

## Goal

Watch and discuss *Straightlaced* in a single extended session, with a focus on understanding key messages and exploring how *Straightlaced* can help youth make sense of their own experiences at school and in their communities.

## Suggested Time

Full viewing and discussion of the film will take a minimum of two hours (including the 67-minute film screening). This is in addition to any pre-screening activities you will be doing. If you are selecting the single-session option, please be sure you have enough time available; if not, we strongly suggest using Discussion Guide #2, which allows you to view and discuss the film over two or three shorter sessions.

## Resources

*First Responses* instructions and handout, pp. 49–50 (Optional)

List of *Discussion Questions*, p. 39

Copies of selected *Straightlaced* quotes, p. 51–55 (Optional)

## Discussion Guide #1: Watch and Discuss *Straightlaced* in a Single Extended Session

Your *Straightlaced* discussion should follow a careful setup of the *Straightlaced* unit, including setting agreements, doing a pre-screening activity and providing a unit overview. The resources on pp. 21–30 are available to guide you through this process.

1. Introduce the film using the information and sample script on p. 28.
2. View *Straightlaced* all the way through. Given the length of the film, we recommend providing comfortable seating arrangements and, if possible, offering some small movie-related snacks.
3. At the end of the film, give students a few minutes for quiet individual reflection and/or pair-share to help them collect their own thoughts and briefly process any personal feelings that came up. The *First Responses* activity on p. 49 offers a guide for leading this process. You should allow approximately 15 minutes for this reflection, including share-out.
4. Build on the *First Responses* discussion to hold a group dialogue focused on key messages and themes in *Straightlaced*, as well as on helping youth connect the film to their own individual, school and community experiences. The *Discussion Questions* that follow can be used to structure your conversation. Please be sure to refer to the *Facilitation Tips* on pp. 36–37.
5. It can often be helpful to use **quotes from the film** to anchor your discussion. A list of powerful quotes can be found on p. 51. These can be used in a variety of ways: read aloud to help initiate conversation, introduced at moments when you want to push the discussion deeper, shared and analyzed in small groups, or included in whatever other ways make most sense for you.
6. Be sure to close out your conversation. Because of the sensitive and emotional nature of the topics discussed in *Straightlaced*, it is important to provide some type of closure to the conversation—for example, a few summary comments by the teacher or leader, suggested next steps or action ideas, or a closing “checkout.” If you will be doing additional *Straightlaced* activities, it is a good idea to mention them at the end of your initial discussion. If not, you may want to consider having youth do a brief written reflection, assessment and/or action plan. For specific ideas, see *Personal Action Plan* (p. 127), *School and Community Action Plan* (p. 128) or *Pulling It All Together* (p. 130).



## Discussion Questions

### A. What are the rules and pressures around gender?

1. According to the students in the film, what are some of the rules or norms for what it means to be a girl? A guy? Where do these rules come from?
2. In your experience, how are young people limited, forced to do things they don't want to, or kept from doing things they do want to because of gender pressures or because they are afraid they'll be labeled as gay?

#### Going deeper:

- One youth in the film said: *"I come from Brazil, and in Brazil it's just natural for guys to get their nails done and have fresh haircuts."* Were you surprised at all by this statement? Why? How does the place, community or culture we come from affect how we learn about gender norms? Can you think of specific examples about gender and gender norms in your own community that may be different in other communities or cultures?
- How do you think a person's race or ethnicity might be connected to expectations they face about how their gender is supposed to act?
- Do you think there are certain stereotypes for males of certain races or from certain cultures? Females? Why do you think that is? What similarities in stereotypes do you see *across* cultures?
- Why do you think that stepping outside gender norms is so often associated with being gay or lesbian? Is that the same in all cultures?
- What do you think society's "gender rules" have to say about the relative value of men and women?

### B. How do gender norms and expectations affect us?

3. How are young people's lives affected by society's messages and expectations about gender? In what ways are people's lives *restricted*, and who is affected in this way? In what ways do some people get *advantages*, and who receives these benefits?
4. How are young people's gender experiences affected by society's beliefs about being gay or lesbian?
5. How do you feel about some of the more tragic stories in the film—the girl who turned to drugs and ended up in jail, the students who faced violence and harassment at school, the young man who committed suicide? What can be done to prevent traumas like these?

### C. What is gender anyway?

6. What do you think of the statement *“My experience is that there’s not two genders. There’s really a spectrum”*?

#### Going deeper:

- Do you think gender is something we are *born with* or something that *society* places on us?

### D. What do we think should be different, and how can we make that happen?

7. One student in the film says: *“I know a lot of people who go to school and they’re afraid to act as they truly are because of what people are going to think or what people are going to say to them... A lot of people really aren’t free because they can’t show their true selves.”* In what ways does this statement apply to your school or community?
8. What ideas do you have for taking action in relation to the issues in *Straightlaced*? What would you like to see changed? How can you help make that happen?



**PLEASE NOTE:** Even if you do not have time to directly discuss the story of Josh, the student whose suicide inspired his friends to build a memorial garden, please acknowledge this section of the film and say a few words about how important it is for everyone to reach out to the “Joshes” in their schools and communities. It is also a good idea to plant the seed that anyone who is feeling isolated, depressed or suicidal should seek immediate help and to indicate where they might find that help in your school or community.