



# States of Grace

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

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### INTRODUCTION

A successful film screening invites viewers to watch the film deeply and purposefully, and to reflect upon what they've seen with their peers, family members or colleagues. We have designed these questions to provide viewers with the opportunity to share their personal and professional views, feelings and experiences. Additionally, we hope the conversation will lead viewers to consider how care giving and care receiving might be enhanced for themselves, for patients and family members, and through the efforts of a variety of healthcare providers and service organizations.

Audiences may range widely from physicians, nurses, and allied healthcare providers to medical and social work school faculty and students, Buddhist and other faith-based groups, meditation practitioners, disability and LGBT organizations, as well as families and caregivers who are dealing with the many dimensions of trauma, illness, aging and disability.

Feel free to pick and choose the questions that are best suited to your particular audience, format, and the amount of time you have for discussion.

### GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What were some of your thoughts and feelings while watching the film?
2. What moments in the film affected you the most? Why?
3. Whose story did you find the most compelling? Why?
4. Did you identify with any of the subjects in any way?
5. What questions, fears or concerns did the film raise for you, both personally and professionally?
6. Did something inspire you in this film? If so, how might it have an impact on your own life?

# KEY THEMES & ISSUES

## THE EXPERIENCE OF CAREGIVER AND CARE RECEIVER

The film portrays many dimensions of caregiving and care receiving, an intimate exchange that challenges and changes the lives of individuals, professionals, and the healing process.

1. What are some tasks and stresses Fu faces as a caregiver? How does she manage them?

*“Am I actually up for being the primary caregiver of a severely disabled person? That was a big soul searching time for me.”* —Fu

2. What kinds of challenges does Grace face as a care receiver? How does she handle these challenges?
3. What are some things you learned from each woman’s experience? How might these lessons inform how professionals provide care to their patients? How might they inform patients and families as they navigate their own healing process?

## THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON FAMILY DYNAMICS

The film shows the experience of an entire family adapting in the aftermath of a life-changing accident. While their journeys through change are inextricably linked, their tasks, challenges and dilemmas are quite different.

1. Grace had been the primary parent and breadwinner prior to the accident, and had also been a physician and care provider her whole life. How does she cope with her new role and position in the family?

*“It was devastating to miss a whole year of Sabrina’s life.... Fu and Sabrina formed a strong bond and there were many times I felt left out.”* —Grace

2. Fu describes herself as a person who “had not really taken on the mantle of adult responsibilities” prior to Grace’s accident. How does she change in the years following the accident? How do you think she feels about these changes?
3. How is Sabrina’s relationship to Fu and Grace affected? What impact does this have on Sabrina’s life as a teenager?



## LOSS, RESILIENCE, AND RENEWAL

The film shows multiple types of loss by individuals and families. How loss is experienced is greatly influenced by how one understands and navigates it, and how effectively loved ones and caregivers provide emotional support.

1. In what ways do Grace, Fu, and Sabrina exhibit flexibility and resilience? What lessons might there be here for other patients, families, and healthcare providers?
2. Prior to the accident, Grace was an honored physician, a partner, a mother, a Zen practitioner, and a longtime member of a Buddhist community. In what ways might these roles have affected how she experienced, and responded to, her circumstances after the accident?

*“I think I would have died early on if it weren’t for my Zen practice. I learned that nothing lasts forever... including great pain, great sorrow, great loss, great sickness, and great helplessness.”* —Grace

3. Grace expresses grief and despair about her many losses on several occasions, including her loss of independence and the burden she feels her dependency places on Fu and Sabrina. How does Grace face her losses? What does the film show about the relationship between hope and despair?

*“I am realizing how much I don’t like being disabled.... Mostly I am worried about being such a burden on you and Sabrina, and I have nothing to give you....”* —Grace to Fu

4. While Grace experiences profound losses in the aftermath of her accident, Fu and Sabrina suffer reciprocal losses as a direct consequence of Grace’s losses. What are those losses, and what helps Fu and Sabrina face them? What are lessons here for patients, families, and healthcare providers?

*“If I learned anything it is that you cannot do it alone. None of us can...only by hard work and risk...and not quite knowing what you’re doing.”* —Sabrina

5. What one or two key factors stand out most for you as supporting Grace, Fu and Sabrina to stay the course toward healing? How might these inform your own role as patient, family member, caregiver, advocate, or healthcare provider?



## CONCERNS/QUESTIONS/OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

Providers' presence, engagement, and responsiveness with patients are key ingredients of healthcare delivery. The film offers insights into the strengths and limitations of current practices.

1. What did you learn from Grace as she navigated her role as a patient? What are some things you learned from her experience that might affect or enhance the way you practice, or plan to practice, as a healthcare provider?

*"I was a caregiver all my life. As a physician, it's a real eye opener to be on the other side of the caretaker-caregiver divide." —Grace*

2. Fu is not a formally trained healthcare provider, yet she provides significant home care for Grace following the accident. What are some things you learned from her experience that might affect or enhance the way you practice, or plan to practice, as a healthcare provider?

*"She needed an ICU, then she needed a rehab hospital, and then they sent her home. And where's the doctor, where's the nursing staff...well, actually, you're it, Fu!" —Fu*

3. What did you learn from seeing what happens to a patient after she is discharged from a care facility and has to manage in her home environment?

*"Regarding the anxiety of going home...I think the only way you're going to get through that is when you actually get home and muddle through it, and find your own routine." —Hospital social worker*

4. What sort of special considerations, if any, does one need to think about when delivering healthcare services to LGBT families?

5. What did you learn from seeing Grace return to work as a physician? In what ways did her experience as a patient influence her work as a doctor?

*"People have been offered lots of pain medications... and various pain interventions. But what they really need is a community of people who support them in the process of working through their pain."*

—Daniel Rybold, MD, co-worker in pain clinic



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