



# MOVIE DISCUSSION GUIDE



## *Five Feet Apart*

“Five Feet Apart” is a touching story of two teens struggling with cystic fibrosis. Stella, played by Haley Lu Richardson, and Will, played by Cole Sprouse, find themselves in the same hospital for treatment. The pair approach their lives and disease differently, but develop an emotional attachment to each other. As Will and Stella’s story progresses, both are challenged by the disease that dictates their lives and prevents them from crucial human connection.

## Programming Suggestions

This discussion guide is designed to assist educational programming after viewing the film “Five Feet Apart.” Its purpose is to generate discussion based on social issues found within the movie and for program participants to reflect on themes that might be pertinent to them. Therefore, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to questions in this guide.

The discussion facilitator may choose to utilize one of the following activities as a means of developing discussion:

- Invite a faculty member from your sociology department from your local community college to discuss how medical issues can impact family dynamics.
- Create a bulletin board focusing on cystic fibrosis. Include information on causes, symptoms, treatments and how individuals and families with CF adapt to conditions of the disease.
- Work with a local cystic fibrosis support organization to learn about CF and to create an event for youth and families as well as health care providers impacted by CF. Host the event at your library or at a local children’s hospital.

### Issues

#### Relationships

Death

Family

Friendship

Healthcare

# Pre-Screening Questions

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1. What do you know about cystic fibrosis?
2. How can medical issues impact families?
3. What chances are you willing to take with your health and safety to be with the people you love?

## Discussion Questions

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1. Discuss how Stella approaches her life and her medical condition. Why do you think she takes this approach? How does Will's approach differ?
2. Have you had a friend or someone you care for have to deal with serious or terminal medical conditions? Discuss as you feel comfortable.
3. Stella's friend Poe tells her he is afraid to get close to someone because he does not want someone to have to take his burdens. Do you believe this is a reality in our society, people choosing to not burden someone with medical or financial issues that they would bring to a relationship?
4. How can we, as a society, make healthcare more affordable for families?
5. Discuss the issue of pre-existing conditions related to healthcare. Do you think it is fair for insurance companies to be able to drop or not insure based on pre-existing conditions or to charge higher premiums due to medical risk?
6. Would you be willing to pay more for your health insurance if it means coverage for all?
7. What do you think the psychological impact for healthcare providers, first responders and other professionals that work in similar environments is?
8. Discuss Stella's relationship with her sister Abby. How did Abby support Stella? Do you think Abby lived recklessly? If so, why do you think she chose to live this way?
9. At one point it almost appears that Stella is jealous of Abby but then we find out Abby has died. Discuss the mixed emotions Stella feels about Abby and her death.
10. Stella tells Will that she is the one that is supposed to die but instead it is her sister and her parent's marriage. Will told her she was a sick girl with survivor's guilt. How does guilt impact Stella? How does guilt impact all of us?
11. How does Will use his art as a method of expression and coping? How do you express yourself? What do you do to cope with the ups and downs of your life?
12. Discuss Poe's relationship with Stella. How do they support each other? How do you support your friends when they are struggling?
13. Poe dies unexpectedly. How does this impact Stella? How does this impact the medical staff?
14. Communities struggle when there is a death of a child. How can libraries help community members deal with the grief of a death in the community?
15. The title of the film refers to a safe distance that people with CF must keep from each other to not expose each other to each other's bacteria. The distance is 6 feet. Stella takes one foot away to make it 5 feet. What is the symbolism of this foot; this act of defiance?
16. Stella and Poe put on a surprise party for Will. How can something normal like a birthday party help those dealing with life threatening situations?
17. The nurse keeps Will and Stella apart and feels responsible for their well being. Do you think she feels responsible for the last couple's deaths because she "looked the other way?" Do you think it is fair to her for Stella and Will to keep sneaking around?
18. Stella tells Will he was right; she had been living for her medical regime rather than having the medical regime so she could live. Discuss the philosophical differences between these two statements.
19. Stella and Will leave the hospital after Poe's death. Do you believe they were being reckless with their health or were their actions warranted? Discuss.
20. Stella finds out she could get new lungs but doesn't tell Will. Why do you think she withholds that information? Have you ever not shared something positive because you feel it might actually hurt someone close to you? Discuss.
21. Stella declines new lungs but Will encourages her to take them even though it means they cannot be together. Why does Stella not want the lungs? Why does Will want her to have the surgery?
22. Will makes the decision to leave Stella for her well-being. Discuss his actions. Could you do the same thing as Will did? Why or why not?
23. The film starts and ends with Stella talking about human touch, human connection and leaves with the advice to act now to reach out to those you love. What will you do to show those you love that you care, that you are connected to them?