

HOW TO TOUCH A HOT STOVE **DISCUSSION GUIDE**

SUGGESTIONS FOR SCREENING

We live in what may be described as a “like-or-dislike” world. *How to Touch a Hot Stove* will provoke thoughts, agreements, disagreements, understanding, and perhaps even discomfort. It is the hope of the film's creators that all kinds of responses to the complex nature of the subject matter will be discussed following the screening and lead to consideration of how each of us can do more to integrate individuals who think, feel, or behave differently from socially accepted norms.

Prior to screening, however, it will be valuable to facilitate a discussion exploring viewers’ perspectives on topics relevant to the film.

Pre-Screening Discussion Questions

- ↑ Assuming you would agree that society discriminates against people with mental disorders, against those who think, feel, or behave differently from socially accepted norms, what do you think causes this discrimination?
- ↑ How is this type of discrimination similar to, and different from, other forms of prejudice?
- ↑ What do you think can be done to address that dynamic?

POST-SCREENING DISCUSSION

The following questions are found to be useful in generating further consideration of the subject. Initial responses, such as “I didn't like what he/she said,” provide an opportunity to discuss with others similar or different reactions.

Begin the discussion by asking the audience for general feedback:

To what do you think the metaphor in the title refers?

With what ideas expressed in the film does your own thinking resonate?

Did the film impact your thinking in any way?

Then move on to more specific talking points.

Perspectives on Mental Illness

What is “mental illness”?

It is often said that “mental illness is like diabetes” or some other physical illness. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? How might this statement be helpful or harmful in diminishing the marginalization?

Within the mental health field, different perspectives on the causation of psychic distress, of whatever kind, proliferate. So, too, the value of diagnoses and the degree to which individuals with lived experience should be involved in decisions regarding treatment. Why is it important to 'bridge the divide' between these different perspectives and how might that best be achieved?

Stigma

What does it mean, on the deepest level, to 'destigmatize' mental disorders/differences?

In the film, the point is made that stigma is perpetuated in the media. Do you agree? If so, where and how? Can you cite any examples of effects such media representation has had on you personally? Can you cite any examples of positive media and entertainment promotion of mental health? How can we use media as a valuable resource to promote the “touching of hot stoves”?

How does language, whether in the media or in our own everyday usage, contribute to the perpetuation of this form of prejudice?

What roles are played by fear and blame in marginalization?

The Movement

How is a mental health movement aimed at diminishing stigma similar to, and different from, other civil rights movements?

As demonstrated in the film, a variety of approaches may be taken to raise awareness of the prejudice associated with mental disorders. What do you think it takes to implement a successful campaign or movement? What are some of the key elements?

How might the slogans associated with some of these 'movements' be actualized or made real, be made to enter all our daily lives?

Touching the Hot Stove

How does the destigmatizing of individuals who think, feel, or behave differently from socially accepted norms occur when

- ↑ Violent acts, such as school shootings, occur with increasing regularity?
- ↑ “Crazy” people are seen in the streets talking to themselves shouting out loud?
- ↑ Your roommate, friend, or family member is having suicidal thoughts?
- ↑ Etc.

Envision yourself as an employer needing to fill a position. Would you hire a qualified individual for that position who self-identifies as having a mental disorder?

Would you hire a qualified individual for that position who does not self-identify as having such a disorder but who visibly behaves in ways or says things suggestive of it? How might this impact your workplace environment?

Should we be trying to bridge the divide between “us” and “them”? Or should acceptance of “difference” be the goal?

Ultimately, the objective is to foster consideration of how viewers might become involved, in their personal and professional lives, in the destigmatization effort.

Thus: How might you, as an individual, go “outside your comfort zone” to diminish the stigma?

CRAZY ?

Additional footage to the film is provided here that deepens the inquiry. It is suggested that discussion take place between the two screenings and that some of these questions be reiterated at, or reserved for, the end of the screening of this additional material.