

Movie Discussion Guide

MY SISTER'S KEEPER

"Most babies are accidents. Not me. I was engineered. Born to save my sister's life."

Conceived by means of in vitro fertilization, Anna Fitzgerald was brought into the world to be a genetic match for her older sister, Kate, who suffers from acute promyelocytic leukemia (APL). Because of her sister's dependency on her, Anna is unable to live the life she wants; in and out of the hospital constantly, unable to take part in extracurricular activities such as cheerleading or soccer. When Kate turns 13 she goes into renal failure. Knowing that she will have to donate one of her kidneys to her sister, Anna sues her parents for medical emancipation and the rights to her own body.



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Programming Suggestions

This discussion guide is designed to facilitate educational programs after viewing the film MY SISTER'S KEEPER. 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:

- Before the film, ask participants to write down 10 things they would like to accomplish in their lives. After viewing the film, ask participants to share the items on their list and to talk about why these items are important to them.
- Host a program in conjunction with this movie in November (National Bone Marrow Awareness Month) or April (National Donate Life Month). Discuss with your residents opportunities to get involved with charities such as Make-A-Wish, Lyrics for Life, or Up Till Dawn.
- Host a panel program on Organ Donation with representatives from the local DMV, Health Services or Police Department.
- Use this movie as part of a program on motivation, perseverance, persistence, and determination. Look for examples from the movie to use in discussion.
- Create a Bulletin Board on the National Marrow Donor Program registry. Joining the National Marrow Donor Program registry requires only a small saliva test. Volunteer donors who join the national registry are asked to remain committed until their 61st birthday and be willing to donate to any patient, anywhere in the world. Each year, more than 35,000 children and adults in the United States develop life-threatening diseases for which a marrow transplant could be a cure.
- Create a bulletin board of the memorable quotes from the movie along with movie trivia to announce the program. You can find memorable quotes at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1078588/quotes>.
- In this age of scrapbooking, host a party where residents can make a scrapbook for a loved one.

An important consideration in choosing any facilitation option is that all students have an opportunity to participate. Be aware that many of the topics addressed in the film are not often talked about in public settings. Students who attend the program may have varying degrees of comfort level with the discussion.

ISSUES

CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES
DEATH AND DYING
ETHICS AND JUSTICE
RELATIONSHIPS/LOVE/FRIENDSHIP

Discussion Questions:

- What themes or issues stood out for you in this movie? Why?
- Did you enjoy this movie? Why or why not?
- To which situations and characters can you most closely relate?
- What significance does the movie title have to the movie content?
- For residents who may have read the book and saw the movie, allow them to share their feelings about the changes between the two.
- Discuss the consequences, both positive and negative, of having a baby through in vitro fertilization with the intention to save another sibling's life. What effect did it have on the family?
- Discuss how terminal diseases can tear a family apart. Has anyone had to deal with cancer in their immediate family?
- The movie shuffles the characters around through flashbacks. Discuss how Jesse's dyslexia and the decision to send him to the school played a role in other family decisions. Was Jesse "lost in the shuffle"?
- Discuss implications of the physician counseling Sara on decisions she has to make regarding Kate. How does the hospice representative add to or detract from the grief Sara is feeling?
- Describe how this movie exemplifies the joys of living and of dying.
- Have you experienced the death of a loved one? If so, describe how this experience made you feel and how you coped. If not, have you thought about what it might be like?
- How did you feel when Jesse blurts out in the courtroom that Kate wants to die?
- Discuss the scene in the movie with Sara and Kate when Kate gives her the scrapbook at the hospital. How does this foreshadow their relationship? How can a gift, such as a scrapbook, express so much of the past as well as so much hope for the future?
- Discuss the implications & thoughts of your residents regarding genetic testing and IVF as a means to have a baby.
- How far will one go when they are wearing the (hypothetical) unrelenting blinders? When did Sara have them on? When did Brian?
- How does Kate's death strengthen the family?
- A number of relationships are portrayed in the movie. Spend time discussing the various relationships (Sara and Kelly, the siblings, Sara and Brian, Brian's family, rebellion in the teens, Taylor and Kate, mother-daughter, etc).
- Kate is portrayed as a young girl with advanced cancer, so physically, she looks very sick. How were your residents affected by these scenes? (this will be especially poignant if they have very little personal experience with terminal illnesses)
- How does the film portray women? Is it positive or negative? Accurate? Why? How does the film portray Sara as a lawyer or Judge de Salvo?

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