



SUPERHERO IRL

HEROIC JOURNEY AT HOME
When Social Distancing
Becomes Social Isolation

Life during the coronavirus pandemic is strange in so many ways. There are a lot of messages out there about what COVID is, and what is safe to do, and what is not safe to do. One message that we are all receiving on a daily basis is that, due to how contagious the coronavirus is, that we are supposed to practice physical distancing. This means that we are supposed to stay at least 6 feet away from other people, in particular, people outside our household. This has also been called social distancing. This means that we are supposed to stay at least 6 feet away from other people, in particular, people outside our household.

For some of us, not going to school might be a relief from the stress of waking up early and encountering annoying classmates and teachers. However, for others, being stuck at home can be a nightmare. We might be kept away from our friends, and in some cases, trapped with abusive family members or the excruciating pain of depression, loneliness, or thoughts of suicide.

If you are struggling, know that you are not alone. Many other teens are in the same situation, too. Many fictional heroes show us how challenging it is to be stuck at home without seeing our friends and participating in our usual activities.

If you have read or seen *Harry Potter*, you might remember that Harry's aunt, uncle, and cousin were all very mean to him. Harry's cousin, Dudley, frequently bullied him, and his aunt and uncle forbade Harry to see his friends while he was home for the summer. Therefore, although Harry was home from school, and away from annoying teachers and class bullies (like Professor Snape and Draco Malfoy), Harry felt completely alone. He was depressed, anxious, and miserable, isolated from his school friends, and he felt like a prisoner in his own home.

Similarly, superheroes such as Superman and Captain Marvel sometimes go on necessary adventures that take them deep into space. These heroic journeys can isolate them and take them away from familiar territory and comforts. This might feel like what you're going through! In order to cope with being far away from his loved ones, Superman has made a habit of writing letters to his adoptive mother, or finding a way to communicate with his wife, Lois Lane, across vast distances. Similarly, Captain Marvel often calls her good friend Spider-Woman just to talk and share her thoughts when the two are not able to meet in person.

You might also recall another well-known superhero, Green Arrow, whose birth name is Oliver Queen. He also knows what physical isolation feels like. After nearly dying in a shipwreck, Oliver is stranded alone on an island without friends or family members, while grieving over his father's death. Like many of us today, Oliver comes face to face with his emotional pain, without being able to see his loved ones for an extended period of time.

Finally, just like many of us, Wonder Woman (birth name: Diana Prince) also knows what loneliness feels like. Although Wonder Woman grows up among many other Amazon warriors, Diana is the only child among all adult women in her immediate environment. As a result, Diana often feels lonely, believing that no one can understand what she is going through.

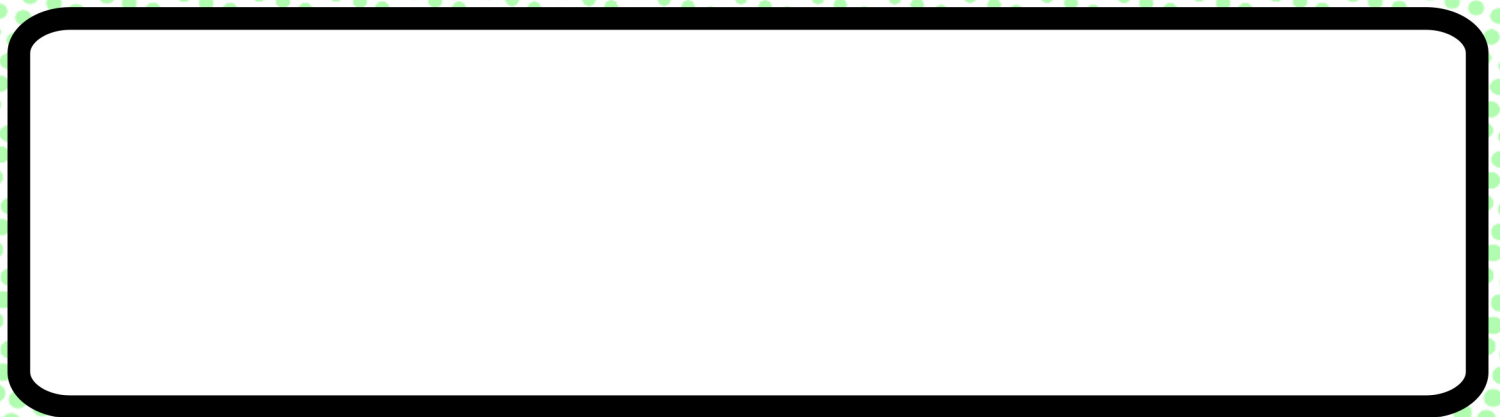
Although Harry Potter, Captain Marvel, Oliver Queen, and Diana Prince all struggled with feeling trapped and alone at times, they all eventually learned how to find meaningful connections with others. For example, while away from his friends, Harry found creative ways to keep in touch with his friends. He would send his owl, Hedwig (when possible) to send messages to his friends and keep in touch with them.

What might be some creative ways that you can keep in touch with your friends?



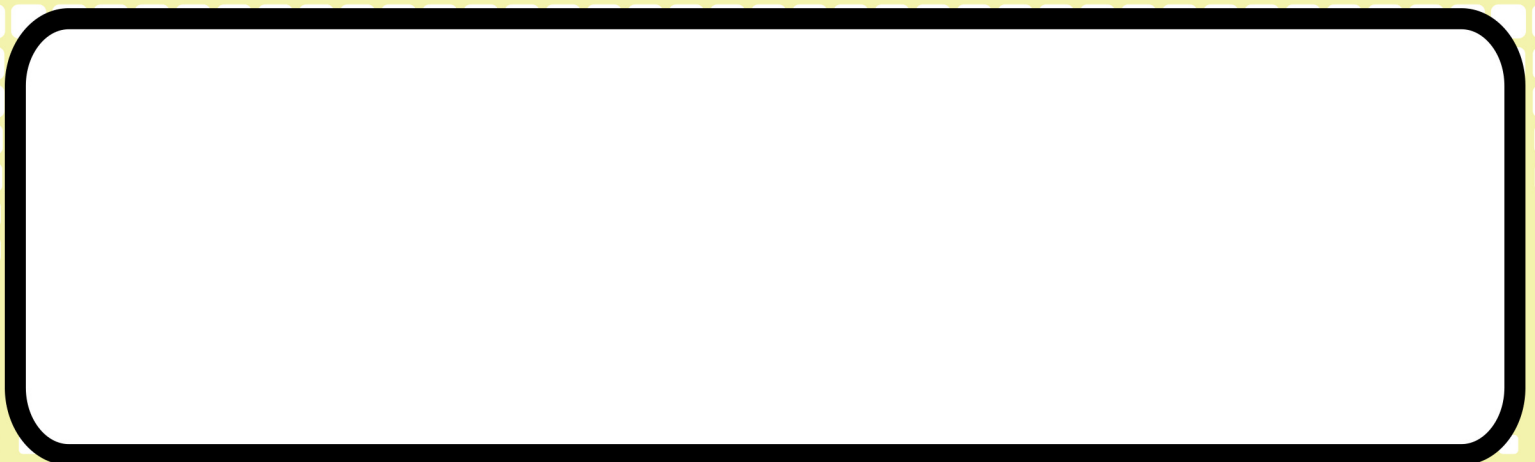
All Superheroes need to have a system in place in which they recognize when they need help. Thanks to technology such as Iron Man's suit, or sometimes enhanced senses as with Superman and Spider-Man, some heroes have ways of knowing they are about to face danger. In a similar way, let's identify any signs or symptoms that would let you know that you are having a hard time. For example, you might have your own warning signs such as an urge to start cutting, a feeling that a panic attack is coming, or the desire to stay in bed all day and do nothing. It is important to learn your own signs of distress.

Signs that I am going through a hard time:



The Avengers, Harry Potter, and the Justice League all rely on the help of their allies when facing some kind of a challenge. For example, Harry Potter had the help of his friends when he was competing in a Triwizard Tournament for the school cup. When Batman faces magical forces he doesn't understand, he turns to Justice League teammates such as Wonder Woman to share their own experiences. Whenever Captain America has needed new equipment or help, he knows that Iron Man, Thor, and Black Widow are ready to help and provide their resources to him. Similarly, we also need to identify some friends that can help to either distract us or support us when we are going through a hard time.

Friends I can contact when I am going through a hard time:



Sometimes, when we can't reach out to anyone or when we need to be alone, there are activities we can participate in to help ourselves. For example, even when things were rough at Hogwarts, Harry Potter would still play Quiddich, a wizard sport. When Wonder Woman isn't sure how to solve a problem right away, she finds comfort in books or enjoys a private moment relaxing in a park. When Spider-Man feels extremely anxious, he goes out web-swinging through the city, the same way some of us might enjoy a jog around the neighborhood. Supergirl enjoys making snacks at home, resting on the couch, and rewatching favorite movies and shows.

Let's identify a few activities that you can do to get through a hard time. For example, watching a funny TV show, going for a walk, yoga, reading a fun fiction book, or playing a game are all good options.

Activities I can do when I am going through a hard time:



Do you know other people who might also be going through a hard time? It can help both you and them if you text or call and encourage each other. Everyone appreciates someone checking on them and making sure they know there is good life ahead!

Here are 3 people I can text or call, to share and hear positive things we want to do in the future.

_____ & _____ & _____

And finally, let's identify how you can receive support if you are having a mental health crisis. A mental health crisis could mean that you are thinking about self-harm or suicide, but it could also mean that you are having a rough day and have no one to talk to. If you are living in the United States, you can text "Hello" to the Crisis Text Line: **741741**. If you live outside the United States, look up the crisis text line in your area. Please fill out the emergency plan below:

In case of a mental health crisis, I can reach out for support by texting:

Reminder:

If you or a loved one is struggling with depression, overwhelming loneliness, suicidal thoughts, or thoughts about self-harm (for example, cutting), please text "Hello" to the Crisis Text Line: **741741**. This is a free and confidential service in the USA (other countries have similar services available as well).

If you or someone you know is being abused, you can **call** or **text** this number: **1-800-422-4453** or **chat online** through your phone, computer, or tablet:

www.childhelp.org/childhelp-hotline

Founded in 2013, SuperheroIRL is a project of Pop Culture Hero Coalition, the first 501c-3 non-profit to use relatable stories from TV, comics, and film, to develop tools for living, including conflict resolution, resilience, empathy, and other crucial mental health skills.

Created by pop-culture-fluent clinical psychologists and educators, our work is in schools, comic cons, children's hospitals – and homes in the age of COVID-19.

www.PopCultureHero.org

For info and requests, please email **info@PopCultureHero.org**

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