

The New Pandemic Pioneers

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Pandemic 2020

There have been so many huge changes in 2020 and the future continues to be much more uncertain than usual. As a young person, you are trying hard to adapt, and wondering when things will go back to normal, or at least, a new-normal.

"Being homebound for weeks at a time isn't exactly fun for anyone — but for teenagers who've suddenly had their friends and social life stripped away by the pandemic, it's been particularly rough." – Amy Bell, CBC News

To start understanding the impact this is having on you, look at the pictures on the next three pages and write 3 or more sentences about each one. If what comes to mind is an image, write about what you see. If you have a memory that involves music or other sounds, write about what you hear. There are no right or wrong words. Just write whatever comes to mind.



















New Pandemic Pioneers

The Covid-19 Pandemic is causing major stress for young people. If you're a kid, teen or young adult, you may be struggling with strong emotions, followed by difficult thoughts. Below are some common emotions young people are dealing with during the pandemic and examples of thoughts that follow.

Check the boxes that apply to you:

Boredom

- "I'm sick of Netflix, Instagram and YouTube. This is boring!!"
- "I miss my friends, being cut off from them is brutal."
- "If my mom tells me to sweep the floors or go for a walk one more time, I'm going to lose it. I just need something fun to do!"

Frustration or Anger

- "My little sister is constantly making noise and it's driving me crazy!!"
- "My mom starts drinking early these days and by supper, she's groggy and not making sense. Why doesn't she just try to do better?"
- "I had to make Kraft Dinner for supper twice this week, there's nothing else to eat, I'm sick of this!"
- "This apartment is too small, I can't believe they closed all the parks, how long is this gonna go on??"
- "No grad? No prom? This is beyond unfair!!! And what about university, will they be closed too?"

Fear

- "My dad already has poor health, what if he gets the virus and dies?"
- "The future is so uncertain, everyone's getting laid off, how will I survive if I can't get a job?"
- "If I don't see my friends soon, we're going to fall apart as a group and I'll lose them."

Loneliness

- "I usually ate lunch with Sam at school, and now I have no one to talk to."
- "I saw on Instagram that Kim and a few others had a Zoom Party last night, why didn't anyone tell me? What's wrong with me?"
- "My dad used to take me to soccer, now he's locked up in his room working all the time and I'm just on my own."



If you checked one or more of these boxes, you are among literally millions of others who have these same emotions, and who struggle with these same or similar thoughts.

New Pandemic Pioneers

In a time when you feel powerless and trapped at home, even trapped in your thoughts, there is another option...you could choose to be a **New Pandemic Pioneer**. Open to all, read on...

The **New Pandemic Pioneers** are using a cutting edge model to *survive and thrive* through the pandemic called DNA-V. The DNA-V model, created by Louise Hayes & Joseph Ciarrochi, was specifically designed to work for kids, teens, and young adults. This manual covers four key concepts: D (Discoverer), N (Noticer), A (Advisor) and V (Values), uses lots of examples so you can apply them to your own life, and includes stories of teens using DNA-V skills in real time. If you go to the DNA-V website - www.thrivingadolescent.com – you’ll find a ton of extra resources including worksheets & videos.

No matter who you are, where you live, or what your troubles are, DNA-V can give you skills, choices and hope. Reading this manual and using the DNA-V skills in your life gives you automatic membership in the **New Pandemic Pioneers**.

VALUES

Let’s start with the center of it all: V for VALUES

What do we mean by Values?

- what you care about the most, what’s in your heart
- a compass to guide your actions around the three D-N-A options
- not the same as goals, more like a path or direction
- ways of spending your time that bring **vitality** to your life
- what kind of person you want to be



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vitality
[vahy-tal-i-tee]

1. capacity for thriving or for the continuation of a meaningful or purposeful existence
2. power to live and grow

Take a moment to write down some of the things you feel truly passionate about (look for ideas in your home & neighborhood and on your phone):



Do any of the things you wrote down on the previous page fit into the six most common Values important to young people?



Doing things to bring your Values alive makes life more interesting and is the best way to live in a place of hope and possibilities.

“How do I do that? First, I have to feel better, right?”

Not right, although this is one of the most common myths out there.

I’m guessing you already know from your own experience that you don’t get to choose how you feel. You feel how you feel. You can’t force yourself to love someone, or forgive someone, or feel chill when you’re mad, or feel happy when you’re sad.

You don’t actually *have to* feel like doing something before you do it. Your choices are in the Discoverer skill set, where you decide how you act, what you do, whether you try something new, or when you’re willing to make a move.

“Choices, you mean choices like a buffet? How many do I get to choose from? What are my choices?”

A basic way to think about choices is thinking about how you spend your time through the day. Say you notice you clock lots of screen time, then it’s legit to say you have time for exercise and you could choose to go for a walk or a run in your neighborhood. You know from your past experience that you feel more relaxed after you get fresh air and move your body. Or if you wanted to try something new, like learn Spanish, it’s legit to say you could choose to learn and practice through on-line tutorials. It might still involve some screen time, but may be more rewarding.

ADVISOR

What do we mean by ADVISOR?

The Advisor is our inner voice that is sometimes *helpful* and sometimes *unhelpful*.

- a world created by our thoughts, experiences and memories that is unique to ourselves
- a constant companion, our personal chatterbox that comments on all that we think, feel, and experience
- our thoughts that sometimes put us down or hold us back and other times help us solve problems or keep us safe

Our Advisor might try to read other peoples' minds. Example: *"I said something awkward to Alex yesterday on facetime and now she thinks I'm weird."*

Or it comes up with worst-case-scenarios. Example: *"If this quarantine goes on much longer, I'll lose all my friends"* or *"If I don't get back to hockey, I'll never make the next level."*

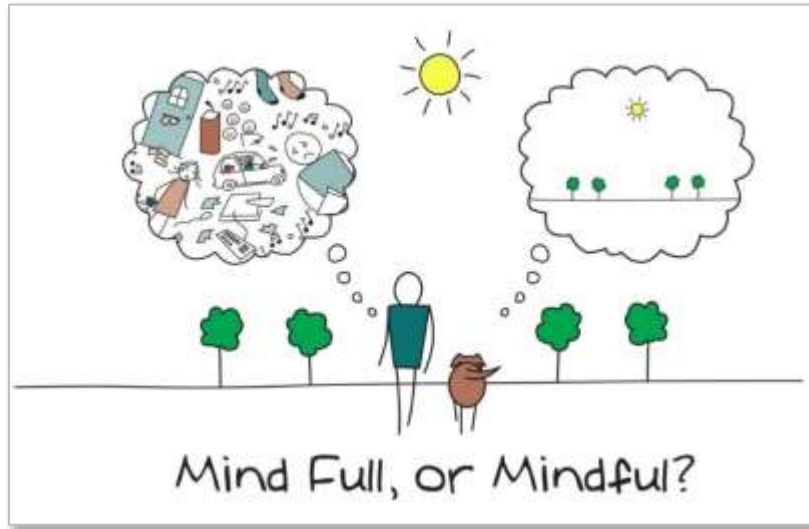
Our Advisor is also responsible for our dreams. Example: *"Someday I'd love to be a fashion designer"* or *"Ultimately, I'd like to own my own restaurant."*

And it also comes up with our good ideas. Example: *"I guess I could pull up a tutorial on how to DIY clothes and try it on something in my closet"* or *"I'm going to try growing oregano so I can make some wicked pasta sauce."*



Sometimes the Advisor says useful things like, "you need to commit to the work to succeed." Other times, it gives terrible advice like, "you're weird, no one wants to date you, just give up." The Advisor is normal and part of being human (dating back to our cave dwelling days when survival was much harder). We get to decide if the advice is helpful or not. If you'd like to know a way to make it easier to decide, jump into the *Noticer* space...

What's happening here...?



Write about what you see:

When we pause and notice our thoughts and our Advisor going a mile a minute, we're using our *Noticer* skill, considered by many to be the "secret superpower."

NOTICER

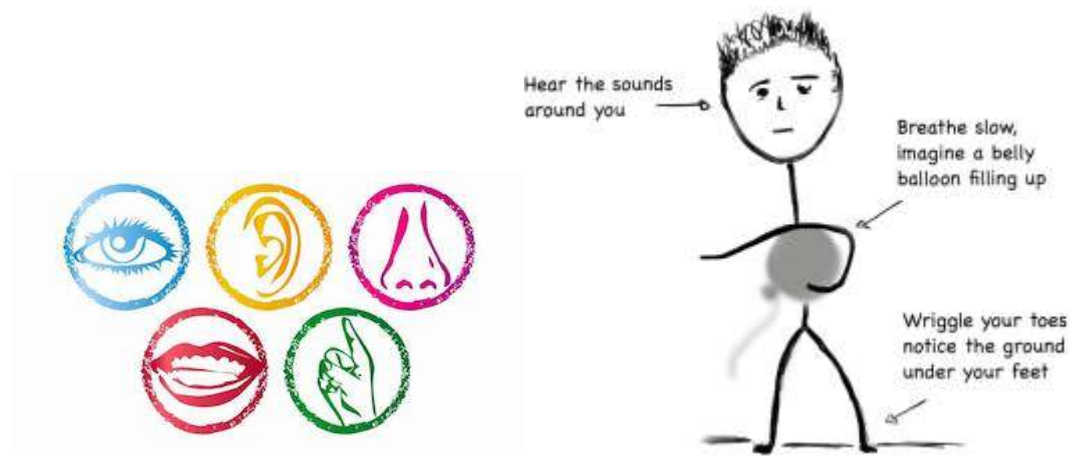
What do we mean by NOTICER?

The N is for *Noticer* - the ability to notice (observe without judging) ...

- what we feel in our body and what emotions we're having
- what's happening in the present, including the perspective of others
- our advisor and whether it's being helpful or holding us back
- the world around us using our five senses



DNA-V logo reprinted with permission from Dr. Louise Hayes.



Are you willing to give these 3 *Noticer* moves a try?

“Sounds a bit like meditation. When I go quiet and focus on my breath, sometimes I feel anxious and I can’t clear my mind of thoughts.”

Great point. The purpose of our Noticer is not to relax or clear the mind of thoughts. The main purpose is *awareness*. We want to be aware of our thoughts without trying to push them away or wipe them out. The idea is to just notice them, then proceed to notice other things, like our body sensations, how we’re feeling, and what’s going on around us. This information helps us accept the stuff that’s outside our control and make choices on what we do have control over – our actions.

Our Noticer skill is present from birth. Babies are pure Noticers and experience the world just as it is (which is sometimes uncomfortable), with no evaluation or judgment. Children are natural Noticers until they see how their actions affect others and start to feel more responsible for things.

Write about a time when you were a baby or child and you did something funny or interesting with *no insecurity whatsoever*:



Sharpen your Noticer skills by using the **AND** system:

A: Aware. Become *aware* of your body by scanning it to see what is happening right now. It’s like you’re watching a tree to see if the wind is blowing in the leaves...you’re scanning your inner experience to see how you’re thinking and feeling.

N: Name. Naming physical sensations in your body - like pounding heart, butterflies in the tummy, tightness in throat, etc.

D: Describe. Describing the emotions you’re feeling - like hurt, fear, excited, relaxed, anxious, angry, etc.

People who can describe their emotions *as they arise* tend to be more successful with friendships, academics and new challenges. Being able to label our body sensations with feeling words helps us make sense of the signals. We learn to listen to what our body is telling us and how to use that information to make choices based on what matters the most - our deepest held values.

Remember, your choices are in the Discoverer skill set, where you decide how you act, what you do, whether you try something new, or when you’re willing to make a move.



Piglet - “How do you spell love?”
Pooh - “You don’t spell it, you feel it.”

DISCOVERER

What do we mean by DISCOVERER?

Discoverer skills can help us to get unstuck from our bad habits. They can help expand our abilities and make social connections. We use Discoverer skills to try new things and to build our strengths. By having new experiences, we find and create our values. We discover what we're passionate about or what makes us feel connected and secure.

The Discoverer is the ability to:

- experiment... try a new approach, a different behavior, or a rewarding activity
- make choices about how to respond to stress or opportunities
- influence, move and make things happen
- take back control over our decisions and how we act

The Discoverer skill is like an explorer, a student, a scientist, a mountain climber...and a *pioneer*. It is the *signature skill* of the **New Pandemic Pioneers**. Discoverers explore and test things out. Discovery skills are usually learned through safe risk taking and creative outside-the-box moves. It's about trying new approaches to test if they help us live out our Values.

“How can I live out my values when I’m trapped in this pandemic?”

The pandemic has surprised the human race and has caused great hardship for many, many people. It's new, so new that we've had to make big changes to stop the spread. Doctors & nurses reorganizing the healthcare system and spending long hours caring for very sick people, parents suddenly working at home, kids missing their friends and learning in school, everything shut down and everyone stuck at home, students in grade 12 missing out on grad & prom, university students getting laid off just when their rent is due... these are not small changes; they're huge changes...

“Wait, how do I handle such huge changes?”

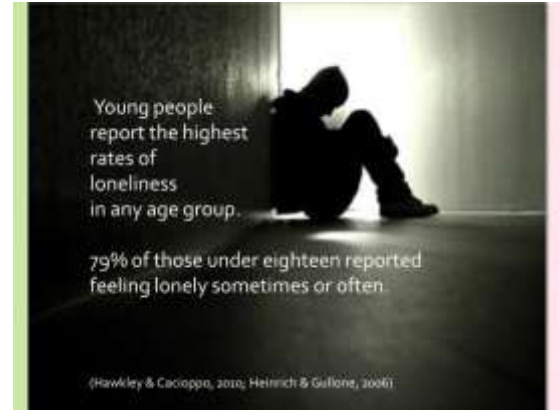
The key is to recognize that there are other things that are important to you at this time in your life and to find ways to focus on those things (your Values) through your actions. When you start something new or when you decide to be kind & gentle with yourself, it adds variety to your day and suddenly other things are happening and you're not quite as trapped as before.



Say, for example, when you looked at the six most common Values for young people (pg. 7)...

being active	connecting	being present
challenging yourself	giving	caring for yourself

...you felt a hollow ache in your chest when you saw "connecting". They say that young people who don't feel connected to a group, probably suffer the most.



It's like two sides of same coin... the more it hurts, the more important it is to you. Right?



So back to your question, "How can I live out my values and also handle such huge changes?"

Remember - *the key is to recognize that there are other things that are important to you at this time in your life and to find ways to focus on those things through your actions.*

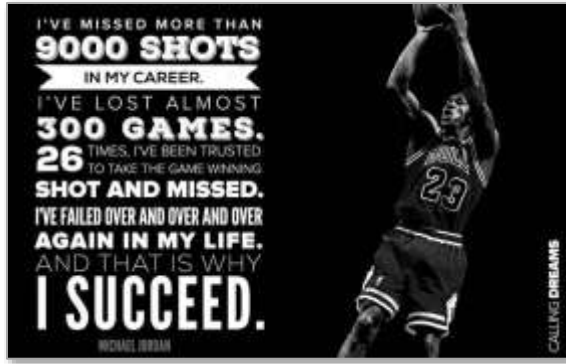
Let's say connecting is really important to you... When you're in the Discoverer space, you would find ways to:

- connect with people you care about
- open doors to new chances to connect

Discovery is *doing*, not just thinking. It means if you'd like to talk to Jordan from your English class, *you decide* to text her and see if she's up for a facetime chat. You've now created an opportunity for you to actually talk to Jordan.

If you want to know what yoga is like, *you decide* to put one foot in front of the other, get dressed in a T-shirt & shorts, pull up a yoga video on YouTube and physically follow through on the exercises. Then you'd know what it is like.

Think of other things that took experience to really understand.... Remember that time you tried to make homemade cookies and they were hard as hockey pucks? That's because you tried to 'wing it' and afterwards, *you learned* it's important to follow the recipe accurately when you're baking. The next time you made cookies, they turned out great!



You're using your Discoverer skills when you choose one of the following options:

- take a different response to your difficult feelings (like self-kindness or patience)
- start something new
- take simple action that you know is effective

We rarely have confidence before trying something, confidence comes after we try, make mistakes, learn, and try again. Sometimes we need to step out of the Advisor space and into the physical world to discover what we love about it.



Tracking. To monitor how you're doing as a Discoverer, you can use the *tracking* steps. We track by checking how our actions are working in the world, and seeing what the natural consequences of our actions are, rather than what our Advisor 'thinks' has happened or will happen.

To track, we simply follow 4 steps:

TRACKING STEPS	- Sample -
1. What was the situation?	going stir-crazy in the house
2. What did I do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - noticed my advisor telling me "I'm lazy" and "This is going to go on forever, I can't take it!" - noticed my stiff, tense muscles - decided I need to move my body, pulled up Beyoncé video and tried to follow choreography
3. What happened next?	felt kinda goofy, awkward, hard to follow steps
4. Help or harm? Did my actions help, or make things worse in some way? If they didn't harm the outcome I wanted, but didn't really help either, did I have a chance to practice something, or learn from a mistake?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - definitely felt better in my body afterwards - not great at choreography so next time I'll just do my own dance moves, like I'm dancing with her instead of like her - might try a Pilates video, easier to follow

Want to give it a try? Complete the tracking steps below.

1. Take a moment to acknowledge something that's not great for you right now; describe the situation briefly.
2. Try *stepping into Noticer space* - describe what you feel in your body, and what emotions you're having. *Notice your Advisor* and the thoughts that hold you back. Make a decision on what you'd like to do or what you'd like to try, and go ahead and do it.
3. Consider what happened next... Were there negative consequences? Did it seem ok? Did you discover anything?
4. Finally, did your actions help to move you in a direction you care about? Or did they make things worse?



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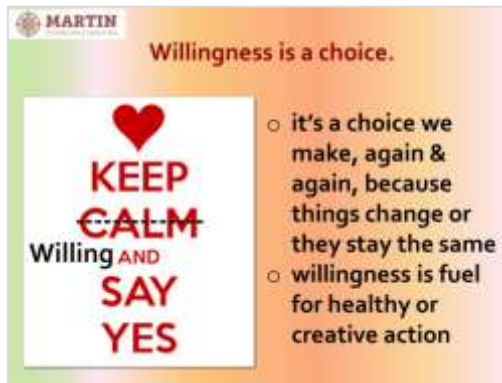
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The key with the DNA-V model is to move flexibly between the Advisor space, the Noticer space, the Discoverer space, using our Values as a guide.



Willingness Questions:

- Am I willing to allow these difficult feelings to exist while I do things to make my life better?
- Am I willing to be uncomfortable in order to do things I care about?
- Am I willing to accept that I don't feel like getting up off the couch and still go outside for a walk?
- Am I willing to accept that I feel awkward while I join the video chat with my friends?
- Am I willing to accept that I fear failure as I start this new project?
- I don't feel calm...and I'm willing to say YES... YES to doing things that could improve my life, YES to accepting my fear & sadness, YES TO NOT GIVING UP.

**Acknowledgements**

Thank you to Louise Hayes for providing accessible education and supervision on the DNA-V model, and for the encouragement with this document.

References

1. Book: *The Thriving Adolescent*, by Louise Hayes & Joseph Ciarrochi
2. Website: www.thrivingadolescent.com
3. Praxis DNA-V course: <https://www.praxiscet.com/events/dna-v/>
4. A. A. Milne & E. H. Shepard for the brilliant writing & illustrations in the Pooh Bear stories.

See next page to read how Diego and Francie are dealing with the pandemic....

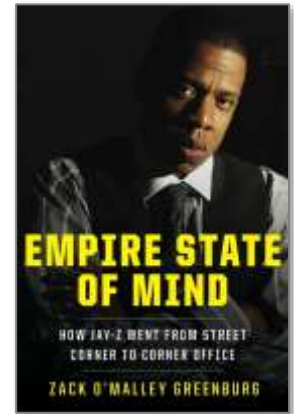
New Pandemic Pioneers

Diego's Story

Hey, I'm Diego. Since the pandemic became a reality, I notice my thoughts getting darker and darker. Like everyone else, I'm stuck at home, with my little brother Malik, who's really annoying, and all I get to see all day is my mom getting drunk. My dad is always in his room on his computer and by always, I mean ALWAYS. Makes me so mad, I just want to escape from all of it. I spent most of last week stoned. Sure, it kinda helped in the short term, but I wake up every morning feeling just as f-cking frustrated.

I found this biography about how Jay-Z went from hustling on the street to building a hugely successful business. I want to read it cover to cover but every time I start, I get distracted. The worst part is I've turned against myself and started thinking *I'm a loser, I have no future...*

I know there's so much outside my control, especially now, things feel so strange. And I know I can't control what my parents do, but it's so lame!! Especially when I can't see my friends!!! Two nights last week I had to make supper for my brother! I mean, I love my brother, I do, but I didn't sign up to be his parent while trapped in this sh-thole.



Then I discovered [DNA-V](#) and the New Pandemic Pioneers (NPP). It actually works! Last year, this one girl went through a really tough time after she was assaulted and she learned about a system to handle trauma called [DNA-V](#) from a school social worker. Then when the pandemic started, she opened an Instagram account called the New Pandemic Pioneers (NPP) and started posting stories about how to use [DNA-V](#) to handle all the massive changes. Now the NPP has over 3 million followers!!!

I had to get the hang of it first and practice every day, but I've been using it since Monday and it's actually made a big difference.

Ok so [DNA-V](#) has four key concepts: [D \(Discoverer\)](#), [N \(Noticer\)](#), [A \(Advisor\)](#) and [V \(Values\)](#). The [Advisor](#) is like our mind, that voice in your head. As an NPP member, you learn to notice when the [Advisor](#) gives us good advice - like wash hands, get off my phone, go outside for some fresh air... or when the thoughts aren't useful anymore - like the "what if...?" thoughts or the "nothing matters anymore" thoughts or the "I suck" thoughts.

Then there's the **Noticer**, it's like an optional perspective, a different way of experiencing things. The **Noticer** keeps us in touch with the day we're in (vs. unpredictable future), and with our bodies to help us name our feelings and what we need at the time, and that's how we stay strong.

You can also use the **Noticer** to anchor your butt to reality when you freak out. Like, an example is if you're completely lost in scary thoughts, you can pause and notice branches moving in the wind. Or you notice (this is weird but it works) the bottoms of your feet on the floor. Like, you do a slow rock from heel to toe while you're standing there and notice the pressure of your feet on the floor as you slowly rock. Simple things are happening all around us as we're swirling in our head and I find if I focus on them, it brings down my stress.

When I notice my body and it feels stiff or tired, that's a sign I need to get off my butt! Yesterday I went for a run around the block five times and when I got back home, things actually felt a little easier.

If you're really upset, it also helps to notice how you feel in your body. I wanted to get some milk for cereal at the corner store yesterday and when I asked Dad for money, he yelled at me and told me not to interrupt him. I wanted to punch a hole in the wall! I stopped right there and went to another room to see how I felt in my body, not just the crap that's going on around me. I noticed my heart was really pounding and my hands were holding a tight fist. I noticed this tight feeling in my throat and head. I was like, "ok, it's not my body's fault it feels stressed and tense." I realized I felt anger and fear. Anger that my parents aren't helping us more and can't even throw me a 20 for food, and fear because how long is this going to go on?? At least at school, Malik got some decent meals.

Ok so then my **Advisor** goes off with more dark thoughts, and I remember that the key to being a **New Pandemic Pioneer** is to *move flexibly between the four concepts* of DNA-V. So I move back into **Noticer** space and take a deep breath. I step outside and decide to zero in on sounds, seeing how many different sounds I can hear. It sounds kind of dumb as I'm writing it down, but it's just a little trick I use to pause and give the adrenalin pumping through my veins a chance to slow down. I realize I can't control my dark thoughts and if I don't try to fight them and turn against myself, if I just let them be there, I don't beat myself up as much. So that's when I ran around the block 5 times, to burn off the anger and give my body something it desperately needs: to just move.

It's a lot easier to re-focus on my **Values** when I use my **Noticer** skill and see that my **Advisor** is kind of wasting my time right now and I have other options. Like, I'm really passionate about

music and cars. I'd like to make good money someday so I can buy a Shelby GT500 (which is like a modern, souped up Mustang for those of you who have no clue about cars). And if I made good money, I'd always be able to take care of my brother.

And the [Discoverer](#) is where we try new things and where we actually have control. It's like we go, "K, what are my choices here?" Make a choice then actually give it a try. Follow the f-ck through, lol. I made the choice to run and clear my head, and when I got back, I picked up my book and read the whole first chapter. Holy crap, Jay-Z started out in a totally powerless situation and he took his [values](#), grit and brains, tried new moves, and [discovered](#) freedom. I mean, his story is full of flops, re-do's, dreams and hope. So ya, I think I'm going to enjoy the rest of this book.

I still wake up feeling frustrated...and, since joining the NPP, I also notice some choices and possibilities.

Oh wow, it's actually sunny out there. I guess I'll grab Malik and get him outside while no one's out there. He's driving me crazy in here anyway. He's been bugging me to play lego with him. Maybe we can make a spaceship together. If I put some tunes on while we're out there, it could be ok.



Francie's Story

Hey, I'm Francie. For almost two years now, I've had a crush on Clay. I'll just come right out and say it, ok? He built houses in Peru with his family and he has a gorgeous smile, so... I bet a good half the girls at school also have a crush on him. We're friends, but does he *like* me...? Sometimes when I think about this and wish he'd ask me out, I wonder if there's something wrong with me. These thoughts used to really get me down until I learned they were coming from my [Advisor](#) and I didn't have to buy into them. I found out about the [Advisor](#) from the DNA-V system when I discovered the **New Pandemic Pioneers**. Ever since I discovered them on Instagram, I've been able to figure things out a lot easier. So anyway, back to Clay... since everything shut down, I don't get to see him and I'm going crazy! And I just found out he's obsessed with his dog, how sweet is that??

I'm really limiting my screen time cause it's so dominated by Covid right now. It's scary for so many reasons, especially when you think of huge systems like healthcare breaking down or whole industries going broke... and what that means for people who get sick or lose their jobs. Sometimes I feel too many thoughts like this swirling in my head, and with too much sitting, I get right tense in my neck. This is something my [Noticer](#) has gotten really good at... if I'm stuck at home and I notice my thoughts are negative or worried, I'll say, "ok [Advisor](#), I can see you're on high alert and that's ok, that's your job." Then I'll refocus my attention on some stretching... or maybe I'll use my five senses, and notice the scent of lavender when I wash my hands or the sound of dogs barking at each other outside.

I also use my [Noticer](#) when I think of something exciting (like kissing Clay 😊). I'll name the feelings like 'heart beating' or 'jittery legs'. Sometimes I'll try to harness the feeling of being excited to do something interesting, by bringing in the [Discoverer](#). It's just so cool to be able to do things, try out new stuff, to bring my [Values](#) alive and do things I really care about. Like, ok, here's an example. No visitors at the nursing home, right? So I called over there to ask if someone could escort my Grandma to the courtyard so I could sit on the bench and have a little visit. They did it! She was 6 ft away from me but I chatted her ear off and gave her all kinds of news. She loved it and it was great to see her.

When I channel my excitement into trying new things, it's waaaaaay better than being bored. I'm biking a lot now, best thing ever! The roads aren't as busy so it's super fun to zip around the streets in my neighborhood and still feel safe. And the power and freedom ramps up the excitement BIG TIME!

This pandemic is so scary and no one knows what the future holds. I get really freaked out when things are so uncertain, when I don't know what's going to happen. I worked hard this

year so far and I want my final grades to be good. And what's the deal with graduation and prom, are you telling me it's all cancelled??

I've learned how to pivot to a new perspective when I get overwhelmed by using my **Noticer** skill and the **AND** system (Aware-Name-Describe)... I get *aware* of just my body, like usually my muscles first, then maybe my bones or an ache somewhere. Whatever I notice, I start *naming* ... ache, tension, butterflies ... Then, and it gets easier with practice, I *describe* what I'm feeling. Like, what am I actually feeling right now? Right now it's mostly fear & frustration (it's so sad to think of so many people suffering) but weirdly, I also feel a little excited too, just in terms of what good might come from this. Maybe we'll all realize how much time and stuff we waste. Maybe we'll learn from this. Well, I guess whether other people learn or not is up to them, but maybe *I can learn* from this and make some cool changes. Like when I get a hot fudge sundae at Dairy Queen (my favorite, yum), and throw the plastic spoon away when I'm done, I always feel a bit guilty. So I put a real spoon in my bag and now I say "no plastic spoon please". So I don't feel like I'm wasting stuff by throwing it away. None of the pizza I made from scratch got wasted tho. My dad made sure of that, lol.

