

Discussion Guide for The Sugar Plays



This guide has been developed by Dr. Sharon A. Denham to accompany the *Sugar Plays*. The guide provides suggestions and ideas for ways to guide discussion with persons with diabetes, family members, friends, and other community persons.

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Discussion Guide

The SUGAR Plays

Introduction to the SUGAR Plays

Getting messages out about diabetes can occur in a variety of ways. Three theater students at Ohio University were commissioned during the 2007-2008 academic year to write plays about living with diabetes in Appalachia. Each writer was asked to develop a play that lasted approximately 20 minutes and included five characters or less. Each playwright did research about Appalachia and diabetes. They learned firsthand about the region and its implications for living with diabetes. Three diverse and remarkable plays were written.

Additional information about the playwrights can be obtained on the **Toolkit** section of the *Diabetes: A Family Matter* website. The three *pdf* files containing the play scripts can be downloaded. The plays can also be viewed online. These plays are copyrighted by the playwrights and any other use of the plays will require permission from them. If you choose to use these plays in your community, please go to the **Communicate** section of the *Diabetes: A Family Matter* website <www.diabetesfamily.net> and share with others how you used the plays and what outcomes were achieved.

The SUGAR Plays:

- *Sugar Bear* by Dana Lynn Formby
- *A Family History* by Nick Sgouros
- *Lucille* by G. William Zorn

This discussion guide can be used in a “talk-back session” after viewing the plays singly or as a group. The playwrights have given permission for the use of the plays locally for diabetes work. This discussion guide suggests ways to engage others in a talk-back session after either reading or observing the plays. Whoever leads the discussion sessions will need to prepare themselves by reading the plays ahead of time and considering various topics that might be discussed. This guide is intended to provide some ideas, but you may think of other topics to discuss or other ways to conduct the “talk-back” session. Please use your own creativity in meeting the needs of your audience.

It is likely that you might choose to use these plays with small group readings or choose to watch the plays online. Ideas for discussion about each of the plays are provided separately. However, should you enact the three plays in a more public format; you may choose to have a “talk back” at the conclusion. In that case, you may want to choose some overall discussion questions to address with a larger group. Or you may decide to have an educator or other speaker have a concluding message that describes the overall diabetes problem in the nation and describe what is happening in your community. This would be an opportune time to share information about local resources and seek to involve others in your local diabetes coalition, *Diabetes: A Family Matter* program, and recruit volunteer SUGAR Helpers.



Sugar Bear

Sugar Bear by Dana Lynn Fornby provides a look at three family generations living with diabetes. As Papaw plans to visit, the family gets ready for his arrival. However, some earlier morning chaos results in some lively family interaction as they try to sort out what has really happened. The play can be read or viewed online prior to discussion. The play is about 22 minutes in length.

A number of things can be discussed in relationship to the family history so often linked with type 2 diabetes. In this play where members of two family generations have the disease, questions are raised by the younger children as to whether they are also at risk. This is a relevant question to discuss given that more and more youth and adolescents are overweight and are being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. One interesting discussions to have following this play has to do with the epidemic of obesity that has been growing across the nation over the decade or two.

One thing to consider in this play has to do with the believability of the characters, the reality of the plot, whether the audience related to the stories about diabetes, and if

they enjoyed the play. Addressing these concerns is a good place to start with discussion about the play. You might begin discussion with questions such as:

- What were the best things about this play? Why did you like it? Things you dislike?
- Was the story interesting to you? Why?
- So which of the characters in this play did you enjoy the most? What was it about this character that you most related?
- Were there things you found in the story that did not seem true? What were these things?
- Would you suggest that others read or see this play?

Next, turn the groups' conversation to some of the main themes from the play. You may want to encourage the participants to discuss the main messages of the play. You might start with something like this:

- What do you think the writer of this play was trying to make us think about?
- In what ways did this play remind you about things in your family?
- Was the way you experience living with diabetes conveyed clearly in this play? Were there things that did not ring true?

After you have discussed the group's general responses to the play, then you will want to turn the discussion to more specific topics about healthy lifestyles, family support, and diabetes self-management. For example, here are some questions you might consider:

- The mother (Marlene) in the play talked about a dish called Country French Chicken and Peanut mentioned that “rabbit food is yucky,” what has been the response in your family to needed dietary changes?
- The message of discipline comes up several times during the course of this play. Both Andrew and Papaw discuss concerns about Andy’s behavior. Do you ever find yourself pointing your finger at someone else in the family to cover up things you should have done but did not do?
- What do you think about the ways Marlene talks to Andrew about his diabetes management? How do people in your family talk about diabetes?
- Did anything about Andrew’s behavior in managing his diabetes remind you of what you experience in living with diabetes?
- Papaw says he is not a liar and tries to correct Andy for his language use. Do you ever find yourself ignoring or forgiving your diabetes management behaviors and pointing the finger at someone else in the household?

Finally, you might end the discussion with some points like these:

- Papaw tells a big story about a bear in this play, do you ever find yourself telling stories or partial truths about your diabetes because you do not want others to know what you are really doing?
- How can local people use storytelling as a way to help others learn

more about diabetes prevention and good self-management?

- What kinds of things can family members do to best assist you in managing your diabetes?
- Are there things that you might do to improve the ways your family communicates with you about your diabetes self-management?



A Family History

A Family History by Nicholas Sgouros moves back and forth over several generations to consider ideas about family history. The play creates windows to consider whether family values, beliefs, and routines are passed on over time. The playwright has woven the idea of sugar through the generations, but ways it appears have both similarities and differences. The play can be read or viewed online prior to discussion. This play is about 20 minutes in length.

One thing to consider in this play has to do with the believability of the characters, the reality of the plot, whether the audience related to the stories about diabetes, and if they enjoyed the play. Addressing these concerns is a good place to start with discussion about the play. You might begin discussion with questions such as:

- What were the best things about this play? Why did you like it? Things you dislike?
- Was the story interesting to you? Why?
- So which of the characters in this play did you enjoy the most? What was it about this character that you most related?
- Were there things you found in the story that did not seem true? What were these things?
- Would you suggest that others read or see this play?

Next, turn the groups' conversation to some of the main themes from the play. You may want to encourage the participants to discuss the main messages of the play. You might start with something like this:

- What do you think the writer of this play was trying to make us think about?
- In what ways did this play remind you about things in your family?
- Was the way you experience living with diabetes conveyed clearly in this play? Were there things that did not ring true?

After you have discussed the group's general responses to the play, then you will want to turn the discussion to more specific topics about healthy lifestyles, family support, and diabetes self-management. For example, here are some questions you might consider:

- Have you ever thought about your family history? In this play, what meanings did family relationships have to diabetes being passed to others in the family? Do you see any

diabetes concerns in your family history?

- What kinds of problems do local people have because they do not have health insurance?
- A long discussion occurs in this play about sugar and moonshine, what ideas do people in your community have about what causes diabetes?
- Do you think local people understand the reasons for diabetes complications? Are there ways we can help people learn more about prevention of diabetes complications?
- Do you think these intergenerational families communicated well with one another about diabetes and its management? What kinds of advice would you give them if you could?
- Living with diabetes happens over many years, what can persons with diabetes do to stay healthy as possible over those many years? What can family members do to help?

End this discussion with some ideas about healthy lifestyles and diabetes prevention. For example, here are some things to ask:

- Let's talk about what it means to make a current sacrifice for a future benefit? Do you ever think that this is what you are doing when you try to keep your glucose under control?
- Getting activity into our daily lives is a challenge, what kinds of things need to happen in this community to encourage people to get active again?
- What kinds of things do family members need to talk to each other

about whenever a family member has diabetes?

Lucille

Lucille by G. William Zorn takes place in a hospital room a day or so before Lucille is going to be discharged and return home. Lucille has been recently diagnosed with type 2 diabetes and is talking with her transition nurse about the things she will need to do when she goes home. The play can be read or viewed online prior to discussion. This play lasts about 23 minutes.

One thing to consider in this play has to do with the believability of the characters, the reality of the plot, whether the audience related to the stories about diabetes, and if they enjoyed the play. Addressing these concerns is a good place to start with discussion about the play. You might begin discussion with questions such as:

- What were the best things about this play? Why did you like it? Things you dislike?
- Was the story interesting to you? Why?
- So which of the characters in this play did you enjoy the most? What was it about this character that you most related?
- Were there things you found in the story that did not seem true? What were these things?
- Would you suggest that others read or see this play?

Next, turn the groups' conversation to some of the main themes from the play. You may want to encourage the participants to discuss the main messages of the play. You might start with something like this:

- What kinds of things do you think the playwright was trying to make us think about?
- In what ways did this play remind you about your family?
- Was the way you experience being diagnosed with diabetes conveyed clearly in this play? Were there things that did not ring true?



After you have discussed the group's general responses to the play, then you will want to turn the discussion to more specific topics about healthy lifestyles, family support, and diabetes self-management. This play takes place in the hospital soon after Lucille is diagnosed with diabetes. Here are some questions to consider for a group talk:

- What are the things about health care encounters that you find the most challenging? For example, visits with your doctor or hospitalization?
- The characters in this play quoted lines from famous historical people to get ideas about health across. Do you think people today learn from

their health histories about what ways to do things better?

- Candy made the statement, “If you’ve got something to fight about, you’ve got something to fight for.” How might you consider this idea in relationship to living with diabetes?
- Lucille makes this statement, “I love my family, but I am not a child.” Do you ever think that your family treats you as a child in the ways they try to help you manage your disease? What would you like them to do differently? How can you share these ideas with them?
- Taking insulin and needles is a big concern to many people. What kinds of concerns do you and your family have about insulin?

- How does your family learn about the things you need to do to best manage your diabetes? What do they need to know? How can you better communicate your needs to those that care about you?
- One of the final statements in the play suggests the idea of “do not go gentle into that good night.” What can you do in your family to change the way health is promoted and diabetes is prevented or managed?
- What kinds of things can occur in this community to make people more aware of diabetes risks and their prevention?

Let’s conclude the group discussion with a few points that are important to all of our lives. Obesity and diabetes are problems of epidemic proportion across America and also in the Appalachian region. Here are some final ideas to discuss with your group:

- Lucille had a very high blood glucose level when she was admitted to the hospital (over 900). Do you think that she had symptoms prior to her diagnosis? Why do you think she postponed going to the doctor?
- What can we do in this community to help people better understand the problem of diabetes and the need for prevention and good management?
- Candy tries to teach Lucille about taking care of her diabetes. What has been your experience with diabetes education? What things are helpful? What is not helpful?