

REAL TALK!

By Megan Cohen

Commissioned by
the New Conservatory Theater Center's YouthAware
Educational Theater Program

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Artist Bio

Playwright Megan Cohen has had over 100 readings and productions of her scripts, and was named a 2014 Theater Bay Area “Eye On” Emerging Artist Honoree. She has been called “*a highly engaging raconteur*” by the Huffington Post, “*funny, erudite, and poignant*” by Poetry Monthly, and was named one of SF Weekly's “Top Theater Artists to Watch in 2013,” in a profile that dubbed her “*a ruthless innovator.*”

Her work has been shown Off-Broadway and Off-Off Broadway in NYC, in Scotland at the 2014 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, at new works festivals in London, and in cities and towns across the U.S. Her plays have been performed in bars, on beaches, and in galleries as well as on stages large and small.

Her work has been seen at or commissioned by New Conservatory Theater Center, Impact Theater, SF Playhouse, Union Women Actors’ Coalition, SF Olympians, and PianoFight!, among dozens of producing and development organizations.

When not making theater, she freelances as a content creator for new media platforms and mobile games. She currently writes interactive stories for teen readers.

“*REAL TALK!*” is her first collaboration with the YouthAware program.

You can find her complete production history, listing 80+ theatrical productions and readings since 2009, at MeganCohen.Com.

Character List (by segment)

The Real Talk Band

Lindsay
Sylvester
Hunter
Alice
Facetube Voiceover (voice only)

Extreme Good Judgment

Shaun Hawktony
Junk Food Kid
Namecaller Kid
Headphones Kid
Lazy Kid

Bloodstream Sailor Videogame

Videogame Player
Bloodstream Sailor
Chicken Pox
Sleepless Zombie
Smoke-Breathing Dragon
Pirate
Game Narrator (voice only)

Hashtag Trashbag

Quarterback
Grandma

SUGGESTED ROLE DOUBLING for a 2F 2M CAST:

Female Role 1: Lindsay/Namecaller Kid/and Videogame Player

Female Role 2: Alice/Headphones Kid/Bloodstream Sailor/Facetube
Voiceover (voice only)/and Tom/Tamara

Male Role 1: Sylvester/Junk Food Kid/Lazy Kid/Chicken Pox/Smoke-Breathing
Dragon/Quarterback/and Harvey (voice only)

*Male Role 2: Hunter/Shawn Hawktony/Game Narrator (voice only)/Insomnia Zombie
/Pirate/and Grandma*

(START OF PLAY.)

FACETUBE VOICEOVER: Lindsay has logged on.

(Notification sound—ding!

Lights up on LINDSAY. A 6th grade girl, bright and outgoing, with a natural warmth in her eyes.

She is framed inside a flat square frame—cardboard or a lightweight wood— which is styled similar to the viewing window of a YouTube video, with “play” and “share” buttons, etc, along the edges. It says “FaceTube” at the top.

This is her “FaceTube” window.)

LINDSAY: Hi! So, um. My name is Lindsay, and this is my FaceTube channel. I use it to share my favorite videos online, and to post new videos I make with my friends. We’re total besties and we even have a band together, so sometimes we make music videos. Do you want to meet everyone? Let’s drop a beat on it!

(A hip-hop beat drops; if Lindsay can beat box that would be sooo optimal right, but if not, a recorded beat will be totally fine.

Her FRIENDS take turns popping in and out of the “frame” to wave hello and rap a line or two:

SYLVESTER, same age, is sweet, a bit shy, and has glasses.

ALICE, same age, is aloof, sophisticated, and cool.

HUNTER, an older teenager, is friendly and confident, with an easy smile.)

SYLVESTER: Sylvester is my name / Let’s kick it for a while
I hope my sweet rhymes / will make you smile.
I’m pretty shy, / and I can be quiet,
But when it comes to real talk, / you know I supply it!

HUNTER: Hunter is my name, / Realness is my game,
My truth ain’t simple, / but I speak it the same:
Like I’m learning to drive, / but I gotta explain—
I don’t have a car/ so I ride the BART train!

ALICE: My name is Alice / but I’m not in Wonderland,
Yo, since we were babies / I’ve been Lindsay’s best friend,
Yeah that doesn’t rhyme, / But you still like it

Because you can. See. I. Have. Skills. So.
Deep. You Can't Even...
Step
To the
Beat.
(sung) Of my heaaaaaart! (spoken) WHATTUP.

LINDSAY: Whattup indeed! Alice, keep working on those emcee skills?

ALICE: On it. Whattup FaceTube universe, thanks for watching my girl Lindsay's channel.

(ALICE waves hello to the "camera")

LINDSAY: My channel is called Real Talk.

SYLVESTER: Because when Lindsay talks to you

HUNTER: She is talking Real Talk.

ALICE: True.

LINDSAY: And our band is called Real Talk...

SYLVESTER: because when we sing about something...

HUNTER: those are our legit thoughts and feelings...

ALICE: and that's definitely some Real Talk!

ALL FRIENDS: Peace!

(All FRIENDS pop out of frame.)

LINDSAY: I'm in 6th grade and I want to have the best year ever. What would make this the best year ever? Well. Being a good friend, and taking care of myself, and learning stuff, and making lots of videos because it's cool to be creative and make stuff. Like this!

(She shows an amazing painting she made.)

LINDSAY: I made that! And this:

(She shows a plate of spaghetti.)

LINDSAY: I made that! And this...

(She shows a rubber duck.)

LINDSAY: Okay, okay, I didn't make that, but I did name it! That's my duck. His name is Harvey. Close-up on Harvey!

(A huge rubber duck— or image of a huge rubber duck-- fills the frame.)

LINDSAY: Hi, Harvey!

(The duck pops away, out of frame, and LINDSAY appears again.)

LINDSAY: Oh man, I'm been watching all these FaceTube videos like All. The. Time, but I've never made one before! Ahhh! I really hope you like my FaceTube channel! If you like my channel, put your thumbs up and say "LIKE."

(LINDSAY and all cast members do a thumbs up and say LIKE, whipping up the audience to join them.

ONCE.

TWICE.

THREE TIMES!)

LINDSAY: Awesome! I'm gonna share one of my favorite videos, from the incredible skater Shaun Hawktony. He's so extreme. His stunts are so extreme. This video is so extreme. See ya! And... TUBE-SHARE!

(At "TUBE-SHARE" the lights change.

SHAUN HAWKTONY, a pro skateboarder, enters the stage with his skateboard, as LINDSAY and her window exit.)

SHAUN: Hey, 'sup? I'm Shaun Hawktony, pro skater extraordinaire and extreme action sport guy. I travel all over the world doing extreme stunts! Yesterday, I popped a 360 flip off the Great Wall of China. Today, I'm in San Francisco, California, skating an extremely difficult school hallway! Let's grind.

(SHAUN gets on skateboard and pretends to skate.

In this scene, instead of the skateboard actually moving, the board stays stationary, while the other performers shuffle past it.

This creates the theatricalized illusion of skateboarding down the hallway. The effect is similar to the style of rear projection footage used for driving scenes in movies.

Scenes take place as SHAUN "passes" each set of characters.

3 kids enter, watch him pass with increasing "speed".)

KIDS: Wow, look at him go.

JUNK FOOD KID: So strong!

NAMECALLER KID: So extreme!

HEADPHONES KID: So fast!

(They exit.)

SHAUN: Now we're really moving.

(Enter JUNK FOOD KID with a BAG OF JUNK FOOD, ideally Cheetos.)

SHAUN: Obstacle numero uno: Check out this kid about to eat some raunchy junk food!

JUNK FOOD KID: Time for noms!

SHAUN: Kid, that snack might be tasty, but you can do better! Those noms are straight-up junk! Hold up!

JUNK FOOD KID: But it is already so close to my mouth!

SHAUN: You gotta have a balanced diet, though, with healthy stuff. I'm talking protein, calcium, potassium and like that. Would you pour Mountain Dew into the gas tank of a car?

JUNK FOOD: Um, no?

SHAUN: Think like that about what you put in your face! Food is fuel for your body! You need good fuel! If you only eat junk, you won't have the energy for stunts like this!

(SHAUN hops off and on the skateboard.)

JUNK FOOD: Wooooow!!!

SHAUN: Eat healthy fruits and veggies. Cut back on junk foods and soda, and see how it makes you feel! You'll have more energy, you'll fight colds and flus better, and you'll be a good role model for other kids!

(JUNK FOOD KID pulls out an apple and takes a bite.)

JUNK FOOD: Cool. The vitamins in this apple make me feel extreme!

SHAUN: Picking a healthy snack shows Extreme Good Judgment.

*(Junk Food
Kid Exits)*

SHAUN: Here comes another obstacle! Looks like these kids are about to get punchy in a fight!

(NAMECALLER KID and HEADPHONES KID enter, angry, having a yelling argument. They are worked up and freaking out. HEADPHONES KID is wearing big headphones.)

HEADPHONESKID: AAAAHHH!

NAMECALLERKID: AAAAHHH!

HEADPHONES: AAAAHHH!

(They roar like angry lions, then put up their fists as though about to fight.)

SHAUN: Yo! Hitting someone when you're mad is not healthy, for you or for anyone else.

NAMECALLER: But I wanna!

HEADPHONES: All I wanna do is be like AAAHHH up in this kid's face!

NAMECALLER: AAAAHHH!

HEADPHONES: AAAAHHH!

SHAUN: Does yelling that loud make you feel better?

HEADPHONES: KIND OF? NOT REALLY?

NAMECALLER: HNNNNG! URRRGGGHH! I DON'T EVEN KNOW!

SHAUN: When you feel like you wanna fight, or call names, or hit somebody, do you know you can just stop?

NAMECALLER: GRRR!

HEADPHONES: GRRR!

SHAUN: You can do better. If you got punchy and hurt each other, how would you feel afterwards?

HEADPHONES & NAMECALLER: We would feel bad!

SHAUN: Then do not do it!

HEADPHONES & NAMECALLER: But we're angry now!

SHAUN: Try calming down. Be mature. Instead of shouting to be heard, just listen to each other.

HEADPHONES: I'm mature enough to listen. But you're not, you're a baby!

NAMECALLER: Am not! I'm mature!

SHAUN: It's okay to stop and calm down when you're mad.

NAMECALLER: HOW DO I DO THAT.

SHAUN: Start with a deep breath.

HEADPHONES: THAT SOUNDS! OKAY!

NAMECALLER: YES! IT! DOES!

(SHAUN and the KIDS take a deep breath.)

KIDS:. PHEW.

SHAUN: A deep breath helps you calm down. Try it when you're mad. Or count to ten. Walk around the block. Do whatever chills you out.

(SHAUN and the KIDS take another deep, calming, breath. The KIDS finally put their fists down.)

SHAUN: Now that you're calm, let's solve the problem that made you fight. Why were you mad?

HEADPHONES: I don't remember.

NAMECALLER: I do. You borrowed my headphones without asking.

HEADPHONES: I totally did. I'm sorry!

(HEADPHONES KID gives the headphones back. NAMECALLER KID puts them on.)

SHAUN: Awesome! If you did something screwy, apologize. Then, instead of yelling or hurting someone, you can both put all that energy into doing cool stuff... like this stunt!

(SHAUN takes the board out from under his feet, and holds it over his head, then puts it back under his feet.)

KIDS: Woooooow.

NAMECALLER: Calming down is extreme!

HEADPHONES: Listening to each other is totally extreme!

SHAUN: Stopping a fight shows Extreme Good Judgment!

(The two KIDS exit. A LAZY KID enters. S/he isn't even standing up, s/he is lying on the floor.)

SHAUN: Kid, what are you doing?

LAZY KID: Meh. Just lyin' here.

SHAUN: Aren't you bored?

LAZY KID: Yeah.

SHAUN: Are you gonna do anything about it?

LAZY KID: Nahhh.

SHAUN: How about exercise?

LAZY KID: But I'm tired.

SHAUN: If you exercise, you'll have more energy! Your body will get stronger and feel more energetic all day long.

LAZY KID: That sounds okay.

SHAUN: So get moving! Play baseball, try dancing, or learn some fly skateboarding tricks, like this!

(SHAUN “jumps” his skateboard over the LAZY KID on the floor.)

LAZY KID: Wooooow.

SHAUN: If you can’t do that, at least stand up, it’ll make your body feel better!

(LAZY KID stands up)

LAZY KID: I do feel better.

SHAUN: Taking care of your body by making healthy food choices, healthy emotional choices, and healthy fitness choices shows Extreme Good Judgment.

(SHAUN skates, slowly but for real, off of the stage, as he says his next line.)

SHAUN: Hey look, a wall of lockers! Time to get vertical. Let’s skate the wall!

(SHAUN exits. LAZY KID “watches” him skating offstage.)

LAZY KID: Wooooow. He’s totally sideways. Look at him skate the wall! Oh—oh no—

(We hear a loud crash.)

SHAUN *(offstage)*: I’m okay, I was wearing a helmet! But... maybe I better skip that trick next time.

LAZY KID: Now that’s Extreme Good Judgment.

(Lights change. LINDSAY and HUNTER in the FaceTube window.)

HUNTER: Wow, that guy takes a lot of risks.

LINDSAY: But he always wears protection, like helmets and knee pads and stuff. That way, he can be safe while he’s having fun!

HUNTER: It’s good to wear protection. Like wearing a seatbelt in a car.

LINDSAY: Yeah, like that. *(to audience)* Hey everyone, this is Hunter, my older brother. Well, older step-brother, like almost college-age older. That’s ‘cause we don’t have the same Dad; Hunter’s from the husband Mom used to have, but doesn’t any more--

HUNTER: It’s complicated.

LINDSAY: Hunter is the coolest, and he definitely inspires me to make good choices.

HUNTER: Aw! Little sis, you're making me blush.

LINDSAY: Hunter, you take really good care of yourself.

HUNTER: Everyone should. But especially me, since I'm HIV-positive.

LINDSAY: *(to audience)* Hunter is dealing with something called HIV. HIV is a virus, but it does not exactly make you sick...

HUNTER: Yeah, I don't look sick or act sick at all. I am just doing my thing. Like, I still play in our band, dropping mad beats, and beating mad drums!

(HUNTER air drums a drumroll and cymbal crash; maybe he even drums on the inner edge of the FaceTube window.)

LINDSAY: *(Shouts over Hunter's drumming)* Hunter is great, but his drumming is not great!

HUNTER: Lindsay! *(whispering)* It's true though, I'm not a good drummer.

LINDSAY: Anyway, you have the HIV virus but you're living with it. You're going to college next year and all that...

HUNTER: HIV does not stop me from doing my thing.

LINDSAY: Because you have medication.

HUNTER: Yeah, and my meds help my immune system stay strong.

LINDSAY: *(to audience)* When Hunter first told me he had HIV, I was freaked out.

HUNTER: You were scared, and mad, and confused...

LINDSAY: I had, like, all the feelings.

HUNTER: Because you didn't understand what it was.

LINDSAY: At first, I thought I might catch HIV from you. Or that mom might.

HUNTER: But now you know better.

LINDSAY: Like a hundred times better!

HUNTER: A zillion times!

LINDSAY: A bajillion million zillion!

HUNTER: That's not a number.

LINDSAY: Let's just say I know a lot better. Like now I know, HIV is a virus, but it is not the same as a cold or a flu, where you can get it from a handshake, or just from hanging out with someone who has it.

HUNTER: *(to audience)* Lindsay will not catch HIV just by being near me.

LINDSAY: Right.

HUNTER: It's not like when you got chicken pox from borrowing my teddy bear when we were little.

LINDSAY: Hunter! You're embarrassing me on FaceTube! Anyway, since HIV is not like that, I know it is safe to hug you, or borrow your hoodie and wear it...

HUNTER: So that's where my hoodie went--

LINDSAY: Anyway, I was trying to say, I am really glad I understand HIV, so that I don't feel scared to be around you.

HUNTER: I wish everyone understood it like you do.

LINDSAY: Me too. When you started telling people you had HIV, some of them really freaked out, and they wouldn't even listen to like, basic science facts.

HUNTER: Yeah, and a lot of people really hurt my feelings. Like, one kid at my high school was spreading a rumor that people could get HIV from coming to my house to play MarioKart?

LINDSAY: That gossip was the opposite of legit.

HUNTER: Totally. But, to help me deal with it, we made a music video with our band, about rumors and gossip, and it is still one of my favorite songs we've ever done.

LINDSAY: Yo, let's watch that sweet music video. Annnd... TUBE-SHARE!

(At "TUBE-SHARE" the lights change. The FaceTube window disappears.)

The gang of four friends poses like a boy band, ala "One Direction," and prepare to sing the song "Hot Cheetos Burning."

The follow text is sung as a pop song, with rap interludes—exact details of singing/speaking rhythms and tunes TBA, depending on backing track.)

HUNTER: *(sung)* Why you gotta hurt me like that

ALICE: *(sung)* Why you gotta hurt me so bad

LINDSAY: *(sung)* Why you gotta take a cheap shot

SYLVESTER: *(sung)* Why you gotta burn me so hot

HUNTER: *(sung)* Why you gotta hurt us like this.

ALICE: *(sung)* With rumors and gossip and dish.

ALL: *(sung)* You burned us like, you burned us like, you burned us like... Hot Cheetos.

LINDSAY: *(spoken)* Hot flaming Cheetos.

ALL: *(sung)* You burned us like Cheetos.

LINDSAY: *(rap)* A kid at Hunter's school is not very smart

HUNTER: *(rap)* She said I was contagious via MarioKart
She told everyone not to play with me

SYLVESTER: *(rap)* Cause she thought he would contaminate the Nintendo Wii.

ALICE: *(rap)* That wasn't real science
That wasn't a fact

HUNTER: *(rap)* I had to tell everyone that story was wack

LINDSAY: *(rap)* But it took him some time to do that outreach

HUNTER: *(rap)* And meanwhile, I was missing games with Princess Peach.
Sitting alone,
at home,
and asking... why.
(sung) Why you gotta hurt me like this.

ALICE: *(sung)* With rumors and gossip and dish.

ALL: *(sung)* You burned us like, you burned us like, you burned us like... Hot Cheetos.

LINDSAY: *(spoken)* Hot flaming Cheetos.

ALL: *(sung)* You burned us like Cheeeeeetooooos.

LINDSAY: *(rap)* When people spread rumors, they stick to your face

HUNTER: *(rap)* Like cheeto dust, they get all over the place
Before you spread gossip, take a second to say

SYLVESTER: *(rap)* How would it feel if someone trashed *you* that way?

HUNTER: *(rap)* So don't dish dirt, and don't talk smack. There's nothing cool in saying stuff behind my back.

(sung) Why you gotta hurt me like this.

ALICE: *(sung)* With rumors and gossip and dish.

ALL: *(sung)* You burned us like, you burned us like, you burned us like... Hot Cheetos.

LINDSAY: *(spoken)* Hot flaming Cheetos.

ALL: *(sung)* You burned us like Cheeeeeetooooos.

ALICE:

(RAP BREAKDOWN)

Whether it's about

Frogs, toads, dogs, cats,

ugly hats, baseball bats,

Petunias or bananas,

Lasagna or Montana,

If you hear that someone's sick, or their parents might divorce?

Don't believe it,

until you've heard it right from the source.

LINDSAY: *(sung)* Don't believe what they say about me....

ALICE AND SYLVESTER: *(rap)* Don't believe it, until you've heard it right from the source.

ALICE: *(rap)* If you hear that someone's sister flunked a history course?

ALICE, SYLVESTER, HUNTER: Don't believe it, until you've heard it right from the source.

LINDSAY: *(sung)* Don't believe what they say about me... behind my back.

(Lights change.

LINDSAY alone in the FaceTube window.)

LINDSAY: That's. My. Jam. Alice and I wrote that rap breakdown together. So epic!
(rapping) Whether it's about frogs, toads, dogs, cats...

HUNTER: Super epic.

LINDSAY: Those kids really believed that rumor, about getting HIV from MarioKart?

HUNTER: Yuuuuuuuuuup.

LINDSAY: But that is so not how HIV works!

HUNTER: Seriously. Like, okay, HIV lives in blood.

LINDSAY: *(to audience)* To get the HIV virus, there would need to be direct contact between your healthy blood, and the blood of somebody who has HIV.

HUNTER: Which, like, blood touching blood would not happen in our life. Because we're not vampires?

LINDAY: It would have to be wet blood, too, which is so gross.

HUNTER: *(audience)* Because when blood dries up, the virus dies.

LINDSAY: So even if there was, like, dried blood on your hoodie, I could not get HIV from that.

HUNTER: Truth.

LINDSAY: So, like, scientifically, your hoodie is safe for me to wear. Anytime I want.

HUNTER: Safe in terms of HIV... but not safe in terms of my personal revenge for hoodie-stealing!

(He tickles her.)

LINDSAY: Hahaha, Hunter! But seriously bro, let's be real.

HUNTER: Always, gurl.

LINDSAY: *(to audience)* HIV is not like a cold or flu where you can get it from a sneeze or a hi-five. But there are three ways it spreads.

HUNTER: *(audience)* There's blood contact, then there is... a mother with HIV can pass it to her baby during birth or breastfeeding.

LINDSAY: But if the mom takes the right medication, that won't happen.

HUNTER: Right. And the only other way HIV can spread...

LINDSAY: The only other way HIV can spread is through unprotected sexual activity with somebody who has the virus.

HUNTER: That means having sex with no condom, where one of the partners has HIV.

LINDSAY: Hunter, does that mean that if somebody--

HUNTER: Don't ask me about that kinda stuff, ask your Mom. Also, not an appropriate discussion topic for FaceTube!

LINDSAY: True. I almost forgot we were on FaceTube.

HUNTER: How can you forget, you're basically always on FaceTube!

LINDSAY: Basically, yeah.

(They pause. Look at the "camera." They wave hello.)

HUNTER: We're basically always on FaceTube. I'm online, like, all day?

LINDSAY: Uh huh.

HUNTER: I'm gonna go like... outside.

LINDSAY: Byyyyyyyyyyyyye!

(HUNTER exits)

LINDSAY: So, okay, that's it, those are the only ways that HIV travels from an infected person to a healthy person. Blood, birth or breastfeeding, or sex without a condom. That's IT.

(Notification sound.)

LINDSAY: Oh! Notification pop-up... oh, it's a comment, my first comment on my channel, ahhh! Hi.

(A second FaceTube window appears. SYLVESTER is inside.)

SYLVESTER: Hi Lindsay.

LINDSAY: Oh, hi Sylvester. What's goin' on?

SYLVESTER: Well, I was wondering. I heard that HIV, which is Hunter's thing, right?

LINDSAY: Yeah, HIV, which is called Human Immunodeficiency Virus, bee-tee-dubs.

SYLVESTER: Well, I heard that is the same as something called AIDS, or maybe not, I'm not sure, do you know about that?

LINDSAY: Kind of. Um, what *do* you know about AIDS?

SYLVESTER: Well, I know it stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, but I don't know what it is. I thought you might know, since you're really... smart. And... you're good at... I dunno... everything... and... you're always nice, too, in school, and... that's why I was your first subscriber, and, posted the first comment on your channel, and... and I like the way your hair is the color of a... Um, I have to go.

(SYLVESTER's window disappears.)

LINDSAY: He's kind of... shy. Okay, let's look up the answer to his question, and see if we can--

(Typing noises.)

LINDSAY: Oh, hey, here's a videogame about how viruses and the immune system work... ooh, and it'll let me livestream while I play, so you can all see it! Aaaand.... TUBE-SHARE!

(At "TUBE-SHARE," the lights change.)

LINDSAY enters as Videogame Player, holding a videogame controller. As PLAYER, she stands upstage of the "game" for the entire scene and "plays" it on the controller.

All “in-game” dialogue, i.e. all dialogue except for the PLAYER, is recorded and played as voiceover during this scene.

When “speaking,” the characters open and close their mouths, lipsyncing inaccurately and gesticulating wildly, in the manner of animated videogame characters.)

GAME NARRATOR (v/o): Welcome to... “Bloodstream Sailor!” You’re a happy-go-lucky hero sailing in the bloodstream of the body. Can you defeat the enemies of the immune system? Player One, activate!

(SAILOR enters and takes a place onstage, swaying slightly for a moment in the manner of a videogame character waiting to be selected.

A chime noise, as SAILOR strikes an action pose)

NARRATOR (v/o): Level One, Bloodstream Sailor versus Chicken Pox. Choose your weapon!

(CHICKEN POX, a chicken, enters and approaches SAILOR.)

PLAYER: Menu menu menu... okay, I’ll use... white blood cells! They’re the body’s best defense against viral attacks. So, I press A, and then B, like...

(Button pushing noises.

SAILOR exits and returns holding bunches of white balloons on strings; not helium balloons, just clusters of inflated balloons that dangle from his/her hands on strings or ribbons.)

SAILOR (v/o): You’ll never defeat me and the white blood cells of my immune system!

CHICKEN POX (v/o): Ha ha ha. Your poultry defenses are no match for my fowl play!

NARRATOR (v/o): Let’s goooooo viral!

(SAILOR and CHICKEN circle each other, doing false attacks, fake-outs, etc. They tussle a little as videogame sound effects go “beep,” “blorp,” etc.)

PLAYER: I know from school that when a virus attacks, white blood cells fight back by making antibodies. I bet I can do that here! I’ll use that combo like...

(Button pushing noises.)

NARRATOR (v/o): Antibody attack!

(Pew-pew-pew sound effect.

SAILOR raises balloons as though they are emitting a laser attack. CHICKEN staggers backwards.)

NARRATOR (v/o): Antibody attack is super effective!

PLAYER: The more white blood cells you have, the more antibodies you can make to fight off viruses like colds, flus, or the chicken pox. So... whammy!

(SAILOR wallops CHICKEN with the balloons. CHICKEN falls to ground.)

NARRATOR (v/o): Knockout!

SAILOR (v/o): This body is healthy thanks to me, Bloodstream Sailor. Chicken Pox, your virus is for the birds!

(CHICKEN exits)

PLAYER: That level was easy. Since the immune system was strong, the sailor was able to fight really well. Let's switch to hard mode, where different enemies weaken your immune system. Here's an enemy now!

NARRATOR (v/o): Level Two, Bloodstream Sailor versus Insomnia Zombie!

(INSOMNIA ZOMBIE, a staggering and yawning zombie in pajamas, enters and approaches SAILOR. ZOMBIE yawns.)

INSOMNIA ZOMBIE (v/o): I'm your worst nightmare!

SAILOR (v/o): It's time to put this villain to bed!

NARRATOR (v/o): Annndddd start!

(SAILOR and ZOMBIE circle each other, doing false attacks, fake-outs, etc. They tussle a little as videogame sound effects go "beep," "blorp," etc.)

PLAYER: A good night's sleep helps your immune system by giving it energy. But when your body is tired, it has less strength to fight off infections.

(ZOMBIE yawns.

SAILOR yawns.

As SAILOR is yawning, ZOMBIE sneak-attack grabs one of SAILOR's balloons.)

SAILOR (v/o): Hey! I need that!

SLEEPLESS ZOMBIE (v/o): Too bad.

(ZOMBIE runs away.)

PLAYER: Ugh, that level was a nightmare.

NARRATOR (v/o): Level Three, Bloodstream Sailor versus Smoke-Breathing Dragon!

(SMOKE-BREATHING DRAGON, a dragon smoking a cigarette, enters and approaches SAILOR. ZOMBIE yawns.)

SMOKE-BREATHING DRAGON (v/o): It's time for you to feel the burn!

SAILOR (v/o): Take a deep breath, dragon, 'cause it might be your last.

NARRATOR (v/o): Annndddd start!

(SAILOR and DRAGON circle each other, doing false attacks, fake-outs, etc. They tussle a little as videogame sound effects go "beep," "blorp," etc. DRAGON stops in the middle of the fight to cough.)

DRAGON (v/o): Smoker's cough. The phlegm is real.

(They go back to fighting.)

PLAYER: Smoking cigarettes hurts your body in a bunch of ways, and is super-duper bad for your immune system... as you can see.

(DRAGON grabs two of SAILOR's balloons.)

SAILOR (v/o): Curse you dragon! Your harsh cigarette smoke takes the wind out of my sails!

(DRAGON runs away)

PLAYER: This game is hard.

NARRATOR (v/o): Level Four, Bloodstream Sailor versus HIV Pirate.

(HIV PIRATE, a pirate with a hook instead of one of his/her hands, enters.)

SAILOR (v/o): My antibodies will bury you like a treasure chest!

PIRATE (v/o): Arrr arrr arrr. I'll send ye to Davy Jones' locker, ye be no match for the HIV Pirate and me trusty rusty hook.

NARRATOR (v/o): Let's goooooo viral!

(SAILOR and PIRATE circle each other, doing false attacks, fake-outs, etc. They tussle a little as videogame sound effects go "beep," "blorp," etc.)

Using the hook, which has a sharpened end or a safety pin attached to the end of it, PIRATE pops three of SAILOR's balloons in a row—pop, pop, pop!

SAILOR (v/o): Gulp!

PLAYER: Just like the pirate, HIV gets in the bloodstream and tries to knock out your white blood cells.

(The PIRATE pops another of SAILOR's balloons.)

NARRATOR (v/o): Congratulations, PIRATE, you've weakened the immune system enough to... Level Up!

(PIRATE exits offstage.)

NARRATOR (v/o): PIRATE has Leveled up! HIV Pirate levels up to... Captain AIDS!

PLAYER: Oh no, HIV destroyed so many white blood cells that it turned into AIDS?! This must be, like, the boss level.

(PIRATE returns with a sword in his/her non-hook hand, or wearing a bigger and more impressive pirate hat.)

PIRATE (v/o): Now that I'm a Captain, I have more aggressive weapons... and I can bring me first mate along!

(CHICKEN POX enters, now with an eyepatch or other Pirate costume detail)

CHICKEN (v/o): Prepare to taste my drumsticks!

PLAYER: Okay. No biggie. We can beat that minor virus again, we slammed it in level one.

(CHICKEN hops onto PIRATE, piggy-back style, and they advance together. This looks totally ridiculous... but is, in its way, genuinely menacing.)

PLAYER: Let's do the same combo we did before, and...

(Button pushing noises.)

SAILOR (v/o, weak, breathy): Anti...body... attack.

(A single "pew" sound effect.

SAILOR raises remaining balloons as though they are emitting a laser attack.

CHICKEN-PIRATE piggyback tower stops in its tracks. CHICKEN shrugs.)

NARRATOR (v/o): Antibody attack is barely effective! With fewer white blood cells, you won't produce as many antibodies!

CHICKEN (v/o): Is that all you've got?

SAILOR (v/o): Uh-oh, looks like I'm about to get Kentucky Fried.

(The enemies reach the SAILOR, and PIRATE pops another balloon.)

PLAYER: Oh man, no way!

NARRATOR (v/o): Game paused.

(Actions onstage freeze.)

PLAYER: Oh, man. HIV or AIDS can't kill you directly, but if HIV levels up to AIDS, then even minor infections and viruses are suddenly really dangerous! They're so hard to fight. Ok, I cannot beat this boss level with a weakened immune system. I'm... I'm gonna go back to my last save point and play that last part over.

NARRATOR (v/o): Returning to last save point.

(SAILOR, CHICKEN, and PIRATE "rewind," doing a high-speed backwards performance of their fight, entrances, and exits... all the way back to PIRATE's first entrance, before leveling up.)

SAILOR (v/o): My antibodies will bury you like a treasure chest!

PIRATE (v/o): Arrr arrr arrr. I'll send ye to Davy Jones' locker, ye be no match for the HIV Pirate and me trusty rusty hook.

NARRATOR (v/o): Let's goooooo viral!

PLAYER: Okay, now I'm gonna use my medication power-up.

NARRATOR (v/o): Medication Power-Up!

(SAILOR exits, and leaves the balloons offstage.)

SAILOR re-enters, now holding a similar cluster of white blood cells, but instead of a flimsy balloon, at the end of each one is a durable white beach volleyball.

PIRATE tries to pop one of the volleyballs with hook, but can't.)

PIRATE (v/o): Avast! Yer immune system be tougher than scrapin' barnacles out of me beard. Yaaaar.

(CHICKEN enters.)

NARRATOR (v/o): Antibody attack!

(Button pushing noises.

Pew-pew-pew sound effect.

SAILOR raises volleyballs as though they are emitting a laser attack.)

CHICKEN (v/o): Aw, ya got me! Ow, right in the nuggets!

(The CHICKEN exits.)

NARRATOR (v/o): Antibody attack is super effective! Congratulations, Player One.

SAILOR (v/o): The bloodstream is safe for another day, thanks to the heroic skills of Bloodstream Sailor!

(The PIRATE crosses his arms in a pose of frustration.

SAILOR poses victoriously.)

PLAYER: The medication power-up let me win the game... but the HIV Pirate is still there.

(Lights change.

LINDSAY and HUNTER in the FaceTube window.)

HUNTER: Once a person gets HIV, there is no cure. The virus stays in that person's bloodstream.

LINDSAY: Just like the pirate.

HUNTER: But I take my medication, and that helps keep my immune system strong...

LINDSAY: ...and you do lots of other things too, to stay healthy.

HUNTER: Right. I go to the doctor regularly to get my blood cell count checked, and I try to make good choices, which help me manage my condition so my immune system stays strong. Good choices like...

LINDSAY: Like eating lots of fruits and vegetables. And exercising three days a week.

HUNTER: Yeah, we at that gym Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, you know it.

LINDSAY: I go too.

HUNTER: We be workin' on our fitness.

LINDSAY: And we try to get good sleep. And drink water, and...

HUNTER: Yeah. Doing what we can to be healthy. It feels good to be strong. (*HUNTER strikes a silly bodybuilder pose.*)

LINDSAY: For real, though, it's kinda scary, to think about the fact that HIV is even a thing.

HUNTER: It's a pretty big deal—right now, over 35 million people in the world are living with HIV or AIDS.

LINDSAY: And we still don't know how to cure it. But we do know a lot about how to treat.

HUNTER: More than we used to know.

LINDSAY: AIDS took the lives of a lot of really wonderful people, especially in the 1980s and 1990s.

HUNTER: Like my all time favorite rock star, Freddie Mercury! From the band Queen! He had the best dance moves.

LINDSAY: And he sang the song that's like...

LINDSAY and HUNTER: (*sung*) We will, we will ROCK YOU!

LINDSAY: I love that song!

LINDSAY and HUNTER: (*sung*) We will, we will ROCK YOU!

LINDSAY: I wish he'd been able to make more songs than he did.

HUNTER: Me too. AIDS spread really fast in the 1980s and 90s, when we didn't know much about what it was, or how to stop it. A lot of people died while we were learning what to do.

LINDSAY: It's sad to think about.

HUNTER: Yeah, but I know you are old enough to handle it.

LINDSAY: You sound really calm about it.

HUNTER: Sure, right now. I get scared about it sometimes.

LINDSAY: Yeah.

HUNTER: But even then, I know scientists and doctors are working every day to find new ways to keep me healthy, there are new medications all the time. And I feel lucky.

LINDSAY: To have your meds?

HUNTER: Yeah. In a lot of places in the world, people don't have access to the same health care as I do, and they don't learn even about HIV in school. It must be even scarier for them. I feel really lucky to live here.

LINDSAY: Hunter's the only person I know who is HIV positive.

HUNTER: Yeah. So, being HIV positive does make me kind of... different from most of the people I spend time around. And sometimes people get pretty weird about that. Like they don't know they can treat me the same as all their other friends.

LINDSAY: Lots of kids have those feels, like people don't understand something about them, or don't know how to treat them. I'm gonna make a video about that.

HUNTER: Cool. Can I be in it?

LINDSAY: Duh, of course!

(Lights change.

FaceTube window disappears.

LINDSAY onstage with a garbage can, featuring a big label on it which reads:

#TRASHBAG.

During this sequence, she has signs for each of the hashtags the other characters mention, and throws them into the garbage can.)

LINDSAY: Stuff that other people say about us, which does not feel right... goes in the Hashtag... Trashbag. Sometimes when you're different from them, people don't understand what you're really about, and they say or think stuff about you that is not right. What would you throw in the hashtag trashbag?

(LINDSAY holds up a sign that says "#JustAKid")

LINDSAY: I'm young, and that's awesome. I like being a kid, and I know I can do important stuff, and help change the world. My voice matters, and I matter, but sometimes people tell me "You're just a kid." Like that means they don't have to take me seriously. "You're just a kid." I hate it when people say that! I want to throw that idea in the trash! So, #JustAKid goes in the

ALL: HASHTAG, TRASHBAG.

(She throws her #JustAKid sign into the trash.)

LINDSAY: When people say that, they might not know that I'm doing stuff that is totally massive! With my videos, and with my band, I'm gonna make a huge difference, and help people learn about all kinds of important real talk! That's a big deal, no matter how old I am. I'm not #JustAKid, I want everyone to see that I... #DoBigThings.

*(She poses with a new sign, that says #DoBigThings.
Notification sound.
QUARTERBACK appears in a FaceTube window.)*

QUARTERBACK: I'm a football player. Some people think that because I'm tough on the field, I have to be tough and macho all the time. Like, that's what they see. But, like, nope! #AlwaysMacho goes in the

ALL: HASHTAG, TRASHBAG.

(LINDSAY throws a #AlwaysMacho sign into the trash.)

QUARTERBACK: You might not know about me that I love cooking dinner with my mom. Sometimes we make lasagna, or a stir-fry with vegetables. Or, like, lentil soup? All kinds of recipes. My mom works really hard, and I love helping her, so I want everyone to see that I'm her...

(LINDSAY holds up a new sign, that says #KitchenGuy)

QUARTERBACK: #KitchenGuy. Hey, pass the ladle!

*(QUARTERBACK out.
Notification sound.
ALICE on FaceTube)*

ALICE: I'm a fashionista. Fly threads, on trend, on fleek, strutting like whoa, I got mad style. Some people think that because I look good, my look is all that I am, like that one thing is my whole deal. Some people think that because I have style, I can't also be really smart, and work hard and be good in school... but I can, I do, and I am. I hit the books as hard as I hit this season's fresh looks. Not everyone sees my brainpower underneath these fly threads, but it's there! I study hard for school AND I follow fashion trends. So, #LooksAreEverything goes in the

ALL: HASHTAG, TRASHBAG.

(LINDSAY throws a #LooksAreEverything sign into the trash.)

ALICE: I want everyone to see that I have....

(LINDSAY holds up a new sign, that says #StyleAndSubstance)

ALICE: #StyleAndSubstance. I apply myself in school, and I keep it cute with the zeitgeist. If you don't know what that means, look it up! I did!

(ALICE out.)

Notification sound.
SYLVESTER on FaceTube.)

SYLVESTER: I'm kinda shy, or like, quiet. Some people think that because I don't talk much, I don't have confidence, or like, I'm too nervous to say things. And that's not true. I'm not scared to talk, I'm just... private. But I know who I am, and I know what I want. So, #ShyIsScared goes in the

ALL: HASHTAG, TRASHBAG.

(LINDSAY throws an #ShyIsScared sign into the trash.)

SYLVESTER: Lindsay, you might not know about me that I... like you. Like... I like-like you. Um. I would like to go out with you for, um, a walk in a park on a nice day?

LINDSAY: What???

SYLVESTER: That's what I want. If you want to do that, tell me next time you see me in school.

(LINDSAY holds up a new sign, that says #FullOfSurprises.)

SYLVESTER: I want everyone to see that I am #FullOfSurprises.

(SYLVESTER out.
Notification sound.

GRANDMA on FaceTube)

GRANDMA: I'm old. Some people think that because I have grey hair and live in a retirement home, I can't be hip like the kids are, but I totes am, yo, check me out on FaceTube. So, #OldIsntHip goes in the...

ALL: HASHTAG, TRASHBAG.

(LINDSAY throws an #OldIsntHip sign into the trash.)

GRANDMA: You might not know about me that I was the singer in a heavy metal band. I want everyone to see that #GrandmaCanRock. Yeeeeeeaaaahhhhhh!

(LINDSAY holds up a new sign that says #GrandmaCanRock, as GRANDMA plays air guitar.

*GRANDMA out.
Notification sound.*

TOM/TAMARA on FaceTube)

TOM/TAMARA: I'm a tomboy. Or maybe I'm a tomgirl. Or maybe I am something else that I have never seen before, a kind of person that I am the very first one of. I don't know for sure, and maybe I don't need to know. Maybe what I am needs to change, or maybe it is something that changes all the time. Sometimes people change their hair color, or what music they like. Some changes are a choice. But some changes are not a choice, they are you becoming who you are. Sometimes you change how you act or how you look to be more true to yourself, and more honest about who you have always been in your heart. When I was little, my room was pink, and my name was Tamara. But maybe that's not who I am now, or who I want to be. I think I am not Tamara, I am Tom. I don't know quite who Tom is, but it feels right to say, hey, I'm Tom. Some people think that I have to be one or the other, a girl or a boy, like my gender is a lightswitch that you throw off or on, but it's not. I don't have to be one thing or another, I am just figuring out what feels right for me. I don't have to choose #ThisOrThat.

(LINDSAY throws an #ThisOrThat sign into the trash.)

TOM/TAMARA: I feel like #LetMeBeMe. Whatever I am, is what I want to be.

*(T(0/A)M(ARA) out.
Notification sound.*

HUNTER on FaceTube)

HUNTER: I'm HIV positive. Some people think that means they can't hang out with me, or that they should treat me differently than other people. That's all because they don't know any better... but it still hurts. I wish I could throw their ignorance away, into the trash. #NotKnowingBetter goes in the

(LINDSAY throws a #NotKnowingBetter sign into the trash.)

ALL: HASHTAG, TRASHBAG

HUNTER: If you don't know something, try to find out.

(HUNTER and all else exit, leaving LINDSAY alone onstage.)

LINDSAY: Wow, this video is getting so many likes! Everyone's watching it! I'm gonna be internet famous! I feel so connected to everyone!

(ALICE joins LINDSAY)

ALICE: Linz, can we work on that song with the band now?

LINDSAY: Totes. But, like, yo, I'm kind of streaming on FaceTube... can the band wait, like, five minutes?

ALICE: Sure. Yeah, okay. Except, that's what you always say-

LINDSAY: Huh?

ALICE: It's what you said when we were s'posed to meet up on Sunday... and earlier this morning... and when you ditched me yesterday... and when you ditched me on Thursday... Man, it's so rude!

LINDSAY: I'm sorry. I didn't realize I was doing that.

ALICE: It's cool. I can just... make other friends or whatever. If you'd rather be online. I thought B.F.F. meant, like, best friends forever, but obviously it's more like "Best Friends with FaceTube."

LINDSAY: No, I just... hey. Alice. I'm really

sorry. ALICE: Uh huh.

LINDSAY: I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, but I totally did, huh.

ALICE: It happens. I forgive you. Sometimes people don't mean to be mean, but they are.

LINDSAY: I'm glad you said something. I didn't know you were upset. I guess I have kind of been online like... a lot.

ALICE: Dude, I know! Me and the band have been talking, and we've decided: this new song is dedicated to you.

(SYLVESTER and HUNTER join them.

They start an acapella rendition of their new song, "Boot It Down," a sung/spoken rap:)

ALICE, HUNTER, & SYLVESTER: Boot it down, girl, boot boot it down girl,
Boot it down, girl, boot boot it down girl

HUNTER: You gotta boot it down...

ALICE: So that you can go play

SYLVESTER: 'Cause your body was not built
To sit around all day

HUNTER: I'm gonna

ALICE & SYLVESTER: Boot it down...

HUNTER: And have a healthy meal.

ALICE: I'm gonna

HUNTER & SYLVESTER: Boot it down...

ALICE: And talk about how I feel.

SYLVESTER: I'm gonna

ALICE & HUNTER: Boot it down...

SYLVESTER: 'Cause I'm keepin' it real.

ALICE, HUNTER, & SYLVESTER: We're gonna boot it down...

ALICE: Now Lindsay, what's your deal?

LINDSAY: I'm gonna

ALICE, HUNTER, & SYLVESTER: Boot it down...

LINDSAY: So I can hang with my friends

ALICE, HUNTER, & SYLVESTER: We're gonna boot it down...

LINDSAY: So that this song can end.

LINDSAY: I guess we all have a lot of questions...

HUNTER: About staying healthy with a strong immune system...

SYLVESTER: And speaking up about our ideas and how we feel...

ALICE: And staying close to our friends, even when it's not easy...

HUNTER: And learning what's true and what is not... by asking questions, and being curious.

LINDSAY: I guess everybody has their own questions... and is finding their own answers, with help from each other! And that's some

ALICE, HUNTER, & SYLVESTER: Real Talk

LINDSAY: We spit some

ALICE, HUNTER, & SYLVESTER: Real Talk!

LINDSAY: We sing some

ALICE, HUNTER, & SYLVESTER: REAL TALK!

LINDSAY: We 'bout that

ALL FOUR: REAL TALK!

LINDSAY: Bye!

(Lights out, with notification sound—ding!)

FACETUBE VOICEOVER: Lindsay has logged off.

(END OF PLAY.)