

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE



Watch together.
Pay attention to choices, conversations, and turning points.



Pause and reflect.
Use the questions to spark discussion.



Listen to understand.
There are no right answers—just different perspectives.



Connect it to real life.
What do these dynamics look like in our world?

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SURVIVOR

TRUST, BETRAYAL, AND THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF ALLIANCE

Stranded together. Competing to be the last one standing.
Use this guide to explore the psychology behind the game.

FOCUS AREAS



Alliance
Formation



Trust and
Betrayal



Strategy and
Decision-Making



Social Influence
and Groupthink



Identity and
Reputation

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What makes forming an alliance necessary in Survivor?
- 2 How do contestants decide whom to trust? What clues do they use?
- 3 Why is betrayal sometimes a smart move in the game?
- 4 How do group dynamics shift over time? What causes those shifts?
- 5 What role does loyalty play in the game? Is loyalty to people or to your own goals?
- 6 How do social influence and persuasion shape decisions and votes?
- 7 What strategies seem most effective—and why?
- 8 How does the game impact how contestants see themselves (and others)?

THINK MORE DEEPLY

- When does cooperation help everyone benefit?
- When does self-interest take over?
- How does timing affect decisions to trust or betray?
- What are the long-term costs of losing trust?
- How do fear, stress, and uncertainty influence choices?
- Can you think of a time in your life when you had to choose between loyalty and self-interest?

TRY THIS

Family Tribal Council

Pick a recent decision (small or big) you faced as a family. Talk it through:

- ✓ What were the options?
- ✓ What did each person want?
- ✓ What factors influenced your choice?
- ✓ What would you do differently next time?



CONNECT IT TO REAL LIFE



At school or work, how are alliances formed?



When is it hard to speak up or go against the group?



How can we build stronger trust in our relationships?



What does it mean to play the long game with integrity?

CLOSING REFLECTION



Survivor isn't just about outwitting others. It's about outplaying, outtrusting, and understanding ourselves.

What will you take from the game into your own life?



DR. MICHAEL ZAKALIK, PSY.D.
Psychologist for Parenting | Z Psychology



Understanding
minds.



Strengthening
connections.