



## Mind, Soul, and Comics Lesson Plan



### Temple Terrace Teen Reading Group VI (Virtual)

*Focus: "Family"*

#### **Participants will be able to:**

- Examine ideas surrounding the concept of "family" by reading and discussing the graphic novels *Stepping Stones*, *Swing It*, *Sunny*, and *Long Way Down*.
- Practice articulating thoughts and emotions by responding to prompts that relate character experiences to their own lives.
- Develop empathy skills by listening to others.
- Recognize character motivations by relating them to their own experiences.

#### **Materials:**

- *Stepping Stones* by Lucy Knisley
- *Swing It, Sunny* by Jennifer L. Holm
- *Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds

#### **Procedures:**

**A. *Intro to topic:*** Begin session with a brief introduction on the background and purpose of the reading group as well as the expected conduct of those involved, reminding participants that every feeling is valid and to be respectful of those with differing opinions and beliefs. Encourage everyone to participate in whatever way makes them feel comfortable. Introduce the representative from the school of social work, who will briefly discuss their role and ability to recommend additional resources to participants based on identified needs that may arise from the group's

discussion. Lead into the title discussion with a short description of the theme for this month's group: "family."

**B. Group Discussion:** Begin the discussion with a brief overview of the main title for this session—*Stepping Stones*. Then propose the following questions to participants:

1. When Jen first meets Andy, the daughter of her mother's new boyfriend, Andy is really bossy and sometimes puts Jen down for not knowing the same things as her. Have you ever had someone in your life make you feel bad for not understanding something that came easily to them? Or has the opposite ever occurred, where something came naturally to you, but you realized maybe it wasn't as easy for someone else? What was the situation and how did it make you feel?
2. Jen's mother's new boyfriend Walter isn't always the nicest to her. He never encourages her or tells her good job even when she really tries. Have you ever tried really hard to meet someone's approval but no matter what you did—they never seemed to notice? How did that make you feel and what advice would you give someone else going through the same thing?

Additional Questions from *Swing It, Sunny* and *Long Way Down*:

3. In the sequel to Jennifer L. Holm's graphic novel *Sunny Side Up*, *Swing It, Sunny* once again follows Sunny as she watches her brother Dale struggle to overcome some of the difficult problems he's going through. He has recently been sent to a special boarding school to try and help him work things out. But when he comes home for the holidays, he is angry and distant. Sunny tries not to take it personally, but it becomes really difficult for her since they used to be so close. Have you ever had someone you care about treat you differently whenever they were going through a difficult time? What did you do to get through the situation?
4. In the graphic novel *Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds, Will is struggling to figure out what to do after his brother Shawn is killed. All his life he's been told not to cry,

so he tries to choke down the pain with action. Have you ever hid your feelings out of concern that someone would judge you for having them? What do you think can happen when someone keeps all their feelings bottled up inside?

5. Have there ever been times when you encouraged someone to hide their feelings, or are there times you think that might be the better choice? What type of situations?

Be sure to give participants enough time to respond, but presenters should be ready with answers to help move the discussion forward, if needed. Allow the discussion to evolve naturally, using the questions as a guide to focus the conversation. A presenter not currently leading the discussion should take observation notes examining how much engagement each question elicits as well as how often participant responses reference the title under discussion. Towards the last ten minutes of the session, wrap up the discussion with a final overview of the title and the concept of “family.”

**Conclusion:**

Thank participants for attending the session. Encourage everyone to complete a program evaluation survey. Remind them of next month’s reading group and provide a brief overview of the theme and titles that will be discussed for that session.