



Where Hope Grows NDSS Discussion Guide

Introduction

The National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) envisions a world in which all people with Down syndrome have the opportunity to enhance their quality of life, realize their life aspirations and become valued members of welcoming communities. We believe the new movie, *Where Hope Grows*, represents a unique opportunity for our community to help achieve our vision. We encourage our affiliates to organize groups to see the film and have open conversations afterwards. This Discussion Guide is meant to provide a framework for those discussions.

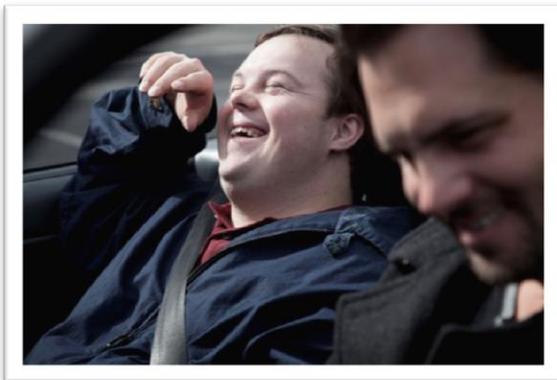
Synopsis

In the new movie *Where Hope Grows*, a former professional baseball player Calvin Campbell is moving through his life without dealing with the challenges surrounding him, his family and his friends. The father of teenage daughter, Katie, Calvin spends most of his time drinking with his buddies and trying to forget his past faults. His spiral into self-destruction is slowly turned around through a newfound friendship with a grocery store clerk with Down syndrome named Produce. The cynical Calvin is awakened to a new outlook through the eyes of an unlikely mentor. As Calvin and Produce grow in their friendship, Calvin is forced to confront his various flaws and struggles and find ways to turn his life in a more positive direction. His new outlook is put to the ultimate test when a painful accident affects every person in Calvin's life, and Produce's future hangs in the balance.



Discussion Prompts

- Think about the story and themes in the movie: what is the primary message of *Where Hope Grows*? What scenes or characters support this message?
- Produce asks Calvin, “Do you think I’m smart?” What does it mean to be smart? What would you tell Produce if he asked you? In what ways is Produce smart? Why do you think he constantly asked that question?
- What does Colt think of Produce? How can you tell? What does Produce think of Colt? How can you tell?
- Why did Produce's boss scold him for hugging Calvin? Why is hugging important to Produce? Why do you think his boss employs him at the store?
- Which characters respect Produce and genuinely like him as a friend? What do they do and say that demonstrates their respect for him?
- Were there times people were condescending toward Produce? How could they have handled the situation differently?
- How does a mutually beneficial friendship develop between Calvin and Produce? How can you tell the relationship between Produce and Colt isn't mutually beneficial?



- Why was Calvin surprised that Produce lived on his own?
- At a funeral service, the pastor says to “make your dash count,” to live your life to the fullest. What does he mean by this statement? Who makes their dash count in the film? Who is someone you know who is making their dash count? How can you tell? What are key elements needed to live a healthy life?
- Characters use different labels to describe Produce—some call him a “retard,” some say he’s “different” or “disabled,” others say he has Down syndrome, and some never give him a label at all. Why are labels harmful? Which labels are particularly inappropriate? How can you describe someone without labeling them?
- Who or what helps Calvin make changes in his life? What relationships bring about his transformation, and what realizations does he make in order to grow?