

GABBY GIFFORDS WON'T BACK DOWN



BRIARCLIFF ENTERTAINMENT AND CNN FILMS PRESENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH TIME STUDIOS A STORYVILLE FILMS AND LISA ERSPAMER ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION "GABBY GIFFORDS WON'T BACK DOWN"
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY DYANNA TAYLOR EDITOR ILYA CHAIKEN MUSIC BY MIRIAM CUTLER EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS AMY ENTELS COURTNEY SEXTON IAN OREFICE ALEXANDRA JOHNS TOM ORTENBERG OREN JACOBY
PRODUCED BY LISA ERSPAMER SAM JINISHIAN DIRECTED BY JULIE COHEN & BETSY WEST
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JOURNEYS IN FILM
educating for global understanding

Learning Guide



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NOTE TO USERS

The sections on Mental Health, Media Responsibility, Gun Violence in the U.S., Civic Engagement, and Career Paths are designed to be used independently, meaning as stand-alone components to focus on each of these areas for learning and growth after viewing the film, but can also be used in conjunction with one another (with suggested connections at the end of each section). They may also be used together as a whole.



Filmmakers use immersive storytelling to produce intense thoughts and emotions in the viewer. Journeys in Film uses this powerful medium as a springboard for meaningful dialogue around humanity's most pressing issues. In this guide, you will find suggestions for leading productive conversations that broaden perspectives, encourage empathy, and build new paradigms for education.

- When watching a film or having a powerful discussion, normalize taking breaks and exercising bodily autonomy. Acknowledge that conversations around complex topics can be vulnerable, complicated, and challenging.
Encourage members to voice and do what is right for them without needing to explain or apologize.
- People do their best when they know what to expect.
Start and end your meetings on time.
- **Share or co-create your intentions for the meeting.**
- **Create your space.** If possible, share snacks or find other ways to create an inviting, comfortable atmosphere.
- **Create a trustworthy space.** Maintain confidentiality and only speak to your own experience.
- **Minimize distractions** while you are together. Silence cell phones and devices so you can give your full attention to the conversation.
- **Practice whole-body listening.** Listen to words, tone, body language, and the feeling in the atmosphere.
- **Acknowledge voices that may be absent.** Is there a lived experience that isn't represented in your group? Who are the bridge people who might be able to connect you with other people in your community who might bring new perspectives to the table?
- **Adopt an attitude of positive intent.** If someone says something that bothers you, assume positive intent and ask for more information.
- Ignite your curiosity around other people's views and opinions. **Listen to understand, not to respond.** You don't need to agree with others in your group or make it known that you are "right" to have a worthwhile conversation.
- **Words matter.** Be open to learning and practicing new ways to communicate with others.
- **Be clear, direct, and kind** in your communication. Nobody benefits when you bottle your opinions.
- Everyone has blindspots and biases; **cultivate a space of grace** as you enter into new territory together.
- If a conversation gets heated, practice acknowledging the tension, pausing as a group, and **taking a collective breath together** before diving back in or taking a longer break to reset.
- Privilege your relationships with others over the content or agenda of the meeting. **Show each other kindness.**
- **Create a closing ritual** that celebrates the time you've spent together and either gives closure or gives members something to think about before your next meeting.



A LETTER FROM GABBY GIFFORDS

I hope you enjoy watching *Gabby Giffords Won't Back Down*. This film portrays my life and my story, and I'm thrilled to be able to share it with all of you. My hope is that this discussion guide will spark important conversations about aphasia, gun violence, and continuing to fight for what you believe in—even when it seems like progress isn't possible.

In 2011, I was the target of an assassination attempt while I was meeting constituents, doing my job as a congresswoman. Six lives were lost that day, and my life was forever altered.

My story is a unique one, although not as unique as we might hope. Every day, more than 100 Americans die from gun violence. Many more are shot and survive and have to live with a lifetime of trauma and physical injuries.

After I was shot, I was partially paralyzed and diagnosed with the communication disorder aphasia. I wasn't able to continue to represent Arizonans in Congress, and I had to relearn some basics, including how to walk and talk.

Despite the fact that an estimated two million Americans are living with aphasia, around 85% of people have never heard the word. Aphasia can make it hard to connect and converse with those around you, leaving many individuals feeling isolated and lonely. I hope my story sheds some light on what aphasia is and what it isn't, and helps those living full, vibrant lives with aphasia feel a little less alone.

Shortly after the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary in December 2012, I founded an organization dedicated to ending gun violence. I've channeled my pain into purpose through this organization, Giffords. We have made tremendous progress over the past 10 years, yet we still have so far to go.

I hope all who watch this film come away with a greater sense of empathy and understanding for those who have suffered from aphasia or gun violence.



But most importantly, I hope viewers understand that even when it seems like the challenges you face are too great to overcome, you must move ahead and keep fighting.

WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE,

Gabby Giffords

INTRODUCTION TO THE FILM



Gabby Giffords Won't Back Down is a powerful film that allows viewers to examine the phenomenon of gun violence in the United States and address the challenging emotions this reality can raise.

The gun violence prevention organization that Gabby founded, [Giffords](#), notes that the term “survivor” refers to anyone whose life has been irreparably changed by gun violence. This can include people who have witnessed an act of gun violence, had someone they know and care for injured or killed, or been threatened or wounded with a gun.

Gun violence can include homicides, suicides, domestic violence, and unintentional shootings. Some people may not recognize themselves as survivors until they see their experience represented. Others choose different words to represent their experience. If you have people who have experienced gun violence in your group, acknowledge that they are the experts of their own experience and offer the resources found in this guide to support them in their journey.

Thoughts and beliefs about gun ownership and legislation vary tremendously depending on political identity and geography. It's hard to find a person who doesn't have a strong opinion about guns in America. Journeys in Film hopes your community will come together to watch this powerful story regardless of each individual's current stance on the issue.

Gabby Giffords Won't Back Down is a film that encourages thoughtful healing and generative discussions. As you watch the film, consider how your community might be strengthened by engaging with the material and with each other. See the facilitation guide on page 3 for suggestions and guidance on how to engage in productive group discussions.

As gun violence is on the rise and more people are affected by its devastating consequences, it is essential to acknowledge the gravity of the subject matter and recognize that the material presented in the film may be triggering for some viewers.



THE LIFE OF GABBY DEE GIFFORDS: A TIMELINE

- June 8, 1970** Born in Tucson, Arizona, to Spencer and Gloria Giffords
- 1993** Graduated from Scripps College in Claremont, California, with a double major in Latin American studies and sociology
- 1996** Earned an M.A. in urban planning from Cornell University
- 1997–2007** Ran her family's tire business in Tucson, then helped manage a commercial property firm
- 2002** Won election to the Arizona State Senate
- 2006** Won election to the U.S. Congress as the representative for Arizona's Eighth Congressional District
- 2007** Married Mark Kelly, a Navy pilot and astronaut
- 2007–2012** Served in the U.S. Congress as Representative from Arizona and served on the Armed Forces, Foreign Affairs, and Science and Technology Committees; Chaired the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics
- 2011** Shot in the head by a gunman at a constituent event and seriously wounded. After a partial recovery, she returned to the House to vote.
- 2012** Resigned from the House to concentrate on further recovery
- 2013** Founded Americans for Responsible Solutions, a non-profit organization supporting gun safety, after the Sandy Hook shooting
- 2016** Americans for Responsible Solutions merged with the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence.
- 2018** Co-founded Friends of Aphasia with speech therapist Dr. Fabi Hirsch Kruse
- 2020** Mark Kelly elected to the U.S. Senate in a special election
- 2022** Awarded the Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, by President Joe Biden
- Currently** Continuing to work on her own recovery and to advocate for responsible gun ownership and policies to prevent gun violence.

To learn more about the life and work of Gabby Giffords, see the resources below:

- Dave Cullen, "How Gabby Giffords Survived a Shot to the Head, and Outsmarted the NRA" bit.ly/3G3UE2A
- Karen Tumulty, "How Gabby Giffords Found Her Voice Again" bit.ly/3thOLXW

SUDDEN VIOLENCE, APHASIA, AND A SLOW RECOVERY



Meeting with constituents was one of Gabby's favorite parts of being a congresswoman. On January 8, 2011, Gabby and some of her staff hosted a "Congress on Your Corner" event in front of a Safeway supermarket in Tucson, Arizona. On that cold January morning, a man drew a Glock semi-automatic pistol and shot Gabby in the head. He then shot randomly into the crowd, killing six people, including a nine-year-old girl, and injuring others.

The bullet that went through the left side of Gabby's brain caused extensive damage. Gabby was placed in a medically induced coma, and part of her skull was removed in emergency surgery. She was moved from the University Medical Center of Tucson to Houston's Memorial Hermann Medical Center for rehabilitation, a long and slow process of recovery.

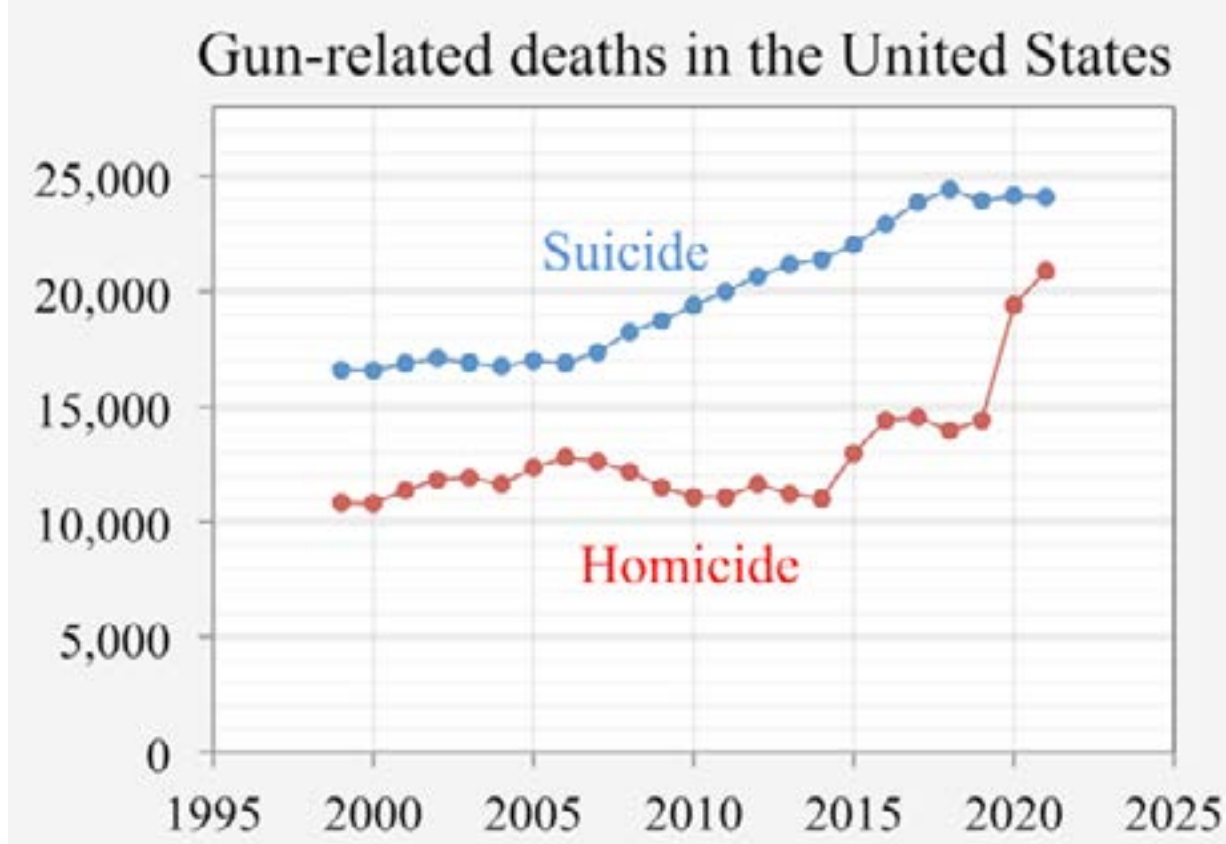
Gabby was partially paralyzed by the gunshot to the left side of her brain, an injury that left her with a communication disorder known as aphasia. Aphasia affects more than two million Americans, yet 85% of people aren't familiar with the term.

Aphasia impacts a person's ability to effectively use language to communicate. Aphasia is typically caused by a stroke, but it can result from any type of brain injury that damages the parts of the brain responsible for language. Word-finding difficulties are the hallmark of aphasia, but it can also impact the ability to understand speech, read, and write. However, aphasia does not impact cognition or a person's intelligence.

In the early days of Gabby's recovery, she was only able to say two words: "what" and "chicken." Through fierce determination and endless hours of hard work, she has now returned to giving speeches. Language and communication remain challenging, but she continues to make progress. And her ongoing improvements are not unique to her alone; people living with aphasia often improve and make progress over the course of their lifetimes.



GUN VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES



DRIVING QUESTION

What does gun violence look like in the U.S. and what actions can be taken to address it?

An average of nearly 41,000 Americans die from gun violence every year, or more than 110 per day.¹ Of these, 59% are suicides, 38% homicides, 1.3% police shootings, and 1.2% unintentional shootings. Americans are 35 times more likely to be killed in a gun homicide than people in other high-income countries.

Just how prevalent are guns in the United States today? In 2018, *The Washington Post* published an article with some startling statistics.² The reporters found that there are “more than 393 million civilian-owned firearms in the United States, or enough for every man, woman and child to own one and still have 67 million guns left over.” That’s more than twice as many guns per capita as the next highest country, Yemen. Since then, the number of civilian-owned guns has continued to grow.

Gabby herself is a gun owner, and Giffords organizes responsible gun owners who understand that gun safety and gun ownership go hand in hand. Her work to reduce gun violence reflects a movement of responsible gun owners who are seeking smart legislation to improve public safety.

Personal Reflection

What is your own attitude toward gun ownership? Why do you think some individuals choose to own one or more guns while others believe gun ownership is either unnecessary or undesirable for themselves?

¹<https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-violence-statistics/>

² *The Washington Post* article: [bit.ly/3thHKX0](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2018/07/26/guns-in-the-us/)

Discussion Questions

1. The individual who shot Gabby had been suspended from his college for disruptive behavior and had made bizarre statements about terrorism and the federal government online. He had been rejected by the military as unqualified for service. In your opinion, should he have been able to purchase the weapon that he used? Why, or why not?
2. Discuss these strategies for lowering gun violence (as a group, or explore them individually). Consider which one(s) you think would work best in your state.
 - a. Eliminating the sale of all semi-automatic weapons to civilians
 - b. Banning the sale of high-capacity magazines
 - c. Requiring background checks for all gun sales
 - d. Raising the age for purchasing a gun
 - e. Passing extreme risk protection orders ("red flag" laws) in every state
 - f. Removing guns from domestic abusers
 - g. Community programs to intervene in and prevent violent situations

Extension Activities

1. Ask each group member to draw a circle on a sheet of paper to create a pie chart. Ask them to guess the percentages of children killed in school shootings, homicides, suicides, and unintentional shootings, and to sketch in their chart. Then share the gun violence statistics found at the bottom of this page with your group. Compare your assumptions with the facts.
2. Go to the Giffords organization website at <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-violence-statistics/> to read additional information about gun violence today. Look up the gun violence statistics for your own state. What information did you learn that surprised you?
3. Read this Pew Research report on difference and agreement between gun owners and non-owners. What do the agreements offer in terms of ways to move forward and build safety around guns in the United States?
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/08/04/wide-differences-on-most-gun-policies-between-gun-owners-and-non-owners-but-also-some-agreement/>

Cross Connection to MEDIA RESPONSIBILITY

How does media coverage of mass shootings affect your assumptions and understandings about gun violence in the U.S.?

Do you think misunderstandings about gun ownership and gun violence influence policymakers?

How does media coverage of mass shootings affect the ways that individuals seek to address violence in their communities?

Additional Resources

Blog post by Research Director at Giffords Law Center, Kelly Drane:

<https://giffords.org/blog/2022/08/guns-are-now-the-leading-cause-of-death-for-american-kids/>

The Washington Post article on the prevalence of guns in the U.S.:

bit.ly/3thHKXQ

Gabby Giffords' nonprofit advocacy and research organization focused on gun violence prevention:

<https://giffords.org/>

Direct link to section of the site focused on taking action to make communities safer: <https://giffords.org/take-action/>

Pew Research Center Data on Gun Deaths in U.S.:

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/02/03/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/>

Gun violence is now the number one cause of death for kids and teens in the United States. School shootings account for less than .05% of all gun deaths of children ages 0–17. Homicides account for 54%, followed by suicides at 38%, and unintentional shootings at 5%.



MEDIA RESPONSIBILITY



DRIVING QUESTION

Do you know how to check if a media source is accurate?
If you do, how often do you check that reporting is accurate or complete?

Gabby Giffords Won't Back Down highlights the media's role in educating and mobilizing the public as well as the harm that can occur when the 24-hour news cycle presents incorrect or biased information. Even though professional journalists are supposed to abide by a code of ethics that requires they verify information before releasing it, media outlets erroneously reported that Gabby died after she was wounded in a mass shooting.

Since 2011, increased social media use has exacerbated the problem of false or misleading news reports; **MIT scholars have found that false news stories are 70% more likely to be reshared than true stories.**⁴ As technology evolves, our society faces new ethical questions regarding how we tell and share stories.

Useful Terms

Social media includes websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

Mass media refers to mass communication, such as broadcasting, publishing, and the internet, considered collectively.⁵

Media bias refers to the selection of events and stories reported by journalists and news outlets within mass media and how those stories are covered.⁶

Personal Reflection

Have you ever listened to or heard of someone else telling your story (through gossip or other “behind your back” discussions)? Were details omitted or added that changed your story? How did it feel to have your life “reported” by others?

Discussion Questions

1. Frustration due to the ongoing American gun violence epidemic has sparked a debate amongst academics, journalists, and the public on how to cover high-profile mass shootings. Some advocate for releasing graphic images to mobilize the public, arguing that reporting is often “sanitized.” Others fear that “sensationalizing” coverage will encourage copycat shooters.⁷ Do you think *Gabby Giffords Won’t Back Down* sanitized or sensationalized (or presented a balanced approach to) gun violence?
2. The NRA has said the only way to combat a “bad guy with a gun” is a “good guy with a gun.” *Gabby Giffords Won’t Back Down* tells the story of the “good guy with a gun” who mistook an innocent person for the shooter. (Thankfully, he never opened fire.) How did the presentation of both perspectives affect your thinking on the issue?
3. What parts of the storytelling in *Gabby Giffords Won’t Back Down* resonated with you? Did any elements of the storytelling inspire you to take action?

Extension Activities

1. Poll your group (or your friends and family) to see what each member believes is more important: information given to the public in real-time or accurate information presented after the story has developed and settled.
2. Create a bar graph reflecting the news sources your group members primarily use to receive their news. Or, if you are completing this activity on your own, poll friends and family and graph the results. Reflect upon or discuss why you trust your news source. What other news sources could you seek out to widen your perspective?

Cross Connection to MENTAL HEALTH

Research shows that trauma exposure impacts physical and mental health. On the flip side, re-watching a favorite show can lead to feelings of comfort.

Over the past few years, can you recall a time when consuming media increased feelings of anxiety or depression?

Can you remember times when your media consumption contributed to feelings that felt good?

What physical cues alert you when your media consumption is healthy versus unhealthy?

Additional Resources

Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics:

<https://www.spj.org/pdf/spj-code-of-ethics.pdf>

Article by staff writer at *Vanity Fair*, Charlotte Klein:

bit.ly/3hsaFVM

“Fake or Real? How to Self-Check the News and Get the Facts” via NPR:

bit.ly/3teaFLJ

Websites for Fact Checking from College of New York Staten Island:

<https://library.csi.cuny.edu/c.php?g=619342&p=4310783>

⁴ <https://www.science.org/doi/abs/10.1126/science.aap9559>

⁵ <https://www.lexico.com>

⁶ <https://www.mccneb.edu/Current-Students/Current-Students-Resources/Library/Web-Sites/Media-Bias>

⁷ <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2022/05/news-media-considers-breaking-grimly-routine-coverage-of-mass-shootings>



DRIVING QUESTION

The mind and body are inextricably connected, so why are mental and physical health services offered separately? Should they be?

The conversations around mental health and demand for mental health services have steadily increased over the past decades. Despite this, the stigma around mental illness still creates barriers to honest conversations that are necessary to accurately identify and solve problems.

Nearly everyone will know a victim of gun violence in their lifetime. Gun violence affects the mental health of those threatened by and wounded with guns and impacts the mental health of caretakers, first responders, communities, friends, and family members of those killed by guns.



Invite yourself and your group to become aware of the thoughts and feelings that arise as stories are shared and listened to. Mental health is a particularly personal and charged topic; see the Facilitator's Guide on page 3 for support and guidance on how to make challenging conversations valuable and generative.

Mental illness can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, geography, income, or any other aspect of identity.

Some mental health conditions are mild, while others require medical intervention. Seeking support for mental health is no different than visiting a doctor to maintain physical health.

Useful Terms

Mental health refers to emotional, psychological, and social well-being and affects how we think, feel, and act. The quality of our mental health determines how we respond to stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices.⁸

Mental illness indicates significant changes in thinking, emotions, or behavior that cause distress or problems functioning in social, work, or family activities.⁹

Stigma refers to the strong disapproval that most people in a society have about something, usually resulting from a lack of information or an unfair perspective.¹⁰

Cognitive distortions, like black and white thinking, result from our brains trying to bypass slow, logical thinking to make quick decisions about whether or not we are safe. Unfortunately, they can give us a skewed view of reality and contribute to depression and anxiety. There are effective treatments for cognitive distortions, including rational emotive behavioral therapy (REBT) and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).^{11,12}

PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) is a mental health problem that some people develop after experiencing or witnessing a life-threatening event, like combat, a natural disaster, a car accident, or sexual assault. There are effective treatments for PTSD, including trauma-focused cognitive processing therapy (CPT), eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), somatic experiencing (SE), and medication.^{13,14}

⁸ Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: bit.ly/3htAGUH

⁹ <https://psychiatry.org/patients-families/what-is-mental-illness>

¹⁰ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/stigma>

¹¹ <https://www.berkeleywellbeing.com/cognitive-distortions.html>

¹² <https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/cognitive-distortion>

¹³ <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/decisionaid/compare.aspx>

¹⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC518443/>

Personal Reflection

1. It is common for people to have radically different responses to the same event (e.g., one person may recover a sense of well-being while another develops PTSD). Can you think of a time when your reaction to an event differed from someone else's?
2. What are your beliefs and/or what have you been told about mental health and mental illness? Can you make room for new information or different perspectives to practice thinking more flexibly and critically?

Discussion Questions

1. In the film, the role that music plays in healing is quite significant. Share a piece of music with your group that has been significant to you or helped support you during a difficult time.
2. If you feel comfortable, share a situation where a significant loss has led to frustration, sadness, or confusion. What happens if you try to “skip” or not feel emotions that don’t feel good or are overwhelming? Explore how seemingly negative emotions might lead to positive outcomes.
3. Access to excellent health care was instrumental to Gabby’s rehabilitation and continues to be a struggle for many American families. What barriers can you identify to health care and mental health services in your community?
4. Discuss with your group (or reflect on your own about) the different ways families (biological or chosen) support each other during a crisis. What about during “normal” times? If an individual doesn’t already have a sense of belonging or community, what might they do to seek support?
5. Discuss (in a group) or consider (on your own) strategies to “challenge old assumptions” regarding mental health and mental illness. What are the obstacles you encounter when challenging old beliefs?

Extension Activities

1. Create a playlist from songs you find inspiring; or, if you are working in a group, create a playlist from the songs your group found inspiring, healing, or significant. Plan a purely social event (which could be virtual) where the playlist will be played, and members can come together to enjoy each other's company.
2. Listen to Gabby's [playlist on Spotify](#). Why do you think these songs inspire her? Which songs offer something beneficial to you?
3. Use a whiteboard or draw a line down the middle of a big sheet of paper. On one side, brainstorm all the negative stereotypes you have seen and heard regarding those living with mental illness. On the other side, brainstorm ways the media could more accurately represent the one in four people in the United States living with mental health challenges, and so become an ally in improving their recovery possibilities.¹⁵
4. Research local resources for free or low-cost health services in your community. Create a document that shows how to find and access those resources and share it on your social media platforms and/or post on community bulletin boards.

¹⁵ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16478286/>

¹⁶ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284156856_Mass_Shootings_and_Mental_Illness

Cross Connection to MEDIA RESPONSIBILITY

Common media portrayals of mental illness offer dramatic and distorted images of the mentally ill as criminal and unpredictable. These representations don't promote empathy for those struggling with mental illness and may prevent people from seeking support when they need it. It is also misleading.

Mental illness can serve as a scapegoat for gun violence, even though the overall contribution to violent crime by those with a serious mental illness is less than 3%, while an even smaller percentage involve firearms.¹⁶

What is the responsibility of mass media when reporting on an individual's trauma?

What is your responsibility as a social media user when you share news or create shareable content?

Additional Resources

Video: "When is It Trauma? Bessel van der Kolk Explains": bit.ly/2MMwNK6

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach: <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4884.pdf>

National Center for PTSD: <https://www.ptsd.va.gov>

A Toolkit for Gun Violence Survivors and Allies: <https://giftords.org/toolkit/from-healing-to-action-a-toolkit-for-gun-violence-survivors-and-allies/>

Despite the prevalence of gun violence, it can be an isolating experience. Loneliness can have serious negative consequences to mental and physical health. Survivors of gun violence can find community and support at [Survivors Empowered](#) and [SurvivorsConnect](#).

How might your community proactively offer support to those at risk for disconnection?



DRIVING QUESTION

How can civics and public service inform one's sense of belonging in a community?

Gabby's political journey began after she returned home from a consulting job in New York City to save her family's tire business. She was tired of the negative press about her home state and decided that, with her degree in planning and her business acumen, she could help. Later, while serving in Congress as a pro-business moderate Democrat, Gabby was praised for her ability to work across the aisle and build consensus.

The injuries sustained from a 2011 assassination attempt forced her to retire early, but she continued working to support her community (locally and nationally) when she founded the gun safety organization today known as Giffords to end the gun violence epidemic in the U.S. After facing gridlock at the federal level, Giffords began focusing on state legislation and, to date, has passed more than 450 pieces of legislation promoting gun safety in states across the country.

This summer, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act was signed into law, the first piece of federal gun safety legislation in nearly 30 years.



Useful Terms

Civics is the study of the rights and responsibilities of citizens and community members.

Civic engagement refers to understanding and supporting the rights and responsibilities of citizens and community members. An engaged citizenry will advocate, vote, volunteer, and participate in local politics to strengthen their community. The range of engagement is vast, from voting in local elections to starting a nonprofit organization.

Public servants work in jobs that provide needed resources to a community, funded by government agencies, which may be local, state, or federal. Individuals working for utility companies, emergency services, education, librarians, and local politicians are notable examples.

Personal Reflection

1. How would you describe the political climate in your town? What are current topics of discussion?
2. How often do you talk about politics with others? Is your focus on convincing the other side of your position? Or do you focus on listening and trying to understand the perspective(s) of others?
3. Do you find yourself unmotivated to use your civic voice? Or in an echo chamber of inaction and complaint? Are you motivated to shift the energy?

Discussion Questions

1. How did Gabby Giffords enter politics? What was her career trajectory? Where did some say she was headed?
2. Independent of a political party, what skills do you think an effective politician should have?
3. After being severely injured, Gabby retired from Congress as she felt she could not fully serve her constituency. She then started Giffords to enact change through policy and law. Compare and contrast the difference in efficacy and reach when Gabby was an elected official compared to her nonprofit work.
4. Mark Kelly is presented as an almost reluctant politician. Why do you think he ran for the U.S. Senate? How do you think his training as a fighter pilot and astronaut helped him navigate the political arena?
5. Gabby Giffords and Mark Kelly have notably different personalities and strengths. How do they each approach public service and advocacy work? What makes each of them effective in their role?

Extension Activities

1. Identify your local representatives and learn how to reach out to them. What are the issues and bills they are working on now? Are there any bills you would like to support or raise your voice against?
2. Research the gun safety laws in your town. What is the history of their development?
3. Attend a town council meeting or a meet-and-greet event. Listen carefully to the speakers and ask questions.
4. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about an issue that is important to you. Share your experience and opinions in as powerful and positive a manner as you can. (See additional resources for guidance on writing a letter to the editor.)
5. Imagine you are going to start a nonprofit organization. What would the focus be? How would you craft your message to connect with people? Do you have an idea for a name of the organization?

Cross Connection to CAREER PATHS

Like Gabby Giffords, many locally elected government officials first had noteworthy careers in the business sector. As you learn about your local representatives, consider their primary careers.

How did their backgrounds influence their government work?

What special skills do they bring to their public service?

Additional Resources

Learn how (or brush up on how) the three branches of the federal government are organized and the responsibilities and limits of each branch:

<https://www.usa.gov/branches-of-government#item-214495>

Learn how (or brush up on how) state governments work:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/our-government/state-local-government/>

Ballotpedia is a virtual encyclopedia of American politics. Through this site, students can learn about elections and ballot measures across the country:

https://ballotpedia.org/Main_Page

iCivics is a nonpartisan education site containing standards-based curriculum resources for educators as well as video games to educate and create civically engaged students:

bit.ly/iCivics-Home

Helpful guidance in writing (and getting published) a letter to the editor:

<https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/writing-effective-letter-editor>

This civic guide for participation includes actions specific to Los Angeles, but also has some useful general information around civic engagement:

<https://www.la101.guide/participation-101>

Resource regarding youth civic engagement:

<https://youth.gov/youth-topics/civic-engagement-and-volunteering>



DRIVING QUESTION

How do our life experiences, both planned and unexpected, shape our careers?

The average American will hold approximately twelve jobs in their lifetime.¹⁷ Career shifts are often necessitated by family situations, economic challenges, and a personal desire for change. In *Gabby Giffords Won't Back Down*, viewers learn about the varied career paths of Gabby Giffords and Mark Kelly. Both ended up participating in careers they had not originally anticipated. Gabby's stint in the family tire business and Mark's position as an elected politician were both influenced by family responsibilities. By understanding their unique skills, talents, and underlying drive, Gabby and Mark transitioned into new careers repeatedly and successfully.

¹⁷ <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/nlsoy.nr0.htm>

Personal Reflection

1. How might you pivot if your ability to do your job or to pursue your future career was significantly impaired? Or, if this has happened, reflect on how you handled that experience. Consider how skills are transferable from one career to another, adjacent or even unconnected. Imagine yourself trying something very different from your existing career or your preferred future career.
2. Recall your relatives' job paths. Go back as far as you have memory or knowledge. What impacted your family members' job choices? Was it their education level? Their command of the language? Their location or social connections? What insight does this offer into your family history?

Discussion Questions

1. Consider Gabby Giffords and Mark Kelly's career journeys. What stands out to you? What was the motivating factor for each career shift?
2. How did Gabby and Mark use their skill sets to transition to the next opportunity? What were the areas that presented challenges for them and how did they overcome those challenges?
3. How important do you think their attitudes were in approaching obstacles and transitioning to new opportunities?
4. How did Gabby rally when she was ready to give up? What are important supports for when we feel defeated?

Extension Activities

1. Create a family career tree. Interview several people, preferably from different generations, about their career journey. Map out their jobs and ask them what motivated their career shifts. Did they end up having the career they planned for? Can you find veins of similar occupations?
2. Using a career guide like *What Color is Your Parachute?* by Richard N. Bolles, take an inventory of what you are good at and research how you can develop your strengths.
3. Learn about a growth mindset by reading *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol S. Dweck or by watching her TED talk (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0mgOOSp-LU>) with your learning community.

Cross Connection to CIVICS

Are there issues you feel uniquely qualified to discuss or that you are passionate about?

If so, consider reaching out to an elected official or community group to share your insights and offer to help.

Additional Resources

The Bureau of Labor Statistics education portal for researching careers:

<https://www.bls.gov/k12/>

For older students and adults:

<https://hbr.org/2020/08/5-ways-a-crisis-can-help-you-cultivate-a-growth-mindset>

Road Trip Nation, the acclaimed documentary series, follows young people interviewing and exploring various careers and career routes across America:

<https://www.roadtripnation.com/>

Yale's popular free course, The Science of Well-Being, teaches how to make life choices that affect well-being and are in alignment with individual purpose:

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/the-science-of-well-being>



FILM AND IMAGE CREDITS

Film Credits

Directed by **Julie Cohen & Betsy West**
 Produced by **Lisa Erspamer**
 Produced by **Sam Jinishian**
 Editor **Ilya Chaiken**
 Director of Photography **Dyanna Taylor**
 Music by **Miriam Cutler**
 Executive Producers **Amy Entelis & Courtney Sexton**
 Executive Producers **Ian Orefice & Alexandra Johnes**
 Executive Producer **Oren Jacoby**
 Supervising Producer **Alexandra Hannibal**
 Field Producer **Charmaine Lewis**
 Associate Editor **Hilary Crowe**
 Senior Associate Producer **Abby Lieberman**
 Associate Producer **Arielle Swedback**
 Additional Cinematography, Tucson **Sean Lonergan**
 Additional Cinematography, DC **Stefan Wiesen**
 Music Supervisor **Ian Herbert**
 Special Thanks **Peter Ambler & Pia Carusone**

Featuring (in order of appearance)

Gabby Giffords	Claire Kelly
Senator Mark Kelly	Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Dr. Dong Kim	Howard Fischer
Angie Glynn	Stephanie Innes
Ron Barber	Fabi Hirsch
Representative James E. Clyburn	Peter Ambler
President Barack Obama	Senator Chris Murphy
Gloria Giffords	Representative Val Demings
Daniel Hernandez	Sage Sundman
Suzi Hileman	Mark Sundman
Sergeant Charles Garcia	Rabbi Stephanie Aaron
Claudia Kelly	

This Learning Guide for the film
Gabby Giffords Won't Back Down and additional
 free materials for your classroom can be found at
<https://journeysinfilm.org>.

Image Credits

Page 1: Poster

<https://briarcliffentertainment.app.box.com/s/a6djzbgz6i-w5juv7a4m67gfe0i70vsfd>

Page 2: By Jens Schott Knudsen - Candlelight Vigil in Union SquareUploaded by Mono

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=12684206>

Page 4: Photo of Gabby at the *Gabby Giffords Won't Back Down* premiere, provided by Giffords.

Headshot photo of Gabby Giffords, provided by Jack Thompson

Page5: Photo of Gabby with Betsy West and Julie Cohen, directors of *Gabby Giffords Won't Back Down*, provided by Giffords.

Page 7: Photo of Gabby and Mark in the hospital, provided by Briarcliff Entertainment (film still)

<https://briarcliffentertainment.app.box.com/s/oh3p5rbc-jw97jpeunyif6kcydyrdcif3/file/966628093994>

Page 8: Compilation of gun violence statistics

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1999-_Gun-related_deaths_USA.png

Page 10: Gabby Giffords at the Memorial on the National Mall for gun violence victims, provided by Pete Marovich

Page 12: Photo of Gabby riding her recumbent bike, provided by Briarcliff Entertainment

Page 15: Gabby Giffords at the Memorial on the National Mall for gun violence victims, provided by Pete Marovich

Page 16: Gabby Giffords and her husband, Senator Mark Kelly, provided by Storyville Films

Page 18: Gabby at rally for Mark Kelly for Senate, 2019, provided by Briarcliff Entertainment

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PO Box 65357
Albuquerque, NM 87193