

DISCUSSION GUIDE

A post-screening discussion is a great opportunity to have an open dialogue about the film and some of its themes including suicide prevention, mental health concerns, grief, and the importance of community support systems in the healing process. Be sure to promote the panel ahead of the screening and set aside approximately 20-35 minutes for your discussion.

Keep in mind that everyone in the audience comes into the conversation with their unique perspectives and experiences. What's most important is that you create a comfortable and safe environment where no one is judged, and everyone is treated with the same respect.

Conversations about mental health and suicide can be incredibly difficult. Some people may not want to share or actively participate, while others may be very interested in speaking and will have a lot to say. The key is to make sure everyone is as comfortable as possible during the discussion.

Here are a few prompts to help guide a discussion about the film. Do not feel you need to cover all of these topics. We encourage you to identify 3 or 4 topics before the screening that you would like to discuss with the audience.

About the film:

1. What emotions did you experience while watching *Scattering CJ*? How did they shift from the beginning to the end of the film? How were you left feeling by the end of the credits?

2. Whose experience in the film do you relate to the most? Why?

3. Did anything in the film surprise you? What did you learn? Have your perceptions changed on mental health or suicide? How so?

4. What will stay with you after watching this film? What are some of the takeaways and lessons learned? How might those lessons change the way you talk about mental health and suicide? How much does "hope" factor into what was shown in the film?

Conversation around mental illness and suicide:

5. Why is there prejudice and discrimination around mental illness and suicide? Why are people uncomfortable talking about suicide? How have you seen this play out in your own experience? What can we do to help break down those barriers?

6. Why is the language that we use to discuss suicide and mental illness so important? (For example, avoiding phrases like “successful suicide attempt” or conversations about specific methods of suicide.)

Healing and helping others:

7. What behaviors might delay the healing process? What are some things one could do to care for oneself after a suicide loss?

8. What do you do when you think a friend or a loved one is in trouble?

9. What sort of thoughts or concerns do you believe someone thinking about suicide might be experiencing? Who are they thinking about? (Be sure to steer conversation away from selfishness in a sensitive but encouraging way.)

Call to action:

10. What are some of the suicide prevention resources available in your community? Is there a local suicide prevention hotline? Awareness and advocacy groups? Support groups? (It’s important to leave your audience with concrete information about the resources available to them.)

Audience engagement:

11. Open up your discussion to audience questions. People will probably have their own questions or things that they would like to share.

Request that the mental health professional joining your panel make themselves available at the end of the discussion to meet with people one-on-one. Some people may be uncomfortable speaking publicly and would rather talk in a more informal setting.

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1-866-488-7386 - The Trevor Project
Text 741741 - Crisis Text Line

USING SCENES TO GUIDE YOUR DISCUSSION

Choosing specific scenes from the film to discuss with your panel can be a good way to touch on different mental health and suicide prevention themes covered in the documentary. Here are a few examples, but please feel free to come up with your own!

CJ Military – 8:55

- Recognizing warning signs that someone may be at risk for suicide
- De-catastrophizing unplanned life changes

Scatterer Story: April – 14:14

- Starting the conversation about suicide
- Using available resources to facilitate dialogue

Scatterer Story: Heidi – 23:55

- Coping with isolation, depression, and a challenged self-esteem
- Using personal experience to help others

Connor – 27:11

- Human connection as a means of preventing suicide
- Grief and healing in the wake of losing a loved one to suicide

Scatterer Story: Kelly – 36:38

- Discussing and contextualizing suicide with children
- When is it appropriate to talk to children about suicide?

Hallie's Speech – 43:40

- Using personal experience to help others
- Finding meaning in the loss of a loved one
- Importance of advocacy and encouraging dialogue

HOW TO MODERATE A PANEL DISCUSSION

Moderating a panel discussion can be a delicate balance of time, content, and keeping the audience engaged. Here are a few tips on how to best moderate a panel to help facilitate a meaningful dialogue following the screening at your event.

1. **Find a variety of speakers**. Try to invite panelists with diverse perspectives (e.g. mental health professionals and those with relevant life experience). This will make for a dynamic conversation that speaks to the full spectrum of the topic.

2. **Have a plan going into the panel**. Give some thought to what you'd like to cover in your panel discussion before the day of the screening. This will help you guide the conversation in a way that meets your goals and expected takeaways from the event. You can also discuss questions in advance with your panelists so they know what to expect.

3. **Set expectations**. Make sure that the audience understands the format of the post-screening discussion. What is the theme of the conversation? How long will the panel be? Will there be time for audience questions? Also be sure to introduce the panelists – mention their names and area of expertise (e.g. "This is Dr. Jane Doe with the local mental health clinic. She specializes in loss survivor counseling."). This will help focus the discussion from the outset.

4. **Keep an eye on the clock**. Time is limited — all the more reason to have a plan going in. Be sure that each of your panelists has a chance to speak and that the audience has time to ask questions (if you want to include a Q&A). If you need more time, you can always invite the audience to stay after the panel if they would like to continue the conversation. If time is running short, you can let the audience know which speakers will be available after the panel discussion so if anyone has a specific question they can ask after the program. This also gives people who are uncomfortable speaking in large groups a chance to ask questions and engage.

5. **Be adaptable**. Sometimes conversations can evolve in the moment, especially if the audience is given the opportunity to ask questions. Stay flexible and allow for natural dialogue, but know when to redirect conversation.

6. **Moderate the audience**. Every audience member will react to the film differently; some may not want to speak while others may have a lot to share. When trying to move the conversation forward you want to do so respectfully (e.g. "In another setting we'd love to hear more, but we're running short on time.").

7. **Now what**? We don't want the conversation to end after the panel discussion! Give your audience a call-to-action before ending your event. Share information about local resources. Encourage people to continue the dialogue beyond the screening.

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