



Sample Pages from Wellness Check

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WELLNESS CHECK

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT BY
Christian Kiley



Wellness Check

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Characters

3 Any Gender

- Student #1:** A high-achieving student. First to arrive at the meeting.
- Student #2:** An underachiever who has nine suspensions and needs to attend this wellness check to boost the F they have in Personal Growth.
- Friendly:** A well-liked teacher who arrives late to the wellness check to find the only two students present are in the middle of an argument that started in first grade.

The characters can be played by anyone. They represent the artists (many of whom are student-artists) who must adapt to the changing circumstances involved with stay-at-home orders that have been issued around the world.

Setting

A video conference call. This play is intended to be performed in a video conference call or meeting. It is specifically geared toward actors who are not in the same physical space.

Time

The Present. During the peak of the Coronavirus.

Dedicated

To the Class of 2020

A video conference session. STUDENT 1 appears on the screen.

STUDENT 1: I guess I'm the first one here. Hello. Odd.

Hellooooooooooooo. It was like I fell into a well, a wishing well. A wandering wizard who was a well-wisher fell into a well full of wistful whale wishes. The ultimate cyber soliloquy with your host... me. "To be or not to be that is the question. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune or to take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them." That's all I know. I mean that's not all I know, that's all I know of that speech. I guess there's no point clarifying out loud since I am alone. Alone. Alone. Sounds serious when you say it like that.

STUDENT 1 starts to sing a song. It can be anything. This will give time for STUDENT 2 to join the video conference. When STUDENT 2 appears, STUDENT 1 abruptly stops singing.

STUDENT 2: Are you-

STUDENT 1: No, definitely wasn't.

STUDENT 2: I was going to ask if you were alone this whole time.

STUDENT 1: It hasn't been long.

STUDENT 2: Doesn't the teacher need to be here first?

STUDENT 1: Yeah, Friendly isn't here yet.

STUDENT 2: Do you think it's weird to call a teacher Friendly as their proper name, rather than an adjective?

STUDENT 1: I guess. It could be one of the coolest things about being a teacher though... having students call you basically whatever you want. Rocket Man, Miss Viper, Super Duper Hipster, whatever you want.

STUDENT 2: Yeah, I guess.

STUDENT 1: Friendly said that this was going to be a meeting to see how everyone is doing, how we're holding up in this pandemic. Makes it sound really important. Pandemic. Like The Rock, Brad Pitt, Matt Damon, Mark Wahlberg, and maybe Will Ferrell are in this converted ice cream truck and they're the only ones who aren't sick and the rest of the world is infected and they have to save them. And there's this evil mastermind with a British accent and he is trying to derail the world's economic structure and use

sheets of toilet paper as money. “How much for that mansion?”
 “Eight roles of two-ply and a family-sized hand sanitizer.”

STUDENT 2: You’ve always been like this.

STUDENT 1: Yeah.

STUDENT 2: It wasn’t a question. We’ve known each other since, when, first grade? You were jabbering away to yourself at recess back then too. Always the first one out during dodgeball. Everyone wanted to shut you up.

STUDENT 1: Thank you. Those were some vivid full-body memories. Do you want to start?

STUDENT 2: Start what?

STUDENT 1: Talk about what you’re feeling? How’s it going? What is your stress level? Are you engaging in meaningful self-care?

STUDENT 2: No.

STUDENT 1: You could engage in a lot of simple self-care practices, like meditation, or giving yourself a good foot rub, spending time with a family pet, listening to soothing music, painting or writing poetry.

STUDENT 2: No.

STUDENT 1: It could be anything that brings you joy. Eating a candy bar while watching your favorite guilty pleasure show. For me, it’s *Dora*. *Dora the Explorer* reminds me of my childhood.

STUDENT 2: I’d prefer to wait in silence.

STUDENT 1: I’m going to lead myself in a positive visualization exercise, if you care to join me.

STUDENT 2 closes their eyes, sighs deeply.

STUDENT 1: A cleansing breath. That’s a good start.

STUDENT 2 mutters something inaudible but clearly disparaging.

STUDENT 1: You are an ocean. At first the waves, your waves, you are turbulent swells, choppy gushes, sploosh, crash, slosh, swish-swash, sploosh, gushing, rushing water, rush, swoosh, gush, rush, gush.

STUDENT 1 starts to act out being the ocean physically as well as vocally.

STUDENT 1: Wooooosssshhhh, Guuuuusssssshhhhhh,
Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhh, Powowowow, Keeeeeeee...

STUDENT 1 makes bird sounds, wind sounds, wave sounds, maybe sings some verses from songs involving the water.

STUDENT 1: And then almost magically, the waves decrease in size. Smaller, smaller still, smaller, now rolling, hypnotic, pulses of water, your pulse and the breath of the water. Wave. Wave. Smaller, smaller still. Wave... wave. Imperceptible, smooth, as easy as the breath you take when your last final exam is done. Smoother, smoother still, stillness. Placid stillness. Now merely rocking. Gentle rocking. Your breath, aligned with your mother's breath, Mother Nature's breath, effortless. Ancient syncing, our primitive pulse, rolling ever so slightly with each breath.

STUDENT 2 peeks for a moment.

STUDENT 1: Nice, right?

STUDENT 2 lets out a long and agitated breath.

STUDENT 1: I'll just let us float in that for a bit.

STUDENT 2 mimes popping a balloon.

STUDENT 1: What was that? What did you just do there?

STUDENT 2: Popped it. Whatever you were floating on.

STUDENT 1: Oh. I pictured it was one of those tandem rafts. And we were floating together.

STUDENT 2: Popped it.

STUDENT 1 mimes blowing air into the raft.

STUDENT 1: There... I re-inflated it.

STUDENT 2 makes a slashing motion.

STUDENT 2: There. That raft is shredded.

STUDENT 1 mimes opening a box and pulling out a new raft.

STUDENT 1: Just so happens I have an extra raft.

STUDENT 1 starts blowing up the raft.

STUDENT 1: It'll just take a sec.

STUDENT 2 mimes picking up a rock, more like a small boulder.

STUDENT 1: What are you doing?

STUDENT 2: Sinking your raft.

STUDENT 1: I'm not even done blowing it up yet.

STUDENT 2: I'll wait.

STUDENT 1: Why would you do that?

STUDENT 2: Why not?

STUDENT 1: This is the kind of abuse you have been heaping on me since we first met. Remember that. The first day of first grade and I walked up to you and said, "We're going to be friends. Best friends." And you punched me.

STUDENT 2: It was a warning shot. A shoulder punch.

STUDENT 1: It sucked.

STUDENT 2: You were dressed like Big Bird. I've never seen so much yellow in all my life. There were actual feathers on your shirt.

STUDENT 1: It was a summer craft project.

STUDENT 2: It was a disaster. I half expected you to try to fly home.

STUDENT 1: Maybe we should just wait for Friendly and whoever else is coming.

STUDENT 2: Fine by me.

STUDENT 1 and STUDENT 2 are silent but the emotional subtext is palpable. STUDENT 1 is trying not to cry. STUDENT 2 keeps readjusting, folding and unfolding arms, getting increasingly agitated. STUDENT 1 opens mouth as if to speak, maybe some sound leaks out, thinks better of it before real words form. This can be done several times before FRIENDLY enters the call.

FRIENDLY: Wow. How did you get in here? Did you climb through a cyber window?

STUDENT 2: Nope, it was accessible to everyone. (*clearly referencing STUDENT 1*) Even weirdos.

STUDENT 1: You have to click a box when you schedule the meeting that says the guests can enter after the host.

FRIENDLY: Ah, hogwash. Such formalities are pointless. This is a pandemic.

STUDENT 1: I'm pretty sure there are still rules, Friendly.

FRIENDLY: Well, you say isolation. I say inspiration.

STUDENT 2: Look, I don't want to be rude. Actually, maybe I do. If formalities are pointless and all. I just want credit for being here. Get my credit, go on my way.

FRIENDLY: You got big plans? A cyber date! Or maybe getting turnd at a cyber party! Is that it? Or are you creating global relationships through Animal Crossing (*or other popular game*)?

STUDENT 2: It makes me uncomfortable when you try to act young by using current, trendy language to seem cool.

FRIENDLY: Point taken. I will cease such sus behavior immediately.

STUDENT 2: You did it again.

FRIENDLY: Yikes, I'm extra, what can I say.

STUDENT 1: You're doing great, Friendly. Some people are just disagreeable.

STUDENT 2: Shutup.

FRIENDLY: Woah, woah, woah. Rule number one, say it with me...

ALL: (*no enthusiasm from STUDENT 2*) Verbal stones can break figurative bones.

STUDENT 1: I think I need a figurative x-ray.

FRIENDLY: And that is exactly what this wellness check is for. I was hoping more students would be here.

STUDENT 2: Why should they be here?

FRIENDLY: Because we need to support each other. And this is one of the forums for us to give and receive that support.

STUDENT 2: What is your real name? Friendly is an adjective, not a proper name. Because I just want to graduate. My parents were

going to pay for me and my best friend to go to Hawaii for a week. Alone. Just my friend and I. Alone. In Hawaii. For a week. Now that's gone. And I swear if you say anything about a virtual-vacation I will lose what's left of my mind on you.

FRIENDLY: Are you struggling?

STUDENT 2: What did I just say?

FRIENDLY: But underneath that. What are you really feeling?

STUDENT 2: Are you a therapist? Let me answer that for you. No. You are not. You are a Personal Growth teacher. How did that even become a class? Personal growth happens naturally. Maybe they should add a class called *Breathing: The Ins and Outs of Staying Alive*.

FRIENDLY: Some people mask their pain with anger as a form of protection.

STUDENT 2: Some do-gooders attempt to do mask their fear with scented candles.

STUDENT 1: I have a scented candle burning right now. It's called Benevolent Berry.

STUDENT 2: Bet it smells like fabricated flatulence.

STUDENT 1: You just said I'm burning a lie fart candle.

STUDENT 2: Yes. I can smell it from here.

STUDENT 1: You know what? You are a very disagreeable person.

STUDENT 2: Ouch. Scathing.

FRIENDLY: We might as well get the most out of this?

STUDENT 2: Out of what? This. This is a turd in a tuxedo. Everyone knows. None of this counts. You can't lower our grades. That's why no one is here. They are all sleeping or binge watching or whatever people do when their reality has been destroyed. You can't tell us that this matters without telling us what this even is. We haven't heard anything from the pilot in a while because there is no pilot. And we're raiding the beverage cart.

FRIENDLY: But you are here. And you matter.

STUDENT 2: I'm here because I have an F in Personal Growth. And I want to, need to, have to, my parents want me to... graduate. What do I need to do to get credit for being here?

FRIENDLY: You answer the wellness check questions.

STUDENT 2: That's it? Go ahead. Shoot.

FRIENDLY: Well, were you the first one here?

STUDENT 2: What do you mean?

FRIENDLY: Who was here first?

STUDENT 2: Why does that matter?

FRIENDLY: The first person here, goes first. That's fair and that's the way we do it.

STUDENT 2: We? There are three of us here. And by the looks of it, only one sane person.

STUDENT 1: I was here first.

FRIENDLY: Great. We will start with you.

STUDENT 2: Shouldn't I go into the virtual waiting room until it's my turn?

FRIENDLY: We actually can benefit from being a part of each person's experience.

STUDENT 2: Each person's crazy, you mean.

FRIENDLY: It feels crazy until we start to sort through it. Find the commonalities. The things that bring us together.

STUDENT 1: I'm ready.

STUDENT 2: I bet you are.

FRIENDLY: I ask that we are supportive throughout this process.

STUDENT 2: Gotta pass, gotta pass the class, gotta pass...

FRIENDLY: What was that?

STUDENT 2: A mantra.

FRIENDLY: Alrighty. Here we go. How are you feeling today?

STUDENT 2: Really?

FRIENDLY: Please be silently supportive during another student's wellness check.

STUDENT 2: It just doesn't seem like a clinical question.

STUDENT 1: I can see why you have an F.

STUDENT 2: Now that's not very supportive.

FRIENDLY: Can we please stay on task? I am asking nicely.

STUDENT 1: Yes.

STUDENT 2: Yep.

FRIENDLY: How are you feeling today?

STUDENT 1: I actually was doing pretty well. I made some artwork out of items that were going to be discarded. Here, I'll show you.

STUDENT 1 presents a piece of art that is made from recyclables and garbage.

STUDENT 1: I call it Surreal-Survival.

STUDENT 2 tries to stay focused but is on the verge of bursting.

FRIENDLY: It is a remarkable piece of art. (to STUDENT 2) Is everything okay?

STUDENT 2: I... feel... a fit of laughter coming upon me like a storm. I can't escape...

STUDENT 2 starts laughing.

FRIENDLY: Can you compose yourself, please?

STUDENT 2: Of course, of course... not! Not, not, not. Look at that hunk of junk. Friendly, come on. Look at that. Really look at it. Say that you like it. Go ahead. Like you mean it.

FRIENDLY: I admire that piece of art.

STUDENT 2: But do you like it? Would you buy it?

FRIENDLY: I am not an art collector but yes, I like it.

STUDENT 2: Do you like me? Be honest.

FRIENDLY: I care about all my students.

STUDENT 2: But do you like me? Right now? The way I'm behaving?

FRIENDLY: No. Not particularly. I don't like you very much. And I don't particularly like that sculpture but I appreciate the effort and emotion that went into it.

STUDENT 2: I like how you left out skill. Nothing at all about the skill that went into it.

FRIENDLY: Can we please get back on track here?

STUDENT 1: I'm not doing as well now. I came into this meeting with a good attitude, to try and be supportive. Maybe even get a little support myself and I've been ridiculed and had my work laughed at. Let me ask you two what the heck you've done in quarantine. Because if honesty is what's trending right now, let me contribute, by all means. It looks like we've got a flunky who criticizes everything because it's easier than putting forth any real, heartfelt effort and a wannabe children's show host who had to make up an elective class to justify the lack of a legitimate psychological degree. And even the flunky knows that none of this really counts. I already have an A-plus in this class. And I am "held harmless" that's the phrase that protects me and could protect this dolt here if Dummy the Idiot had even enough points for a D. But nope. I mean what are your other grades like if you have an F in Personal Growth. I'm only taking this class because it was either this or delivering notes to classrooms like a junior postal worker. Let me make this quick, since I know all the wellness check questions. That's right. I have them memorized in the same way any parrot could. Squawk!

One: How I am doing? Not well. I feel like the more I try, the more I achieve, the less I am acknowledged, except for the verbal abuse heaped on me by just about everyone, including my own father, who if I don't get into M.I.T. is going to consider me a failure.

Two: On a scale of one to ten, with one being despondent, that means really, really sad and ten being elated, that means really, really happy, how would I rank my wellbeing presently? Two and sinking by the second.

Three: Have I had depressing thoughts and feelings in the last week? Yes. I write poetry, spoken word songs, pause for chuckles and full belly laughs as needed, and of course my junk art.

Four: On a scale of one to ten, with one being unmotivated and ten being I found a cure for the Coronavirus, how productive am I feeling today? Eight. I am designing another sculpture in my mind as we speak. If I were a blacksmith, the fire that I would use to forge my gauntlet, that's a glove made of metal that a knight wears, would be all of the toxic flames that burn around me, and rather than be destroyed by them, I shall channel them into a suit

of armor that will protect me from charlatans and other frauds who seek to diminish my value.

Five: Have I considered harming myself in the last week? Nope. But I have recently considered some other options. Perhaps I'll make a very jagged sculpture about it that is so sharp it cuts without the viewer having to touch it. Fin. Wellness check done. May I leave this meeting?

FRIENDLY: Usually the wellness check is a series of questions and answers. A dialogue. Not a stream of consciousness.

STUDENT 2: That was scary.

STUDENT 1: I guess you're more accustomed to the sound of the wind whipping through the deserted wasteland of your skull.

FRIENDLY: Now hold on a second. We need to be respectful of each other.

STUDENT 1: Just shut up. Please. Enough already. We need to respect each other? Do you have any idea what goes on in the cyber hallways and actual hallways? This imbecile has been hounding me from the moment I stepped on the school yard.

STUDENT 2: There are predators and prey. Like the wild.

FRIENDLY: I don't agree with that at all.

STUDENT 2: The good news is the prey can camouflage themselves. Or they can be the Head Nerd of the Sci Fi Fiction Club.

STUDENT 1: Please. It is the Science Fiction and Fantasy Realm Fan Forum and Role-Playing Guild. And Fi is short for fiction. You don't say Sci fi fiction. Unless you are a parrot or a future parolee.

STUDENT 2: See what I mean?

FRIENDLY: This is a mess. Just a mess. I can't! I just can't do this. I try. You know that? I took on a nickname that I thought would help me create a persona. You can't not like someone named Friendly. Or, if you do, you're a terrible person. Or the person named Friendly is in disguise and is really not friendly at all. A liar. Do you want to know something? A secret. I went shopping right before the quarantine started and I bought way too much sugar. Bags and bags and bags of it. Not toilet paper or hand sanitizer. Sugar. And my reasoning? You want to know why I did this? What was my evil master plan? You wanna know? I figured I would bake sweets and deliver them to students, senior citizens, anyone who

needs a treat. I have six-hundred pounds of sugar. I'm basically Sugar Scarface! I could dump it all out on a huge banquet table and, "say hello to my little snickerdoodle!" How selfish! Right? What about Grandma Gert who lives down the block? What about her sugar? Well, there's none left. Sorry. And this is the way we are all behaving. Our true colors are coming out. And I don't know what the selfish colors are, but they're making us buy up all the sugar, toilet paper, baby wipes! What about peanut butter? If you wanted to live a long time, get a giant vat of peanut butter and a spoon and hunker down for the long haul. But noooo, people are using windshield wiper fluid as a pre-op scrub before they perform surgery on what, a dollar cheeseburger? The hospitals don't have the supplies they need because Dorko down the street has four hundred face masks. Are you studying to be a bank robber, Dorko? Or are you just demonstrating what we all already knew? We are so unbelievably selfish that we are going to drive the entire human race into extinction. But at least we'll have body wash. Smell that. Smells like a spring fresh lies!

STUDENT 1: Sorry, Friendly.

STUDENT 2: That was awesome.

FRIENDLY: My pain was amusing to you?

STUDENT 2: No. Yeeees. I can't lie. It was the best thing since quarantine started.

FRIENDLY: Your turn.

STUDENT 2: Easy, Sugar Bandit.

FRIENDLY: How are you feeling today?

STUDENT 2: Do I have to answer that?

FRIENDLY: If you want your precious credit. Yes. Yes, you do.

STUDENT 2: You're scaring me.

FRIENDLY: Oh, stop it. You're like the first one to be written out of a horror movie script. "Oh, what's that horrible rusty crunching sound? I should go check it out." Goes into the other room. "I'm scared." Only the rusty crunching sound is coming from inside. You. You are the monster you are afraid of. Monster!

There is a pause where the realization of what has just been said lands.

STUDENT 2: You're right.



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