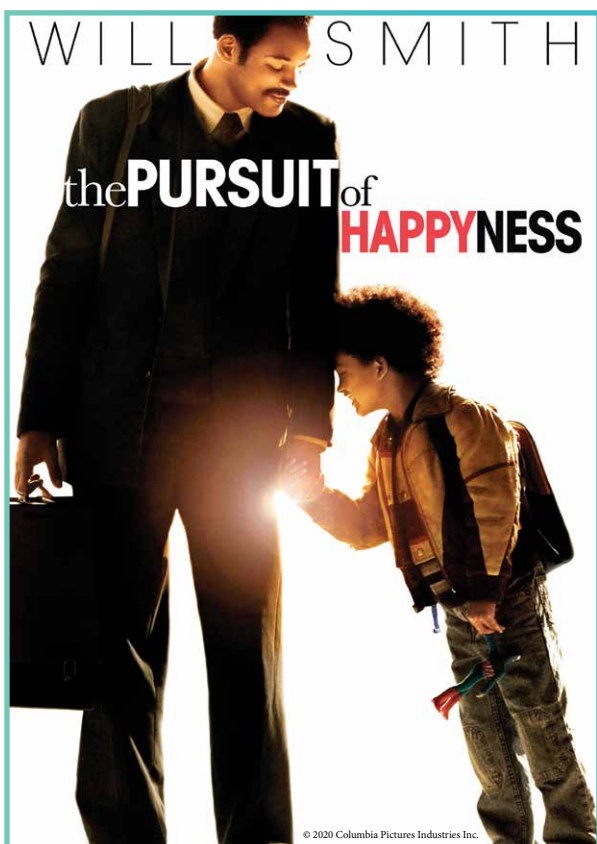




# MOVIE DISCUSSION GUIDE



## *The Pursuit of Happyness*

Based on the true story of Christopher Gardner, and his struggles to raise and make a better life for him and his son, *The Pursuit of Happyness*, featuring Will Smith who was nominated for an Academy Award for his performance, is a poignant tale of one father that overcomes incredible odds to provide for his son. Christopher, a struggling salesman, deals with hurdle after hurdle including his wife leaving him and his son, homelessness, a seemingly dead-end job and the constant questioning of his self worth as he attempts to raise his son the best he can. *The Pursuit of Happyness* is a powerful story of the power of human courage, motivation and determination to make the most of one's life.

## Programming Suggestions

This discussion guide is designed to facilitate educational programs after viewing the film "The Pursuit of Happyness". Its purpose is to generate discussion based on social issues found within the movie and for program participants to reflect on themes that may 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:

- Create a bulletin board on the topic of homelessness. Include information about local shelters, statewide and nationwide. Include images, statistics, graphs and headlines focusing on the issue. Make a point to focus on the impact homelessness has on children.
- Take a trip to a local homeless shelter. Volunteer to help prepare or serve a meal to the individuals that use the shelter.
- Invite a member of the Career Services department to come and discuss jobs in the financial sector. Discuss internships and how they have changed over the years.

### Issues

Family  
Homelessness  
Parenthood  
Responsibility

# Discussion Questions

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1. Discuss Christopher Gardner and his journey. Why do you think he ultimately was successful? Do you think that there are specific characteristics of successful people? If so what are they?
2. What is success? How do you define it? Does the meaning of success change over time? Why or why not?
3. What can we learn from Christopher Gardner's story?
4. Throughout the film the one constant is Christopher's son. Do you think that Christopher could have done what he did without him in his life? Why or why not?
5. As the story unfolds Christopher's wife, Linda, decides to leave Christopher. At first she takes their son but ultimately relents and leaves Christopher with his father. She states a child should be with his mom. Do you agree with this statement?
6. Do you think times have changed in how society views single parents, single fathers?
7. Can you think of situations where someone you knew grew up in a single parent household? How was their life different than those growing up in two parent homes?
8. Christopher struggles to pay the bills. Ultimately offering to paint his apartment in exchange for rent. He and his son then move to a motel because of financial struggles. How do you think you would handle such a dire financial situation?
9. Can you think of situations today where people are having to make financial decisions with long lasting impact due to unemployment or underemployment?
10. Christopher showed up for his interview after spending the night in jail. He decides to tell the truth about his appearance. Have you ever been in an awkward position such as this?
11. Would you rather arrive late for an interview or disheveled? Explain your choice.
12. Christopher spent his savings on the bone density scanners and had to constantly try to unload them. Have you ever had job selling a product you didn't fully believe in? How did you do? How did it make you feel?
13. Christopher and his son are playing basketball when he tells his son he probably won't be a professional basketball player. He follows this up by telling him "Don't ever let somebody tell you... You can't do something. Not even me. ... You got a dream... You gotta protect it. People can't do somethin' themselves, they wanna tell you you can't do it. If you want somethin', go get it. Period." What do you think about this statement? What does this say about him as a father?
14. After Christopher and his son are kicked out of the motel they end up spending the night in a train station bathroom. Discuss this scene and the emotions that Christopher must have been going through.
15. Can you think of a situation where your parents or another older adult have shown true emotions like in this scene? How did it make you feel? Did it change your perception of them? Why or why not?
16. During the film Christopher Gardner discusses the idea of the pursuit of happiness versus happiness. What do you think of these two different concepts? Are we guaranteed happiness? Should we be? Why or why not?
17. Christopher and his son end up spending time at a homeless shelter. Discuss the role these programs play in your community. Do you think they provide the resources necessary for patrons to get back on their feet? Why or why not?
18. While staying at the shelter we see Christopher studying by the light from the window. What does this say about his character?
19. Do you think Christopher would have been successful regardless of his situation? Why or why not?
20. Do you think that his co-workers or his supervisors knew how hard it was for Christopher?