

A Discussion Guide for *Wrong Way to Hope*



This Discussion Guide contains some tips and outlines to help you with introducing the film and facilitating the post film discussion. Remember, no matter how much or little everyone in the audience knows about the specific issues that face young adults with cancer, everyone can connect with the major life themes that the film explores.

Pre-Film Discussion:

- Make sure to introduce yourself and your connection to WW2H (ie. how you found out about WW2H, are you a survivor or supporter, etc.)
- Introduce any special guests (ie. cancer survivors or supporters) or have people quickly introduce themselves.
- Make sure to say THANK YOU for coming!
- Introduce the WW2H documentary by explaining backstory (from Film Program) and reading the introduction provided below.

Portion of Introduction Speech by Mike Lang from the Canadian Premiere:

Stories are so important to tell. I want to read you a quick paraphrase, from a book called Kitchen Table Wisdom by Dr. Naomi Remen, that has shaped our philosophy as we plan for our adventure trips and retreats.

“Everybody is a story and sharing our stories with others is how wisdom is passed along. Our stories are a front-row seat to the real experience. We become in that moment a guest in someone else’s life, and together with them sit at the feet of their teacher. The meaning we may draw from someone’s story may be different from the meaning they themselves have drawn. No matter. Facts bring us to knowledge, but stories lead to wisdom.”

All Bonnie and I try to do on our expeditions and at retreats is give people the opportunity to tell their story so that they can learn from it and so that others can learn from it. Telling our stories helps everyone process what they have been through in their lives and it is the way wisdom is passed along. I hope you guys enjoy the story tonight and that you can take some wisdom from these stories back into your own lives.

One last quick thing... cancer can be a heavy topic but there are many parts of the film that are really funny! So don't be afraid to laugh! A little humor goes a long way when talking about this subject matter and we tried to keep a good amount of it in the film. Enjoy.

Post-Film Discussion:

- Start by reading the Post Film Speech below.

Post Film Speech by Mike Lang from the Canadian Premiere:

What a Journey. You know, telling a story doesn't matter if there is no one to listen to it... so thanks again for all of you coming tonight. We really appreciate it and I hope you enjoyed it. One thing Bonnie and I have learned throughout this whole crazy experience, is that when you have the opportunity to do something good for the people around you, never hesitate. Just do it. If you use the skills and abilities you have to make the world around you better place, I guarantee you will not regret it. Before we end things off, there are a couple more pieces to this story that I would like to share with you all.

After that first trip on the Owyhee that you just witnessed we realized that we had to keep doing this! So we founded an organization called Survive & Thrive Expeditions. If you are a young adult cancer survivor and you are interested in coming on a kayaking trip like this or a sailing trip with us, please visit www.survivethrive.org to get all the details. We run a few trips every summer and they are always just as amazing and meaningful as the one you just witnessed.

Finally, the last story of the night. 1 in 7 young adults diagnosed with cancer will die from it... and out of the 8 of us on that trip Alston was that one. He passed away last week (*a week before the Canadian Premiere of the film*) after living 3.5 years with Esophageal cancer. I say "living with Esophageal Cancer" because he was truly living life to the full and his life was not defined by the disease that killed him. He knew that he would not have much time left when he signed up for the expedition and for him, the trip meant to live life to the fullest when he didn't know what was going to happen to him. It meant to try to find answers and get involved as much as possible with life and with people.

I want to read you his Facebook wall description "More life to the days, if not more days to life. Stay engaged!" Engaged is the perfect word to describe Alston. He was always listening intently, testing everything, fully engaged in every conversation, fully engaged in every relationship. We will all miss Alston so much... thankfully his openness and rawness will always be preserved for us in this film. He told me when he signed up that the expedition that it would be his legacy and I am honored that I got to be apart of that legacy.

Thank you so much for being here and being apart of this great story with us and because this is a real story it does not end once we leave this theatre. My hope is that you take some wisdom that you gained from this film back into your own story My hope is that the world will be a better, kinder and wiser place because you took some wisdom away from the story tonight... Thank you again for being apart of this journey with us. Goodnight.

- After the reading, transition into quickly and succinctly explaining which theme you connected with the most from your own cancer/life journey. Share a story from your life that illustrates that theme or really connected you to one of the survivors stories (ie. When Laurie said... I connected with her because in my life...).
- Depending on the purpose and atmosphere of the screening:
 - Choose one or two discussion topics from the discussion guide, read the intro and ask the questions to get conversation started.
 - Or ask “Were any specific themes that you really connected with?” and go from there using the discussion guide to help facilitate.
- In case the discussion does not start up easily:
 - Have a few pre-picked a few themes to focus your discussion.
 - Refer back to the film and use the summaries provided below to refresh peoples memories of what the YA survivors talked about.
- End off the discussion by talking about the word “Reintrajectorization”. Now that they have seen this film and have a good understanding some of the specific issues that YA’s with cancer face, explain where they can go from here and what they can do to help (This is the action step portion of the discussion, see below).

****Make sure to let people know that if they would like to help us keep showing this film to survivors, cancer care professionals and the public all over North America they can go to www.wrongwaytohope.com to learn how.****

Action Steps: How the audience can make a difference, now.

- Buy the film and organize your own screening of WW2H.
- Set up a meeting with a cancer care professional and take WW2H to your local cancer hospital or cancer support centre.
- Tell everyone you know about the film... everyone knows someone with cancer and everyone would benefit from seeing this film.
- Connect with any cancer survivors/patients you know. Send them a copy of WW2H and tell them about Survive & Thrive Expeditions.
- Like Wrong Way to Hope on Facebook to keep up to date on all the exciting new developments with the film.

Discussion Starters

#1. Transition

- Peter talked about the two major transitions that cancer survivors go through, the abrupt transitions that surround the initial cancer diagnosis and the transition out of treatments back into everyday life.

Discussion Questions:

What transitions are you currently going through?

Are they positive or negative?

How does your surrounding community help you through these transitions?

#2. Fear & Uncertainty

Cheryl talked about the constant fear that she felt about everything for a long time after she was diagnosed.

Discussion Questions:

Think back to what your initial reaction was the last time something unexpected happened to you. Were you motivated by it or paralyzed by it?

What is one fear you have had for a long time?

What helps you best to continue forwards despite this fear and the uncertainty it causes?

How could you confront this fear?

#3. Isolation

Laurie talked about how not being able to relate to people in the same stage of life as her was very isolating. Mike and Cheryl talked about how they purposely isolated themselves by not reaching out to others or asking for help.

Discussion Questions:

How is it that we can be surrounded by people but still feel so isolated?

How does our culture help lead to isolation?

#4. Relationship

Jen talked about not having the support of her father or her boyfriend during her treatments and the frustrations caused by losing her independence. Her boyfriend did not know how to handle her sickness because he just wanted to fix it but he couldn't. Peter talked about how his family played a huge role by allowing him to feel normal through plain everyday conversations.

Discussion Questions:

Why do relationships fall apart so often when something like cancer comes into the picture?

How can we keep our relationships strong despite what is going on in our lives?

#5. Identity

Alston talked about how everything he worked hard for his entire life was taken away from him and that he felt like it was all for nothing. Vik talked about how others see him has been effected by the disfigurement from cancer. Mike talked about how the one thing that stayed constant throughout his cancer journey (and his entire life) was his belief that God loved him unconditionally and wanted the best for him despite the fact he could not understand what was happening.

Discussion Questions: What do you want people to see you as?

What if all those things were taken away?

What will keep you grounded when your life changes before your eyes and your surface level identity seems to be gone?

#6. Silence

Jen realized that she had been distracting herself for a long time. With all the time to reflect Cheryl realized that cancer now seemed like a gift despite what it had taken away from her. Peter realized that there was no use in reflecting to much on the past and was not sure if going through cancer was worth the perspective and insight he gained because of it but he was excited to try new things that he might not have done before his cancer and river journey.

Discussion Questions:

Why is silence and stillness important?

How can we start incorporating times of silence in to our hectic lives?

#7. Reintrajectorization

Alston talked about how he had seen throughout the trip, principles put into practical action and that it had given him impetus to go home and change the direction of his life. Mike talked about how important it is to take the lessons learned from experiences like cancer and the expedition and apply them directly to our everyday lives. Move into **Action Steps** portion of discussion.