



A DISCUSSION GUIDE For Medical / Nursing Schools & Students

"THE FIRST WAVE is about many things to me but, at its core, it's about how human beings come together in the face of crisis. I hope the film serves as an homage to the brave healthcare workers who have risked their lives on the frontlines of this ongoing pandemic. Now, almost two years into the crisis, they deserve our gratitude and support more than ever."

—Matthew Heineman, Oscar®-Nominated and
Emmy®-Winning Director, *THE FIRST WAVE*

THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE is designed to help you use *THE FIRST WAVE* as a catalyst for building community and sparking conversation about the future of our healthcare workforce and the mental health and well-being of clinicians. You will find resources on leading and participating in a discussion after viewing *THE FIRST WAVE*. This is an emotional film that can be a powerful way to process and learn more about the experiences you and your peers have had during the COVID-19 pandemic. You'll have access to supporting content and tools, pathways to action, mental health resources specially tailored to medical students, and words of wisdom from one of the film's main subjects, Dr. Nathalie Dougé. Thank you for playing an important role in expanding and deepening this crucial dialogue.

SPARKING CONVERSATION

Check-In

Given the emotional nature of the film - and the personal experiences of everyone watching - we encourage starting conversations with a few grounding questions that help build trust and provide a sense of safety. Some examples:

- How are you doing today as you come into this screening/conversation?
- How are you feeling after watching the film?
- What has it been like for you to grapple with and process the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic as a health professions student?
- During the pandemic, have you felt more united with the healthcare workforce as a whole? How so?
- Has the film brought up anything about your experience going through the pandemic that you now feel you need to speak up about?
- Has this film inspired you to become more of an advocate for yourself, your patients, and your community? If so, in what ways?
- What has it been like for you to experience and process the racial violence & disparities within COVID-19 in our country as a health professions student in the last two years and counting?

Reflect

From there, consider exploring how themes in the film might resonate on an individual or institutional level.

- Do you identify with a particular character or experience depicted in the film? If so, which one and why?
- Do you have any concerns about entering the health workforce after seeing the film? If so, what are they?
- What actions, tools, or strategies have you used to protect your own mental health and well-being during this crisis?
- What gaps in the healthcare system highlighted in this film have you witnessed and/or experienced yourself?
- How have you seen similar scenarios related to equity and health outcomes play out in your hospitals and/or research?
- If there is one thing your school or hospital could do to better support your mental health and well-being, what would it be?
- How should healthcare professionals seek a balance between caring for their patients medically and emotionally, but at the same time keeping their emotions in check for themselves and other patients?

Plan

Finally, consider how your concerns or feelings might be addressed in the future as medical or nursing students entering the workforce.

- How might new doctors and nurses help one another by destigmatizing seeking mental health support upon entering the workforce?
- How might we commit to checking in on one another, now and in the future as nurses, residents, and attendings? How might we learn how to identify burnout in ourselves and our colleagues?
- How might we actionably commit to dismantling systemic racism and embracing anti-racism in the medical system and medical/nursing schools?
- How might we build a healthcare system that centers the needs of healthcare workers alongside patients?
- How can we hold healthcare systems accountable for ensuring the well-being of healthcare workers?
- How can we organize around encouraging medical/nursing schools and institutions to destigmatize mental health and center well-being in their curriculum and workforce?

FROM DISCUSSION TO ACTION

Now that you've started to grapple with some of the themes in the film and how they relate to your own experience, you may be curious about how to start acting on changes or ideas that may have surfaced in the conversation. To help you do that, we've identified the following pathways to action to get you going.

Pathways To Action For Medical & Nursing Students:

Join the [ALL IN: WellBeing First for Healthcare](#) movement to advance a system where the well-being of the healthcare workforce is prioritized and individual healthcare workers feel valued and supported so they can sustain their sense of purpose and meaning in their work.

- Visit [ALLINForHealthcare.org](#) and learn more about the issues you care about.
- Join the [ALL IN community](#) and add your voice to the conversation.
- Sign the [ALL IN Statement of Commitment](#) or ask leaders in your school and hospital to do so.
- Use and share the [free tools and resources](#).
- Share your story to help normalize the conversation around mental health and well-being.

Pathways To Action For Medical Students:

Join a diverse community of future doctors at the [American Medical Student Association](#), where you'll find opportunities to meaningfully engage with the issues that matter to you through advocacy, expanded education, and networking.

- Visit [AMSA.org](#) and get involved with your nearest chapter, join a nationwide campaign, or utilize their resources.
- Join the Wellness and Student Life Action Committee.
- Join the Race, Ethnicity, and Culture in Health (REACH) Action Committee.
- Register for the [Racism in Medicine](#) and/or [Health Justice](#) Scholars Programs.
- Join a diverse community at [AMSACon](#).



A WORD FROM DR. DOUGÉ

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in New York City at the time, I didn't see a person or hear a voice publicly that emulated my experience or thoughts.

So, I decided to take part in this film, with the hope that I could be that for someone else. It means a lot to share this film with students like yourselves, because young frontline workers seem to be hit the hardest, with the vast majority, almost 75%, reporting that worry and stress related to COVID-19 has had a negative impact on their mental health.

I hope you take away from the film that in your journey to better serve other humans, you too recognize that you are human. Trauma is often juxtaposed with triumph, and resilience can include rest. Collectively, we can be vulnerable yet strong enough to persevere. However, that involves processing our feelings, and ultimately enlisting the help of others when we need it most.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

NAMI FRONTLINE WELLNESS

- Website: [nami.org/frontlinehealthcare](#)
- Instagram: @namicommunicate
- Text SCRUBS to 741741

CRISIS TEXT LINE

- Website: [forthefrontlines.org](#)
- Instagram: @crisistextline
- Text FRONTLINE to 741741

THERAPY AID COALITION

- Website: [therapyaid.org](#)
- Instagram: @therapyaidcoalition

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

- Website: [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](#)
- Phone: 1-800-273-8255

PHYSICIAN SUPPORT LINE

- Website: [physiciansupportline.com](#)
- Phone: 1 (888) 409-0141

BETTERHELP (via AMSA)

- Website: [amsa.org/benefits/betterhelp](#)

FREEDOM 365 (via AMSA)

- Website: [amsa.org/benefits/freedom365](#)

APPENDIX

Tips For Organizing + Leading Conversations

If you're taking on the role of organizing a screening and/or facilitating a conversation, we're here to help you. We've crafted the following tips to help you guide a conversation around ways to identify and meaningfully support student mental health and well-being and identify pathways to action.

Event Organizing Tips

FORMAT

- Discussions can take many forms (panel discussion, Q&A, etc.), but we suggest a more intimate group discussion as it fosters a more comfortable space to share personal reactions. As the pandemic is ongoing, you may need to convene your group virtually, using Zoom or other video platforms to host a discussion after screening the film. Many healthcare workers have reported that it has been cathartic to see and discuss the film together, so the more community you can create, the better.
- If your event is virtual, consider using break-out rooms and coming back together as a larger group to share. Think about your audience and what format would be most engaging for them.

AUDIENCE

- Identify (and invite) those who should be in the room, considering the appropriate mix of administrators, staff, and/or students that makes the most sense for your context.

DISCUSSION PREPARATION

- Read through the discussion questions and resources and prepare a rough outline of what you want to cover. Reminder, once people get talking, the conversation will organically evolve, and you will just need to be a guide.
 - » **When crafting the conversation:**
 - Consider the audience, who will be part of the discussion, and what strengths they bring to the conversation.
 - If you want people to take a specific action, think about how the conversation can support that.
 - Consider incorporating an icebreaker or breathing exercise at the beginning to center the room and allow participants to reset before the screening and conversation.
- We have provided tools to help construct your discussion around the film; however, what you discuss is ultimately up to you. It is important to acknowledge that audience members may continue to have strong feelings and responses to the film and discussion, so consider if it makes sense to offer more space to process / another opportunity to reconnect and continue the dialogue.

Discussion Facilitation Tips

- Set the stage for a good discussion by welcoming everyone and setting an intention for the conversation.
- Appreciate that everyone in the room has good intentions and also individual experiences.
- Stay aware of who is speaking and who is not. Ensure that no one dominates the conversation and welcome (but don't demand) input from quieter participants.
- If the conversation escalates inappropriately, quiet the group and ask everyone to spend two minutes silently writing down their feelings and thoughts. Use your judgment to either move on to a different topic or share what everyone wrote.
- Gently remind participants of some best practices for group discussions:
 - Speak for yourself ("I feel..." "I think..."), not on behalf of your identity ("we feel..." "we are...") or other identities ("they think..." "they act like...").
 - Don't be afraid to ask questions. Try not to make assumptions and listen to what people say instead.
 - Be open to feeling uncomfortable - remember that all growth comes with some discomfort.
 - Stay engaged. If you feel frustrated or misunderstood, take a moment, but don't drop out.
 - Don't dominate the conversation. Everyone gets a chance to speak and be heard.
 - This is a discussion, not a debate or a lesson.