



NORMIE

FILM DISCUSSION GUIDE & QUESTIONS

NORMIE

Not yet rated. Appropriate for ages 10+.

When Annemarie looks in the mirror, she sees Down syndrome. She hates it. To her, the diagnosis is a giant barricade keeping her from the independence and intimacy she desperately desires. She embarks on a journey of self-discovery as she tries to understand what it means to be normal. NORMIE is an endearing, inspiring, and heart-felt documentary about the illusion of normal and the beauty of love.

HOW TO UTILIZE NORMIE TO CREATE DISCUSSION

NORMIE has the potential to spark many important and meaningful conversations about human value, comparison, performance, special needs, vulnerability, wonder, fear, honesty, limitations, and freedom. Host a movie night or educational screening, and consider inviting other organizations, parent groups or students to join you. Use the guide and discussion questions below to start conversations in your school, church, advocacy organization or mom/dad club.

FRAMING THE CONVERSATION

1. Set up the room so that you can all see each other while discussing the questions (e.g. a circle or U-shape).
2. Before starting the discussion questions with your group, go over group guidelines of how to have a respectful conversation. Ask the group if they have any other guidelines they would like to add.
3. Pose one question to the group from the sections below. Limit reflections to 2-3 participants for each question to make sure you have enough time to touch on each theme.

NOTE: Each section below has 2-5 questions for discussion and should take groups around 10-20 minutes to work through. For those with a limited amount of time, please feel free to select enough sections to fill the time available while being considerate of the most relevant themes to your group.

These groupings can be modified depending on the comfort level of your group. While facilitating the conversation, be mindful of the unique identities and experiences of each member. Make sure to choose questions and themes that resonate with the group.

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THEMATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

We tried in NORMIE to show some of Annemarie's struggles, but if you flip the lens and take a look at yourself how would you answer these questions:

- How do you define normal?
- How do you define love?
- What do you think gives a person value?
- What gives you value?

Comparison: Harris III (the illusionist) tells Annemarie how he too has struggled with being so different and the pain that caused him. He actually said he hopes that people now see that he is comfortable in his own skin and that he has given up on the illusion of normal.

- Have you struggled with being different?
- Do you think that it is possible to feel comfortable in your own skin?
- What do you think it takes to feel that way?

Performance: In NORMIE we use Atticus' quote, "We will never get back the life we waste trying to be normal."

- Do you feel you spend a lot of time trying to fit in and be normal?
- How hard is it to stand alone and not be like everyone else?
- Has your definition of normal changed after watching NORMIE and if so, how?

Special Needs: Annemarie and many other individuals featured in the film have Down syndrome or "special needs". NORMIE shows many different individuals considering their own needs, limitations, and differences.

- What ways are you like Annemarie?
- What ways are you different?
- When you watched NORMIE what preconceived notions did you have about people with Down syndrome and have those ideas changed?
- Has NORMIE caused you to think differently about how you value/view yourself and others? If so, how?

Vulnerability: Jean Vanier's famous quote used in our film is, "How can we welcome fully the weakness of another if we haven't welcomed our own weakness?"

- How do you feel about the word "weakness"?
- Are there some things in your own life that you choose not to look at? What are some of those things?
- Was there a moment in the film where you felt uncomfortable? Can you explain?

Wonder: Annemarie experiences real wonder in seeing the eclipse and at Harris III's "magic" show.

- Why is it important to feel and experience wonder?
- Can you talk about a time you felt wonder and how that affected you?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS *continued*

Honesty: Annemarie’s parents, Emily and Pat each ask Annemarie if they should have been more honest earlier with Annemarie about her Down syndrome.

- Do you wish someone in your life was more honest with you and what they say to you?
- And is there someone you want to be more honest with after seeing the film?

Fear: In the film we hear the word fear mentioned in several places:

- When Katie is talking about the potential medical problems that her daughter Palmer could face;
- When Pat was telling the story about how Annemarie wanted to try out for cheerleader, and he felt there were no good options on what to say to her and her potential for getting hurt;
- And Tim spoke of his daughter Alex and how he does not want her to become a “project” like he has witnessed when a team allows a kid with Down syndrome to score a touchdown.

We all face fears whether we admit it or not. It takes courage to talk about them. Brené Brown wrote in one of her books, “The definition of vulnerability is uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure. But vulnerability is not weakness: it’s our most accurate measure of courage.”

- Can you share some of your fears?
- If you’re a parent, how have these fears changed as your children have grown?

Limitations: Amy Julia explains in the film that there is a difference between being limited and being broken.

- Can you recall the difference between the two definitions?
- And how do you see yourself—as limited or broken?

Freedom: Josh (the pastor) tells Annemarie that when we put ourselves at the center of the Universe it gets very lonely. He explains for himself the way he tends to overcome his own limitations is not to think about them but to focus on the person in front of him—on others. He also says when we accept our limitations that is the path to become free.

- Can you name some of your limitations and have you experienced acceptance of any of your limitations?
- Can you talk about the freedom you gained from accepting them?
- How difficult is it to focus on others rather than yourself?
- Do you know people like that and do you enjoy being around them?

Did you participate in a group discussion? Tell us how it went and how it could have gone better! Email us at info@normiefilm.com. Find more resources and discussions about NORMIE at normiefilm.com.