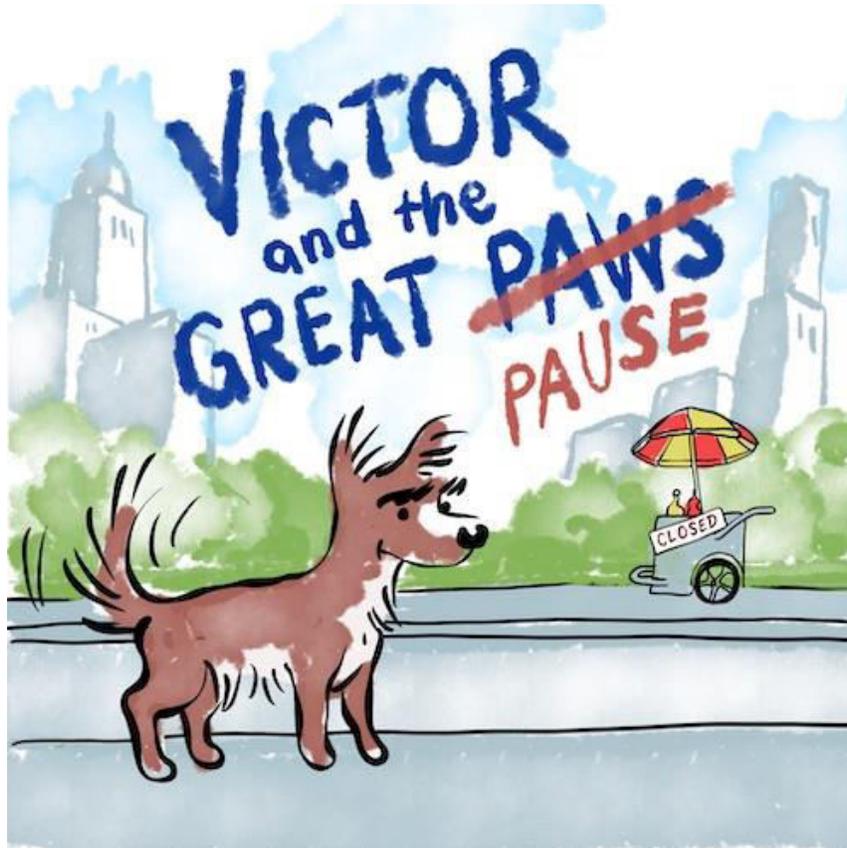


# Compassion in the Pandemic: Conversation Starters for Parents, Teachers & Kids

*A companion guide to The Bright Siders' video storybook "Victor & the Great Pause"*



## Quick Study: What did COVID teach us?!

**C: COMPASSION (Kindness)**

**O: OPEN-MINDED**

**V: VALIDATION**

**I: INFORMED**

**D: DETERMINED**

The Bright Siders

2021 National Parent Product Award Winner

The Bright Siders: *A Mind of Your Own* is out now on Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

Dear Teachers and Parents,

**Please enjoy this 20-minute illustrated audiobook and its accompanying discussion guide.** Both were created by award-winning child psychiatrist Dr. Kari Groff specifically to help kids and families process the emotions that have come up throughout the pandemic. The video is available for free on our home page: [www.thebrightsiders.com](http://www.thebrightsiders.com).

Appropriate for elementary aged children, “Victor and the Great Pause” describes New York City in the early days of Covid-19, as seen through the eyes of a clever and kind-hearted stray dog named Victor. On the anniversary of the beginning of the quarantine, it’s read aloud by Brooklyn-based musician Akie Bermiss, with drawings by Taylor Ashton and original music by Chris Eldridge.

This story will especially resonate with children who were confused by the sudden changes brought on by quarantine. We are hoping that parents and teachers will use the story to help children process this very intense and difficult experience.

“Victor” has two main themes and asks its listener two very important questions:

**How did the outside environment change when we had to stay inside?**

AND

**How did humans use their best human qualities to support each other through a difficult time?**

Ultimately, “Victor” is a story about “compassion”. It’s a big word, but small kids can really grasp the concept quickly and we are hoping that this story lends itself towards thinking about compassion as well as other important human qualities. We are also hoping that the story helps future environmentalists to think about the interaction between humans and their natural world.

Because of the enormous impact Covid-19 has had on our children, helping them process the experience is important. We strongly recommend taking some time to discuss at home or in the classroom. Art, music, and stories like this one can be especially helpful to young children who need assistance reflecting on confusing experiences.

Sincerely,  
Kari Groff, MD & Kristin Andreassen  
The Bright Siders | [www.thebrightsiders.com](http://www.thebrightsiders.com)



### **Topic #1: How did the outside environment change when we had to stay inside?**

Victor experiences many changes in NYC during March of 2020. He watches the city go from a busy, vibrant place filled with activity to a very empty and quiet place. As he wanders the streets of NYC without the activity of so many humans, he begins to notice a lot about the environment that perhaps he missed when there was so much human activity.

Here is a suggestion for an activity for home or for the classroom. With a quieter NYC, there were many interesting environmental changes. Especially interesting were all of the nature sightings this year. Have your child look up pictures of the humpback whales in front of the Statue of Liberty. Search online for photos for the bald eagles visiting Central Park and other birds of prey in Brooklyn. There was a drastic drop in air pollution in the early days of the pandemic from less air travel. There was a lot of discussion and thought about what happened in the world when things became so quiet.

**Reflection:** *How can we consider the environment as we rebuild our human communities after successfully overcoming the pandemic?*



## **Topic #2: How did humans use their best human qualities to support each other through a difficult time?**

In Part Two of the Victor story, Victor starts to appreciate more of the effects of Covid-19 on the human community. He sees humans working very hard to help and care for each other, bringing out the best in each other.

We used the letters that spell Covid (C-O-V-I-D) to help with discussion points around these thoughts. Feel free to come up with your own adjectives and encourage children to think of positive human traits that they have noticed during this past year.

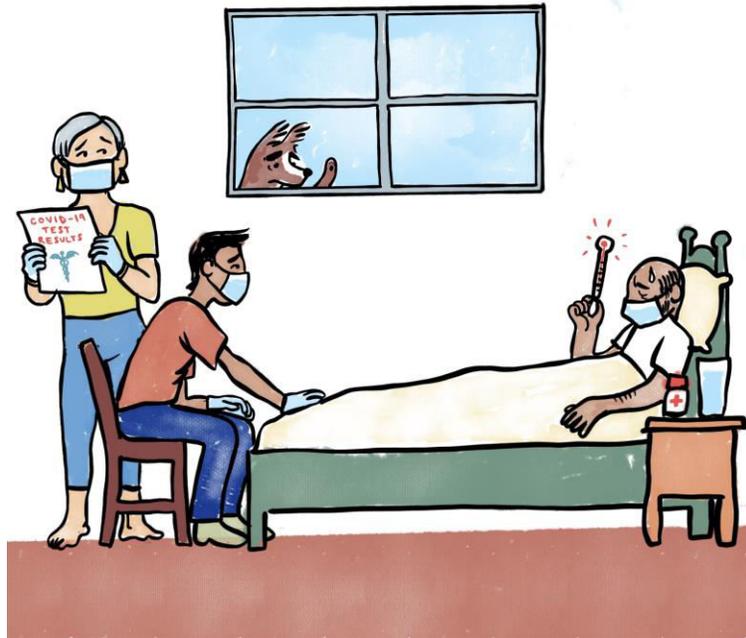
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### **C: COMPASSION (Kindness)**

**Victor notices that humans are acting in very compassionate ways towards each other by caring for each other when sick, helping each other at home, or by being brave front-line workers.**

COMPASSION -- Compassion is a very big word but a very important word to know! Victor notices many people being compassionate towards each other. To be compassionate means being kind, understanding, and having a caring attitude.

#### ***Reflection:***

*Can you think about ways that you were compassionate towards people that you live with this past year? What about neighbors or perhaps people you don't know?*

*Have you been kind and compassionate towards yourself?*



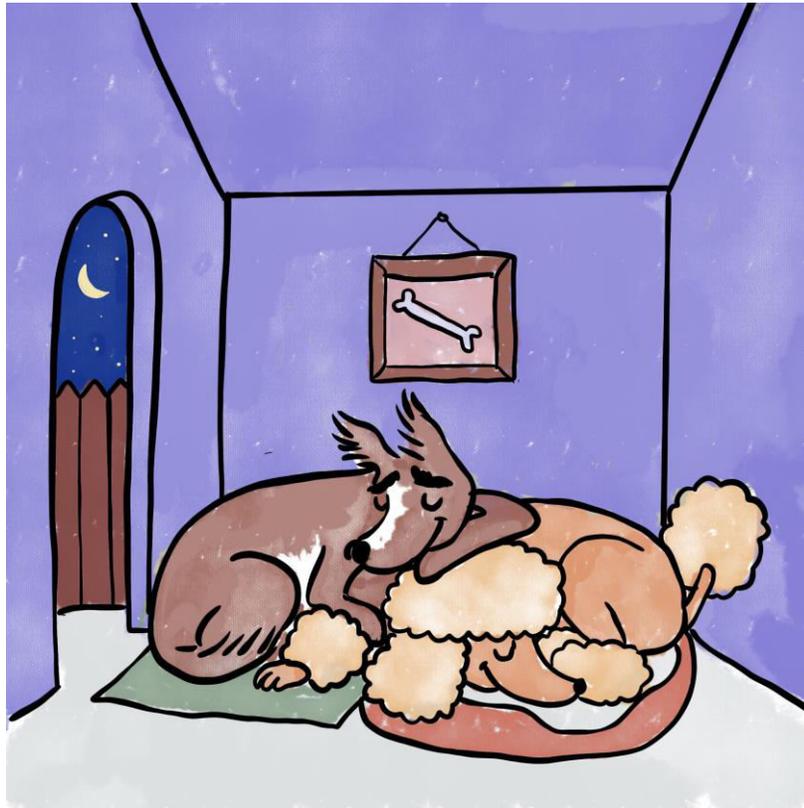
## **O: OPEN-MINDED**

**Victor realizes that he and others around him will need to be open-minded and flexible in the face of this very challenging situation. His routine changes in the story, and Victor has to adapt to a new way of life during the pandemic.**

OPEN-MINDED --Being open-minded and flexible can definitely make things a little easier because it naturally helps people feel less stressed! Instead of believing something absolutely HAS to be a certain way, it is useful to think of things with a wider view and with different possibilities. Being open-minded sometimes means seeing things from another person's point of view and having a "yes" brain instead of an automatic "no" to an idea. Being flexible means sometimes not getting exactly what you want and being open to new ways of trying things.

### ***Reflection:***

*What ways did you have to be open-minded and flexible this year? What new things did you try? Can you give an example of how your parents needed to be more flexible? What about your teachers?*



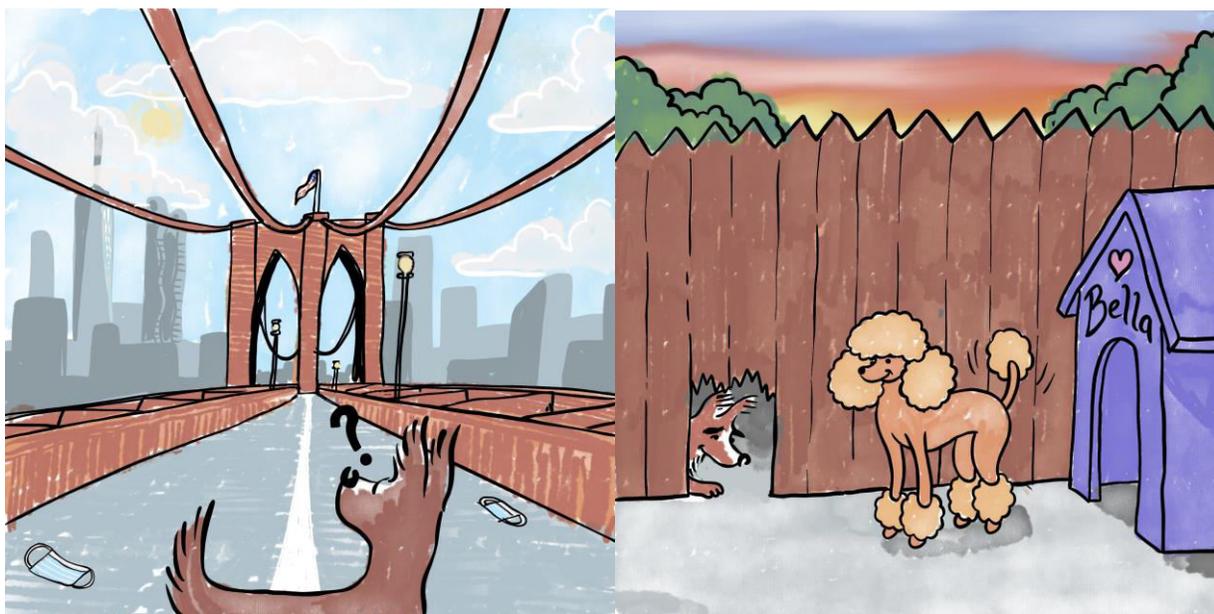
## **V: VALIDATION**

**Bella, Victor’s best friend, validates Victor’s emotions and experiences. Validation is recognizing that what you are feeling is real and important. Bella really listens to Victor and understands his feelings.**

VALIDATION -- It feels really good to have your feelings and experiences validated and it is important to validate other people’s feelings and experiences. Validating someone’s feelings is like saying “I understand you and your feelings are real and important to me” It is equally important to validate your own feelings! Try saying to yourself “My feeling are real and important and it is important to listen to them”.

### ***Reflection:***

*Do you have any feelings that would be helpful for people to validate? Examples might be feeling sad or worried about something just like Victor felt. It feels good to have your feelings understood and validated especially by adults and friends that care about you. It is equally important to validate other people’s feelings and experiences too.*



## I: INFORMED

**Being informed in a difficult situation is extremely helpful. Victor is very confused at first because he lacks information. He seeks out Bella, someone he really trusts.**

INFORMED -- Accurate information about a stressful situation is extremely important. It is really important to stay "informed" and to be thoughtful about where you are getting information. Make sure you get information from people that you trust and know will do their best to keep you informed of the things you need to know to stay safe and healthy.

***Reflection:*** *What information about this past year has been the most helpful for you to have? Who do you trust to give you safe and up-to-date information?*



## D: DETERMINED

**Victor was very determined to figure out what was happening. Determination is an important part of getting through a tough time. To be determined means to not give up easily. Determination is what many people have relied on to get through this strange and difficult year.**

DETERMINED -- Determination is another way of saying “not giving up”. Many children have had to be very determined this year in many different ways.

***Reflection:** Can you list the ways in which you have been determined this year? What about other people? Have you seen people in your family or school act in a very determined way?*

**What do you think? If you and your child/classroom have new words to add to our list of COVID strengths, we’d love to hear them. Just send us an email or post your own idea and tag us on Instagram @thebrightsidersmusic.**

“Victor & the Great Pause” copyright 2021 The Bright Siders LLC  
Written by Kari Groff MD and Kristin Andreassen  
Read by Akie Bermiss | Illustrations by Taylor Ashton | Music by Chris Eldridge

*Don't forget to check out our new album!*  
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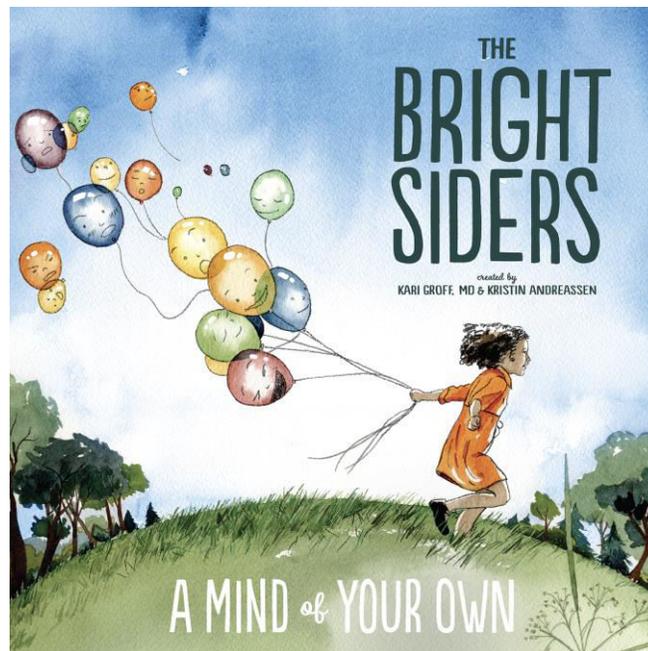
Featuring a stellar cast including GRAMMY-winning musicians, and 100% doctor-approved, these songs and skits are guaranteed to spark a meaningful conversation with the kids you love.

## ***The Bright Siders: A Mind of Your Own***

NAPPA Parenting Award Winner (2021)

**Created by Kari Groff, MD & Kristin Andreassen**  
**Produced by Kristin Andreassen & Chris Eldridge**

*Featuring the voices of: Ed Helms, The War & Treaty, Punch Brothers, Gaby Moreno, Joey Ryan, Kaia Kater, Oh Pep!, Aaron Jonah Lewis, Zara Bode & more.*



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