

drawing from life

moving away from suicide towards life
a documentary-animation hybrid

Study Guide





INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCUMENTARY DRAWING FROM LIFE

Drawing from Life is a journey about shifting the focus of the experiences of many individuals toward life. It is NOT about pathology. It is the exemplification that even when frightened and unsure, we can choose to act on trust, integrity and courage.

This is a documentary about the courage it takes to live. Choosing to get involved in this film and share experiences openly was an act of generosity and courage on the part of the participants. For this reason, it is important to assume a respectful and compassionate stance when viewing and discussing the film. The participants were invited to explore assumptions they may hold about themselves and their lives. Viewers of this documentary are invited to embrace this challenge too. There are few right and wrong answers to any of the following questions.

BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM, ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS:


1. How do you feel about suicide?
2. How do you feel about someone who attempts suicide?
3. Why do you think people try to end their lives?
4. Is suicide about life or death?
5. What do you think makes a life worth living?
6. What, if any, expectations do you have about the film or the people in it?

BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM, DISCUSS THESE QUESTIONS:

1. What are the risks in having a relationship with people who are “at risk”?
2. What do you understand/know about why someone would attempt to end their lives?

AFTER WATCHING THE FILM:

1. How did you feel during the film? Did you notice any change in how you felt during or after you watched it?
2. What are the common symptoms the group members describe? What are the implications of letting go of the symptoms?
3. Why might the absence of symptoms cause anxiety?
4. Why might changing behaviours (e.g. letting go of “quills”) cause anxiety?
5. Why do you think animation was used in this documentary? How did the animation affect you?
6. How was this a healing group?
7. What are the barriers to seeing pain?

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8. How were shame, isolation and stigma expressed/identified/talked about in the documentary?
 9. How is suicide described in the film? Name at least 7 different ways.
 10. How do people describe themselves? What did you notice about their language or the way they described their experiences?
 11. What is the meaning of “safety” in the film? Why is it important to define what “safe” looks, feels and sounds like?
 12. What are safe choices? How did the film influence your choice of these?
 13. Why do you think there are multiple experiences of visits to an emergency department?
 14. Were there any stereotypes about individuals who have attempted suicide that you found yourself confronting?
 15. Do you think the use of concrete tools/strategies is helpful for participants? Can you think of other strategies that might be helpful?
 16. How is hope discussed and encouraged through the sessions? At what point/s in the film did you see/feel hope emerging?
 17. How did the film match or differ from your expectations?
 18. How do fear and anger intersect with suicide? What other emotions might you expect?
 19. In the film, how do a) feelings and behaviour and b) life events interconnect with suicide?

FOR THERAPISTS

1. Identify the key therapeutic factors of group process seen in this documentary.
2. What are the risks and benefits of working in a group?
3. How does this film challenge or confirm our beliefs regarding confidentiality?
4. Describe the stages of group that this group “visits.”
5. How is metaphor used as a therapeutic tool?
6. Discuss the role of education and structure in the group.
7. Identify and discuss what outcomes are noticeable in this group that would be difficult to assess.
8. What would be the similarities and differences in working with this group versus another faced with a life-threatening illness such as cancer?
9. How might the inability to name emotions affect an individual's:
 - self-concept
 - interaction with others
 - access to treatment

As each person in the group has a unique perspective, each viewer watching the film will have a unique interpretation of the documentary. Each individual in the group takes something different away from the experience after 20 weeks. The same holds true for the viewer: watching the film several times will change the experience.

Thank you for participating in this journey called “life.”

This guide was created by a group of people with diverse experiences and affiliations.



INTRODUCTION: FOR THE CASE STUDY

Drawing from Life is a journey about shifting the focus of the experiences of many individuals toward life. It is NOT about pathology. It is the exemplification that even when frightened and unsure, we can choose to act on trust, integrity and courage.

This is a documentary about the courage it takes to live. Choosing to participate in this documentary and to share a time of vulnerability is a gift of learning to us the observers. In light of this, it is important to assume a respectful and compassionate stance when viewing and discussing the case study. This case study is NOT about pathology or stigmatizing concepts. It is about challenge, courage, fear and the struggle to stay alive. If you find yourself, as a viewer, beginning to diagnose or pathologize, we would invite you to discuss how this stance helps generate hope and life. There are few right and wrong answers to any of the following questions.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. How does diversity in perspectives challenge caregivers?
2. How does diversity in perspectives challenge clients?
3. What did you notice about the timing of intervention?
4. How many competing demands were shown in this short few minutes of a one-and-a-half hour intervention?
5. What is validation and how is it manifested?
6. How is working in the “here and now” facilitating something new to occur?
7. What is the role of the co-therapist?
8. What are the risks and benefits of working with people identified as being “at risk”?

FILM CREDITS

FEATURING **JILL, WENDY, LOIS, BRIAN, JAIMIE, DAVID, BELINDA, MARIO, JAY, GLEN** and **JORDAN**
ANIMATORS **DIANNA BASSO, KEN COLLINS, ANDREW GREGOIRE, DAKS TOMASJUNYU ZHAO** and **RIE SHIBAZAKI**
ANIMATION SUPERVISOR **BEN MCEVOY** ADDITIONAL ANIMATION **BARNEY WORNOFF**
PRODUCERS FOR SENECA COLLEGE **JED DECORY** and **MARK JONES** ORIGINAL MUSIC **BOB WISEMAN**
SPECIAL THANKS **YVONNE BERGMANS** WRITER/DIRECTOR/EDITOR **KATERINA CIZEK**
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FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Distribution	1-800-267-7710
USA Distribution	1-800-542-2164
International Distribution	1-514-283-9000

This study guide is available for download at www.nfb.ca/guides



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If after watching this documentary you feel unsettled or at risk, please contact a friend, family member or a distress line in your region.

ALBERTA

Crisis Centre: S.A.V.E.S.	403-340-1120
Doctor Margaret Savage Crisis Centre	1-866-594-0533
St. Paul & District Crisis Centre	1-800-263-3045
Greater Edmonton Area	780-429-0230

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Canadian Mental Health Association	1-800-667-8407
Province-Wide toll-free number	1-800-SUICIDE

MANITOBA

Klinic Community Health Centre	1-888-322-3019
Mobile Crisis Unit (MCU) Brandon, MB	1-888-379-7699

NEW BRUNSWICK

Provincial toll-free crisis line	1-800-667-5005
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NEWFOUNDLAND

Mental Health Crisis Centre	1-888-737-4668
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NOVA SCOTIA

Telephone intervention throughout Capital District, mobile response for Halifax, Dartmouth, Bedford	1-888-429-8167
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NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

NWT Help Line Crisis 7 pm-11 pm (Mountain Standard Time) 7 days/week	1-800-661-0844
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NUNAVUT

Awareness Centre	867-982-0123
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ONTARIO

Ontario Association of Distress Centres	416-489-4357
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PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Island Helpline	1-800-218-2885
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QUEBEC

Centre de prévention du suicide de Québec	1-866-277-3553
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SASKATCHEWAN

Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service	306-933-6200
West Central Crisis & Family Support Centre	1-877-310-HELP
Hudson Bay & District Crisis Centre	1-866-865-7274
Prince Albert Mobile Crisis Unit	306-764-1011
Regina Mobile Crisis Services	306-525-5333

If you want to learn more about suicide prevention in Canada and how you can be part of the solution, visit the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention (www.casp.ca) for “The CASP Blueprint for a Canadian National Suicide Prevention Strategy” (2004).