

## 'Gifted' movie discussion guide for families

### **Before the movie, consider giving your kids a head's up. Tell them:**

- Look for the different ways that 'family' is defined in this movie.
- Love is found in so many forms in this movie--keep your eyes open for the different ways people show love.
- There's one pretty interesting and important pet in this movie. Just watch for it, and let me know what you think about it afterward.
- McKenna Grace has a teeny, stuffed seal that is her real-life lovie and that she snuck into the film. See if you can find it.

### **After the movie, you can chat about:**

- What did 'family' mean to Mary? To Frank? To Roberta? To Mary's grandmother, Evelyn? To the foster family? To does 'family' mean to you?
- How might 'family' be defined in the dictionary? Who creates that definition?
- Think about the many different ways 'gifts' were used in this movie. Count them.
- What does it mean to be 'gifted'? How do you know when you are gifted?
- Though Mary and Frank were the main characters, minor characters played a really important role in this movie. Talk about how this movie would be different without Bonnie or Roberta or Fred.
- It seems as though mathematical talent has been passed down in Mary's family. What skills, talents, or strengths have been passed down in your family?
- What do you know about Mary's mother? This is a time when you may possibly field questions about suicide, which I know is a difficult and tricky topic. See ideas and resources below.\*\*
- Roberta and Mary have a Friday night ritual of spending time together, singing and dancing. What rituals do you have in your life?
- If you could start a weekly ritual with a friend or family member, what would it be?
- What is one of the main conflicts, or problems, in this movie? How is it resolved?
- Which characters grow and change during the course of this movie? Do they realize they make this change or not? Explain.
- Talk about the role of Fred in this movie. How would the movie be different without him?
- Fred is a rescue cat, saved from a shelter. Do you think it's better to get a new pet from a pet store or an animal shelter?
- Mary's teacher, Bonnie, plays a really important role in this movie. Who is a teacher you've had in your life who has made a difference for you?
- Is it better to be behind in school, struggling to keep up, or is it better to be ahead of the class--gifted in some ways? Explain.
- In the beginning of the movie, Mary has some amazing adults in her life, but she doesn't seem to have many friends her age. By the end of the movie, it's clear that that changed. How? Do you think children should have older friends or friends their own age? Why?

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\*\*from *Explaining Suicide To Children*, **SAVE - Suicide Awareness Voices of Education** [www.save.org](http://www.save.org)

*What should I tell the children?* A question often asked after the suicide of a loved one. The answer - the truth.

Many people still believe it is best to shield children from the truth, that somehow this will protect them. More often than not, the opposite is true. Misleading children, evading the truth, or telling falsehoods to them about how someone died can do much more harm than good; if they happen to hear the truth from someone else, their trust in you can be difficult to regain. Not knowing can be terrifying and hurtful. We've always been told that "honesty is the best policy" and just because the subject is suicide, that doesn't mean this time is any different.

How do we explain suicide to children or young people? It may seem impossible and too complex to even try, but that's exactly what we must do - try! Their age will be a factor in how much they can understand and how much information you give them. Some children will be content with an answer consisting of one or two sentences; others might have continuous questions, which they should be allowed to ask and to have answered.

After children learn that the death was by suicide, one of their first questions might be, "What is suicide?" Explain that people die in different ways - some die from cancer, from heart attacks, some from car accidents, and that suicide means that a person did it to him or herself. If they ask how, once again it will be difficult, but be honest. . .

A more detailed explanation might be:

"Our thoughts and feelings come from our brain, and sometimes a person's brain can get very sick - the sickness can cause a person to feel very badly inside. It also makes a person's thoughts get all jumbled and mixed up, so he can't think clearly. Some people can't think of any other way of stopping the hurt they feel inside. They don't understand that they don't have to feel that way, that they can get help." . . .

Some children might ask questions related to the morals of suicide - good/bad, right/wrong. It is best to steer clear of this, if possible. Suicide is none of these - it is something that happens when pain exceeds resources for coping with that pain.

Whatever approach is taken when explaining suicide to children, they need to know they can talk about it and ask questions whenever they feel the need, to know that there are people there who will listen. They need to know that they won't always feel the way they do now, that things will get better, and that they will be loved and taken care of no matter what.

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