



DISCUSSION GUIDE

ALL I GAINED

Questions and talking points for parents and teachers to encourage reflection and deeper discussion about friendship with kids ages 9+.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Pick and choose questions for your child/class.

These can be used to prime kids for the book, or even afterward for additional discussion. The ideas listed below each question are for teachers/parents, if needed, to help get the discussion going if kids feel “stuck” brainstorming and need a nudge.

How do great friends make us feel?

Ideas: Respected. Safe. Happy. Cared for. Appreciated. Known. Included.

What are red flags/warning signs to look out for with friends?

Ideas: Disrespect. You don't feel safe physically or emotionally (sharing your dreams, feelings, or ideas). Only one person puts in the work and makes sacrifices and compromises. They isolate you from your family and other friends. They encourage you to do things that don't align with your values, that go against family or school rules, or that break laws or put yourself or others at risk. If you ask them to stop teasing and they don't.

What do you think will change about your friendships as you get older? What might make it hard to stay close?

Ideas: Moving away for college or a job, getting busy with job or family responsibilities, not being in the same life stage (maybe one is married or has kids and the other doesn't), interests may change (maybe you played soccer together but someone switches to another sport), changing schools, etc.

If you want to stay friends for a long time, what can you do as you get older to stay connected?

Ideas: texting, talking on the phone, hanging out in person, Facetime/Zoom, taking trips/vacations together, sending letters or gifts, remembering the big moments in their life, offering support and encouragement, checking in, being thoughtful, being a good listener, cheering them up, etc.

TALKING POINTS

These talking points are for parents/teachers to facilitate a deeper dive on important topics/themes touched on in the book and include additional reflection questions - best used after students have read the story so they can make stronger connections.

#1 EMBRACING DIFFERENCES

Great friendships aren't all about common interests. You can actually be very different and still connect on a deep level!

In fact, sometimes it's really good to have friends who are different from us - maybe you like how outspoken your friend is, or how athletic they are, or that they play the guitar and do awesome magic tricks.

Maybe you come from different cultures or love different subjects in school. Those differences can make your conversations interesting and allow you to learn from each other and grow in new ways.

Even if your personalities and interests are quite different, some friends just "click" because they have a comfortable way with each other, they feel they can be themselves, they have a similar sense of humor, or they share similar values.

What do Riley and Emma have in common?

How are they different?

TALKING POINTS CONTINUED

#2 MANAGING DIFFERENCES

You can disagree sometimes and still be great friends! You're two different people and you have different points of view. You will want different things sometimes, or see an issue differently. The trick is to handle those heated moments without tearing each other down.

Stay curious - try to understand where they are coming from (maybe you love different music, can't agree on which movie to watch, or don't want to play the same game at recess).

Respect has to be at the center. We can disagree without being hurtful.

Sometimes feelings get hurt, even when we don't mean it, and we need to "repair" that hurt as quickly as we can. Be willing to apologize when you've done something wrong, offer a hug, make them smile - find some way to reconnect.

How did Riley and Emma handle some of their disagreements?

If you and a close friend got into a argument, how could you try to reconnect with them after?

When your feelings are hurt, what could your friend do to help you feel better, or to let you know they're sorry?

TALKING POINTS CONTINUED

#3 RELATIONSHIP MAINTENANCE

Relationship maintenance behaviors are the things we do to keep our relationships strong. Being generous, forgiving, supportive, responsive, and having fun together are all important ways to invest in your friendships.

What did Riley and Emma do to stay close over the years?

#4 COMMITMENT

Close friends stick together in the good times, and when life gets hard. A “fair-weather” friend only hangs around when everything is going well and things are fun. But, if you get sick, struggle in math, or don't get picked for the team, true friends still stand by you.

Which hard things did Riley and Emma have to face together over the years?

#5 KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Deep friendships take work!
- You have to put in the effort and be intentional, especially as life throws curveballs and it's not as convenient to live nearby or sit next to each other in class.
- It takes effort to check in, to support each other, to make the time for talks or visits, and to remember special occasions and milestones.
- It can be hard to apologize, be a good listener, work through disagreements, and show each other grace, but those are critical skills for all relationships in life.

For really special friends, that hard work is worth it though!