

# WHISPERING SPIRITS

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR PARENTS & ADULTS

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*Whispering Spirits* generates a lot of emotion. Therefore it is important for the audience to have time to process it. This discussion guide can be used with the film in a 45-60 minute time period or discussion can be more in-depth and a role-play can be added if there is additional time.

The discussion should be as interactive as possible but it is important for the facilitator to be aware of time and make sure the following topics are discussed:

(1) How to help a friend; (2) the Good Samaritan Law; and (3) Naloxone (Narcan)

The more important questions and facilitator talking points are preceded by an asterisk (\*). However, if there is more than 10 minutes for discussion, it is suggested that the questions be asked in the order they are listed. A list of helpful websites and local prevention and treatment resources should be distributed to all in attendance.

The program will be enhanced if there is a panel consisting of a law enforcement professional, a substance abuse treatment professional, and a prevention professional. A physician, a young person in recovery, and a parent can be added. If using a panel format ask the questions to the panel and have the panelists provide the information but allow questions and comments from the audience. If a panel is included, the program should be planned for 90 minutes.

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**Ask audience/panel:** What was your reaction to the story?

**Ask audience/panel:** What they would like answered about Justin, his family, what happened?

**Discuss** the different routes teens and young adults take to heroin use. *Included are: using alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs including pills perceived by teens as less dangerous, and then wanting to try a "different high;" addiction to prescribed opioids for pain; curiosity (thinking "once won't hurt")*

**Discuss** what can be done to prevent heroin use. *Examples: Enforcement activities; secure convenient drug disposal drop boxes; education about the dangers of use (addiction overdose); intervention with drug use perceived to be less dangerous; reducing risk factors for youth substance use.*

\* **Discuss** what a parent, friend, or family member can do when someone's using substances.

- \* Call a toll free helpline or visit a website for advice
- \* Contact a local substance abuse treatment program for advice
- \* Attend a support group for friends and family members such as Al-Anon, Nar-Anon, etc.
- \* Meet with Planned Interventionist and plan an intervention
- \* Talk with the person, ideally when he/she is not impaired

\* **Review** the four steps of how to talk with your friend, ideally when he/she is not impaired.

**Step 1** - Tell your friend that you're worried about him/her and give specific examples of why.

*"Last night you couldn't even walk, you became violent for no reason, you fell asleep while you were driving, etc."*

**Step 2** - Acknowledge that how the person acted was not how they would normally act.

*"You would never have cursed at your mom. I think the drug(s) you were using might have made you out-of-it."*

**Step 3** - Express your concern about the drugs causing problems.

*"I think those pills you're taking are mellowing you out too much or making you really irritable." "When you drink you turn into a different person."*

**Step 4** - Suggest help.

*"How about talking to someone about ways of using less or not using at all."*

**Explain** what a risk factor is and give non-drug use examples.

(Obesity is a risk factor for diabetes, not wearing sunscreen is a risk factor for skin cancer, etc.).

**Ask audience/panel:** What are the risk factors for teen substance use?

Clarify which are supported by research.

**Ask the audience/panel:** What were the risk factors in Justin's life? *Point out that there were only two risk factors mentioned in the film: early onset marijuana use; anxiety disorder.*

**List** risk factors for teen substance use including: drug using friends, positive attitudes towards drug use, school failure, depression, family history of substance abuse.

\* **Ask audience/panel:** Is there anything Justin's friends could have done to prevent Justin's death?

\* **Ask audience/panel:** Why do you think Justin's friends didn't speak to his parents, counselors at school, or a trusted adult?

**Optional:** Divide the audience into groups of three. Have one person be the person with the Substance Use Disorder, have one be the concerned friend or family member, and have the third be the observer. Role Play with three rotations so everyone gets a chance to be the friend and try out how it feels to speak to someone who has a problem with substance use.

\* **Explain** the Good Samaritan Law (if your state has one).

\* **Explain** how naloxone can reverse overdose effect of opiates such as heroin and prevent death.

\* **Discuss** the availability of Narcan in your community.

**Extra discussion:** Explain the different types of drug treatment for teens.

(outpatient programs, day treatment, detoxification, inpatient, residential, etc.)