



SUPERHERO IRL

ORIGIN STORY PART II
BY DR. JANINA SCARLET

Just a reminder, an *origin story* is a story that explains how a person (or character) came to be who they are today. An origin story can be a traumatic event, like losing a family member, or it can be a positive or a neutral event, like starting a new school.

Like Batman, Rey (from *Star Wars*), Harry Potter, and Black Panther, we all have an origin story. Our origin story could have happened in the past, or it could even be happening right now. For example, as a result of this pandemic, you might choose to study science, medicine, or otherwise find ways to help people in the future.

Think about your origin story (either from the past or the present) and either write it down or draw it (stick figures and word bubbles are perfectly okay). This will be for your eyes only; you don't have to show this to anyone. If you don't feel comfortable writing or drawing your origin story, feel free to think about it instead.



Next, think about how your origin story changed you. What did you learn from this experience?

Does your origin story relate in any way to the development of the talents, interests or any other strengths you now have or are now developing? For example, perhaps as a result of what you went through, you became more caring, or more creative, or more motivated to help other people.

Feel free to write about, draw, or think about this response.



Superman is famous for being a very powerful superhero. He can fly, he has super-strength, and laser vision. But Superman also has a vulnerability – he is vulnerable to kryptonite. Kryptonite is a substance from Superman’s home planet, which weakens his powers.

In this example, kryptonite is anything that gets in your way or gets you stuck and unable to reach your goals. Your kryptonite could be anything like self-doubt, fear of reaching out to your friends, procrastinating on your schoolwork, and others.

Think about what your kryptonite might be and either write it down, draw it, or think about it.



Even when superheroes are faced with their biggest “kryptonites,” their biggest obstacles, they are able to show up for their superhero mission.

This does not mean that they never struggle. This does not mean that they never feel afraid, overwhelmed, lonely, tired, or insecure.

Just the opposite. It means that superheroes might be afraid and they are willing to respond to their call to action anyway. For example, Storm, from the X-Men, has a lot of anxiety, especially related to being in small spaces, such as closets, cellars, or caves. This fear of tight spaces is called claustrophobia. When she is trapped in a tight space, Storm becomes very anxious and scared. But even when she is very scared, Storm will stop at nothing to help her friends.

Like Storm, there are probably many times when you have felt afraid, tired, depressed, or overwhelmed but still went to school or still did your homework, or helped your friend. Just like Batman, Harry Potter, and Storm, you can feel afraid and still do what is really important to you. Your obstacles do not have to hold you back from your superhero mission, such as helping others or being a good friend.

How has your origin story lead you toward your “call to action” or “superhero mission?” You can either write it down, draw it, or think about it.



Optional Worksheet Origin Stories:

Feel free to write or draw your answers

My origin story: For example: moving to a new house/city/state, losing a family member or a friend, going through the pandemic, gaining a new skill, being away from friends, owning a pet, becoming a sibling, or other skills.

What I learned from my origin story and/or how it changed me:

For example: I learned to handle adversity; to reach out to others for support; I learned that I care about other people; I learned to have more empathy, tolerance, or patience for others because I know what it feels like to struggle.

My kryptonite: For example, reaching out to my friends, asking others to hang out, asking for help, procrastinating on my work, fear of embarrassment, worrying about what other people think.

My superhero mission: What would you like to do (for friends, for others, to help people, to help the world)? For example, to be more aware when others around me are struggling; reach out to friends and help others .

MEET THE DOCTOR

Dr. Janina Scarlet is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist, author, and a full-time geek. A Ukrainian-born refugee, she survived Chernobyl radiation and persecution.

She immigrated to the United States at the age of 12 with her family and later, inspired by the *X-Men*, developed Superhero Therapy to help patients with anxiety, depression, and PTSD. Superhero Therapy refers to incorporating popular culture examples into evidence-based therapy to help the client to become the hero of their own journey. Dr. Scarlet is the recipient of the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award by the United Nations Association for her work on Superhero Therapy.

Dr. Scarlet's work has been featured on Yahoo, BBC, NPR, Sunday Times, CNN, CW, ABC, Huffington Post, The New York Times, Forbes, the Nerdist, BuzzFeed, Bleeding Cool, CNET, Mugglenet, LADbible, and many other outlets. She currently works at the Center for Stress and Anxiety Management in San Diego and has authored *Superhero Therapy*, *Harry Potter Therapy*, *Therapy Quest*, *Dark Agents*, *Super-Women*, as well as numerous contributions to *Star Wars Psychology*, *Star Trek Psychology*, *Wonder Woman Psychology*, *Supernatural Psychology* and many other books.

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**

POP
CULTURE
HERO
COALITION



@SuperheroIRL