

TOUCHED WITH FIRE

Discussion Guide



A POWERFUL STORY

A Window into the Reality of Bipolar Disorder

Touched with Fire stars Katie Holmes and Luke Kirby as two poets with bipolar disorder whose art is fueled by their emotional extremes. When they meet in a treatment facility, their chemistry is instant and intense, pushing each other's mania to new heights. They pursue their passions, swinging from fantastical highs to tormented lows, both of which place them on the edge of disaster. They must ultimately choose between each other and stability.

Inspired by the filmmaker's own struggles with bipolar disorder, Paul Dalio wrote, directed, edited and scored his feature film debut. The film also includes performances by Griffin Dunne, Christine Lahti and Bruce Altman with a cameo by Kay Jamison, author of the book *Touched with Fire*, a definitive work on creativity and mental health. The film is produced by Jeremy Alter and Kristina Nikolova and executive produced by Spike Lee.



AN IMPORTANT CONVERSATION

Touched with Fire takes the audience on an authentic journey through the highs and lows of bipolar disorder and how it affects not only individuals, but also friends, families and work life. It is an outstanding film that offers a holistic portrayal of mental health and provides audiences with an inside look into one of the nation's most talked about but least understood mental health conditions.

So, what can we take away from this mission-aligned film primed to change conversations? In a time when mental health is constantly appearing in national headlines, what must we do to reduce stigma and change the way we view mental health concerns?

DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS

This discussion guide is designed to facilitate a conversation that is inspired by the film. Its purpose is to create a dialogue to reflect on the themes of the film, relevant issues, and the personal experiences of the audience.

To organize a conversation with your community, we suggest following these steps:

1. Coordinate a group outing to go see the film on opening weekend.

The film will be released around the country on **February 12**, and opening weekend is February 12, 13 and 14. Check <http://www.touchedwithfire.com> or your local listings to see where *Touched with Fire* is playing in your area.

Theatrical buy-outs may be available for larger group screenings. Contact hina@prosocialconsulting.com for information.

2. After the movie, plan a conversation to discuss the relevant issues in the film.

Where will your discussion take place?

You can host a post-movie conversation at a local restaurant, coffee shop, friend's home or another venue. This discussion can be as formal or informal as you would like. Alternatively, if your group is large enough and will see the movie during off-hours (such as the late morning), you may be able to arrange a post-screening discussion at the movie theater.

If you choose a home or coffee shop, for example, make sure that the space is accessible, quiet and large enough to accommodate the type of group discussion you are hoping to have.

Who will participate?

Will you invite others outside your chapter to the discussion? Are there local experts on the topic who you would like to invite? Also, how large do you want your group? (Smaller groups often allow for more honest and participatory dialogue).

Who will facilitate the discussion?

You may choose your chapter leader, a local expert or a copy or a family member or friend to facilitate discussion. Also, you may choose to have a small panel sit at the front of the room to lead the conversation, particularly in larger groups.

3. Spread the word about your event!

Communicate with your chapter via email, phone or word-of-mouth to encourage participation in this important conversation.

Also, email us at hina@prosocialconsulting.com to let us know that your event is happening.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

People who feel safe, encouraged, respected and challenged are likely to share openly and thoughtfully. As a facilitator, you can encourage that kind of active participation.

You don't need to be an expert, but knowing the basics can help you keep a discussion on track and gently correct misstatements of fact. Prior to your discussion, take time to do some additional research on bipolar disorder and other mental health concerns.

Additionally, remind participants that everyone sees through the lens of their own experience. Who we are influences how we interpret what we see—everyone in the audience may have a different view about the content and meaning of the film they have just seen, and all of them may be accurate. Inviting speakers to identify the evidence that they've based their opinions on can help people to understand one another's perspectives.

Note: There are no "right" or "wrong" answers to questions in this guide.

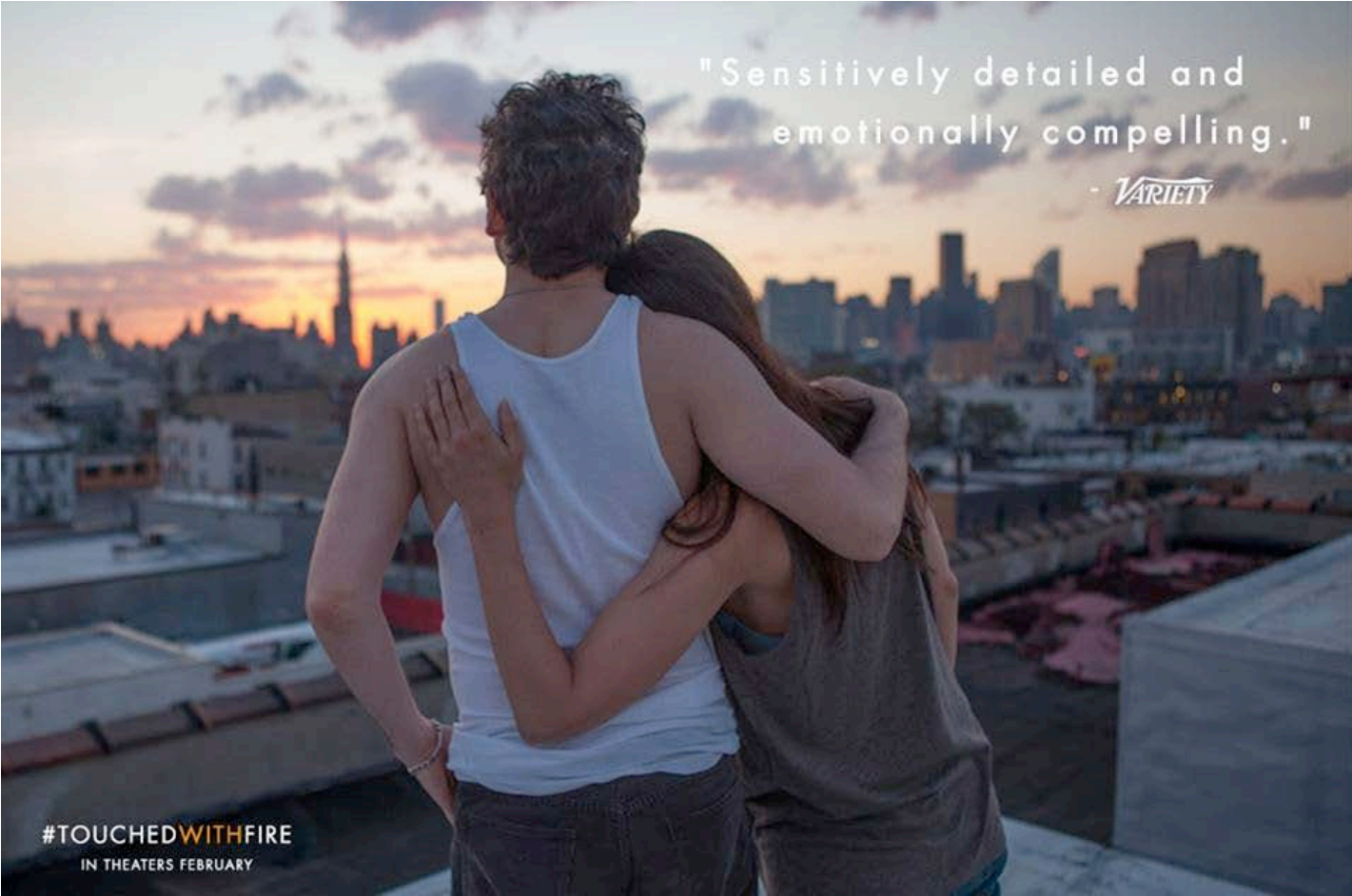
- Millions of Americans live with mental health issues. How do you see the film informing families of people with bipolar disorder? Informing the medical community?
- Doctors play a big role in diagnosing and treating patients with mental illness. How do you feel about the way the doctor is portrayed during Carla and Marco's time at the hospital?
- At one point in the film, both characters contemplate suicide. Do you feel it was necessary to depict suicide in this way?
- Creativity is embedded in the film – whether through poetry, art or referencing great artists of the past. How important is it for people to recognize these individuals had bipolar?
- What moment in the film strikes you as being the most informative to audiences about bipolar disorder?
- There is so much discussion around reducing the stigma of mental health. How do you see this film changing the conversation around mental health?



RESOURCE LIST

This discussion guide is designed to facilitate a conversation after viewing the film. Its purpose is to generate discussion inspired by the film and to create an environment to reflect on the themes, relevant issues, and the personal experiences of the audience. If you need further assistance, please check out the following resources.

- **National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI)** is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. What started as a small group of families gathered around a kitchen table in 1979 has blossomed into the nation's leading voice on mental health. Today, they are an association of hundreds of local affiliates, state organizations and volunteers who work in your community to raise awareness and provide support and education that was not previously available to those in need. NAMI relies on gifts and contributions to support our important work.
 - NAMI Family-to-Family is a class for families, partners and friends of individuals with mental illness. The course is designed to facilitate a better understanding of mental illness, increase coping skills and empower participants to become advocates for their family members. This program was designated as an evidence-based program by SAMHSA. The course is also available in Spanish, De Familia a Familia de NAMI. See more at www.nami.org/familytofamily.
 - NAMI Connection is a weekly or monthly support group for people living with a mental health condition. This program is also available in Spanish, NAMI Conexión. See more at www.nami.org/connection.
 - NAMI Family Support Group is a weekly or monthly support group for family members, partners and friends of individuals living with a mental illness. See more at www.nami.org/fsg.
 - NAMI AIR (Anonymous. Inspiring. Relatable) is the new NAMI app, a free, mobile-based social network designed for individuals living with mental health conditions and their family members/caregivers. NAMI AIR is intended to provide another way for people to find and give support, to connect with others through smartphone and computer tablet. See more at www.nami.org/air
- **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)** is the leading peer-directed national organization focusing on the two most prevalent mental health conditions, depression and bipolar disorder, which affect more than 21 million Americans, account for 90% of the nation's suicides every year, and cost \$23 billion in lost workdays and other workplace losses.
 - DBSA Education Materials are crafted with both peers and leading clinician and help people with diagnoses and their loved ones to know what mood disorders are, and what can be done for treatment and management. See more at http://www.dbsalliance.org/site/PageServer?pagename=education_landing
 - Depression and bipolar disorder can be isolating illnesses, but DBSA support groups can help you connect with others who have been there as well. Visit a DBSA support group and get the support that is essential to recovery. See more at http://www.dbsalliance.org/site/PageServer?pagename=peer_support_group_locator



"Sensitively detailed and emotionally compelling."

- *VARIETY*

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IN THEATERS FEBRUARY