes can help us feel less alone in our struggles.

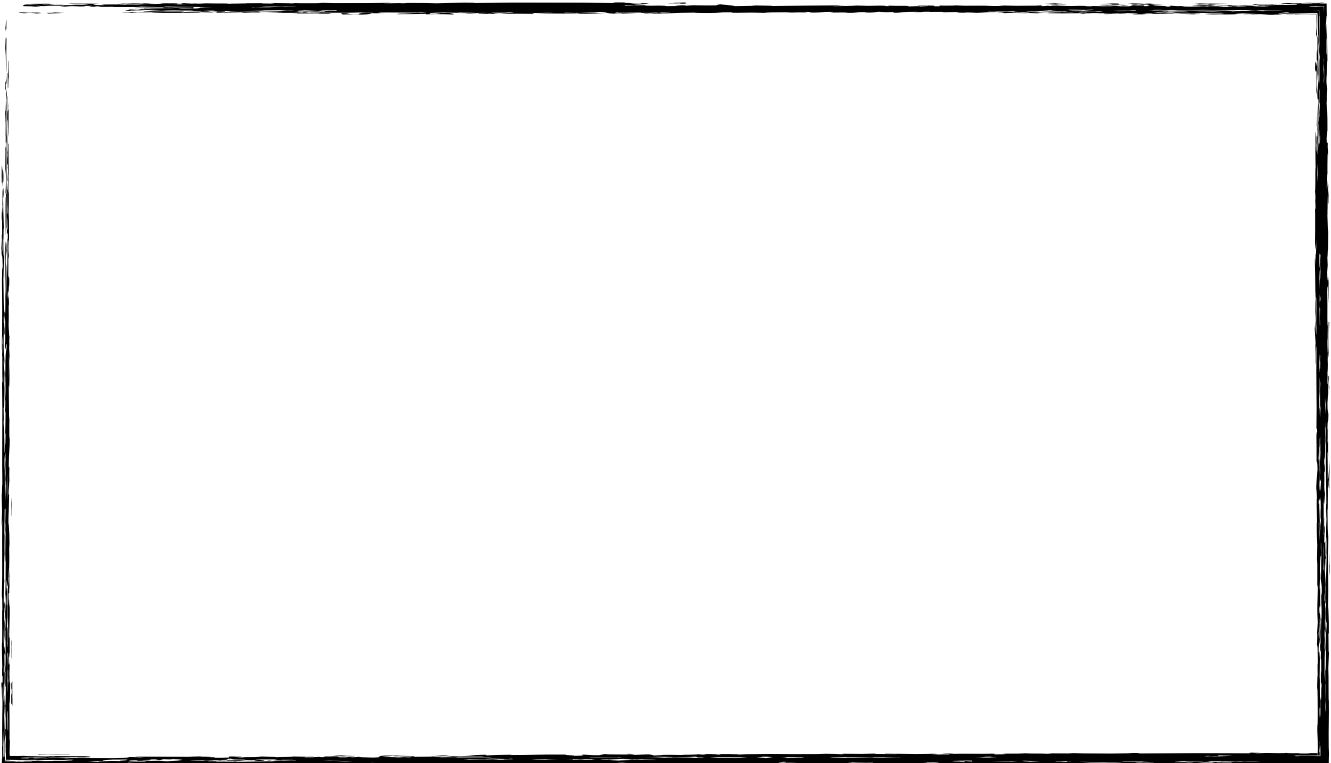
There are many times in our life when we could really use a hero's support and guidance. Some of these situations include the times when we:

- Feel discouraged and need inspiration and encouragement
- Are being bullied, excluded, singled out, or prejudiced against
- Are facing a situation and don't know what action to take
- Have made a mistake or feel lost
- Are faced with making a tough choice
- Feel alone
- Feel overwhelmed
- Have to do something scary or unfamiliar
- Want to help others but don't know how
- Need to inspire or motivate *others* to take a risk or do something challenging

My Personal Hero

For this exercise, let's think about your personal hero, someone you admire and look up to. This can be a fictional character or a real person, from the past or present. If you choose a real person, your hero does not have to be someone you know personally.

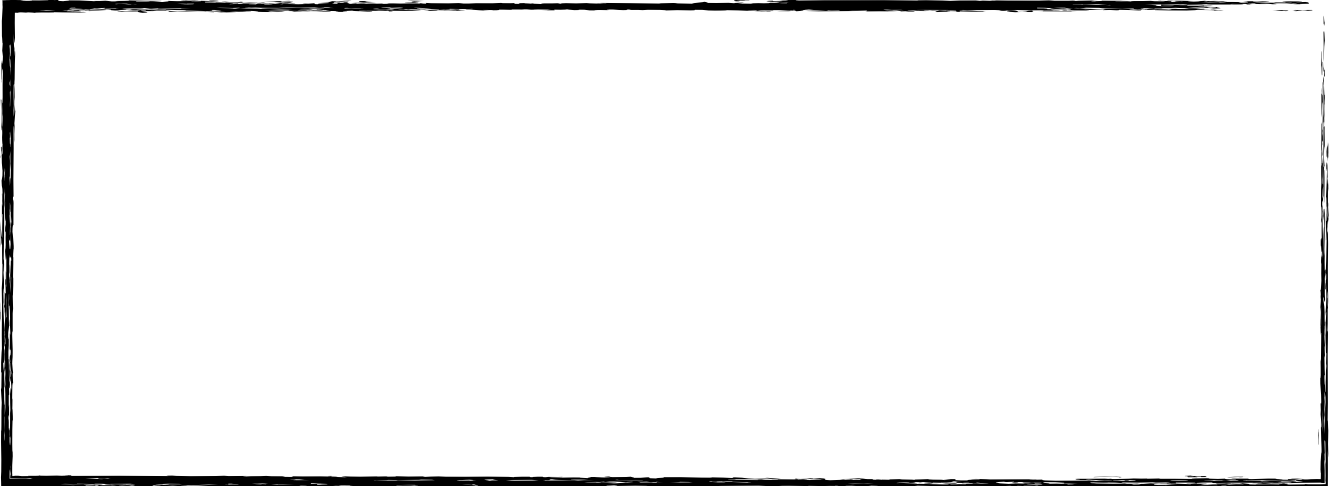
Briefly explain what made you choose this individual. What personal qualities or characteristics inspire you? What values do they represent for you? You can type your answers below or write/draw them on a separate sheet of paper. You don't have to share this with anyone. It can be just for you.



Think about a recent time when you were going through something difficult. Maybe you felt overwhelmed, scared, lonely, depressed, or unmotivated.

You can write a sentence or two about this situation below or in your phone or on a separate sheet of paper. Alternatively, if you prefer, you can draw a picture of the situation you're remembering, even if it's stick figures. For example, you can draw a few comic book-like panels with speech bubbles.

If you don't feel comfortable doing either of these exercises, feel free to silently think about this situation instead.



Now, imagine that you are able to have some one-on-one time to talk to your hero. Your hero understands you, cares about you, and supports you. You don't even have to explain anything, your hero fully understands you and believes in you.

Read the questions below and write or draw your answers. If you don't feel comfortable doing either of these exercises, feel free to silently think about this situation instead.

- What would your hero do in your situation?
- What would your hero say to you?
- How would your hero encourage you?

Take comfort and hope from your imagined conversation with your hero! They are always available for you in your heart.