

Beauty Mark Documentary Discussion Guide

About this guide:

Beauty Mark is a documentary that may ignite emotional responses out of viewers. It is our hope that groups, universities, educational institutions, facilities, etc. will take the time to process the documentary in a safe environment and allow viewers to discuss the impact of the film in a manner that offers hope, self-reflection, and an understanding of the complexities of perfectionism, body image, and eating disorders.

This guide is divided into three parts and suitable for viewers of all ages. We suggest you begin with the “Initial Reaction” section to grasp the viewer’s impression of the documentary. This will allow the facilitator to guide the remainder of the discussion. The “Processing” questions are film specific and offer questions designed to make the viewers critically think about how they relate to Diane’s story. Finally, the “Closure” questions are designed to empower the viewers so they leave with a sense of hope and additionally know what to do with the information gained while watching Beauty Mark.

Suggestions for Facilitators:

Read the discussion guide thoroughly before you begin. You may want to highlight questions you definitely want to discuss based on your specific group.

Be on the lookout for someone in distress. After the discussion is over, be sure to follow up with anyone you feel need additional support.

Always validate your audience’s feelings. Everyone will take the film differently, be sure to thank them for sharing, even if you disagree with what they are saying. In addition, do not challenge anyone in a defensive manner. Often, other people will do this naturally. If you need to intervene, ask someone to explore a different side to the topic.

Do not force someone to talk or put them on the spot.

If there is a lull in the conversation, ask a directive question.

Remain conscientious about lecturing; the purpose of the discussion is to discuss the film.

Don’t try to get through all of the questions. Usually, the discussion will naturally lead itself. The guide is just that, a guide. Furthermore, if there is something you’d like to add, feel free!

Enjoy the conversations and use them as an opportunity to get to know your group and learn different points of view.

Materials:

Below are materials that are helpful, but not necessary.

Tissues

Flip Chart, White Board, etc. and Markers

Scratch paper and writing utensils for note taking

Discussion Questions

Initial Reaction

How are you feeling about the documentary?

What parts of the documentary resonate with you?

What aspects of Diane's story do you see within yourself?

Processing

To Diane, a pound meant the difference between 5 or 10 seconds, and winning or losing. What does a pound mean to you?

Plagued by numerous injuries at the age of 28, Diane was forced to stop competing. What do you think compelled her to keep going? When do you push yourself to keep going? When do you give yourself permission to stop? (this could be athletically, at work, school, etc.)

In the beginning of the film, Dick Traum says that Diane "was too much into the speed and the mileage, and she wasn't having fun." What are the reasons you exercise? What is your ultimate goal? Complete the sentence, I sweat because...?

The spinning instructor, Brenda Maller, believes that everyone who comes to her class has body issues. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?

In your opinion, what is the difference between exercising normally and exercising dangerously?

Dave Scott talks about his obsession with exercise and comments that he was doing bench presses with a hospital bed. In what ways do you think men struggle with body image? Do you think that their struggles are harder, easier, or the same as women?

All or nothing seems to be a central theme in "Beauty Mark." Do you have an "all or nothing" mindset? What are your "all or nothings?"

What role do you think parents play in their children's body image and self-perception? Did your parent/s help or hinder your body image?

Everyone in Beauty Mark clearly has multifaceted issues that lead and contributed to their eating disorders. What do you think an eating disorder is? What are the causes of an eating disorder? Have you or someone you know ever struggled with one?

What does someone with an eating disorder "look" like? What are the actions and behaviors or someone with an eating disorder?

How does society normalize and justify disordered eating and/or thinking?

Why do you feel that in this country we are terrified of being "fat", yet we have the highest obesity

ratings in the world?

Diane stated "I never could see myself as a whole being and a whole human being. It was always, 'my hair's okay, I hate my stomach.' Or 'I wish I had thinner arms.' And she'd be like, 'God, why do you do that to yourself?' " Ivette thought Diane was beautiful, Diane thought she had to change. Did you see yourself or your actions in this scene? If no, do you know someone who possesses similar character traits?

Would you consider yourself self-critical? If yes, think back to a time in your life when you weren't so critical of yourself. Do you recall what was it that changed the way you began to look at yourself? When did your body become more than just "your body?"

When Diane went to New York City she met with Dove consultant, Jennifer Scott. Scott talked about a survey that Dove conducted and the results showed only 2 percent of women referred to themselves as beautiful. Since all of the words were positive, Scott seemed troubled by the results. Why do you think women don't describe themselves as beautiful? What one word would you use to describe yourself?

Jane Brody said, "One of the problems we have with body image in this country is that someone else is dictating what a body is supposed to look like. And we can't all fit into the same mold. We simply can't. We each have different body structures. We have different genetic tendencies. We have different sizes and shapes and forms. And we've lost sight of the range of normal, on both ends – the people who are too thin and the people who are too heavy. " Society is masterful at telling consumers what we should and should not look like. Brainstorm ideas on ways we can help restore perspective of what "normal" is.

Esther Levy Bar-Shai believes it is the parent's responsibility to create their child's image. Do you agree or disagree? What other factors contribute to the way children feel about their bodies?

Peter Huston talked about mannequins and how they are asked to mold them. What are your thoughts about the mold that is consistently used and highly unrepresentative of our culture?

Diane met and interviewed Cindi and Zack Andrews, the mother and son that were severely burned in the fire. What were you thinking during this scene?

Dawn Gallagher said that fear sells products. What does she mean by this statement? What have you purchased out of fear?

When discussing aging, Paul Campos said that society wants everyone to be "thin, blond, and 21 for their entire lives." What do you think about that remark? How have you fought aging? How have you embraced it?

Toward the end of Beauty Mark, Diane seeks wisdom from people who have healthy body images. Do you consider yourself someone with a healthy body image? If yes, how do you maintain it? If no, in what ways can you begin to seek it?

What imperfections do you embrace?

Eve Ensler discusses self-absorption. She believes that we are all wrecks and completely dysfunctional, but still capable of making the world a better place. How do you make this world a better place?

Define true beauty.

When Diane went home, why do you think she was unable to tell her mother why she was really crying?

Linda Zimmerman said that over the past ten years Diane had changed but was still the same in many ways. What makes recovering from an eating disorder difficult in our society? Do you believe it is always there? Can one truly recover?

Diane's mother said she feels more beautiful now that she gave up perfection. What did this statement mean to you?

Closure

As a result of Beauty Mark, what will you do differently if you see a friend who is struggling with their body image, disordered eating, or excessive exercising?

How do both body image issues and eating disorders impact us as a society?

At the end of Beauty Mark, Diane quotes "I thought that in this journey of healing, that I would arrive somewhere. And somehow, everything would be okay. Like, enlightenment is this place that you get to and there's all this light and you're so okay. And what I've realized in this healing journey is it's so a journey. There's no finish line. Everything's a process. Everything's a moment. Everything's being awake and falling asleep. Everything's a light and a dark. Everything is just an evolution. There's no finish line. The finish line is the gift of life." With that said, what are your gifts? What are you grateful for? And what makes you beautiful?