

Monica

Not Okay

Facilitator Discussion Guide

EYFP

Synopsis

Monica is back home at the farm and taking care of chores. She is surprised to see Layla, who normally would be at cheerleading practice. Layla reveals that she injured her back during practice and that Shauna gave her some painkillers to help. Monica and Layla argue about Layla's decision to take the pills.

Monica tries to change the subject by asking about Max. Layla said they were not able to find him. Layla also says that she and Shauna were going to visit Shauna's brother that weekend at his apartment. Monica is not happy about Layla's decisions, and she becomes angry when Layla teases her about Cameron.

Monica remembers that she is supposed to talk to the animal shelter director about Cameron's service project idea. She arranges a meeting for the following afternoon and invites Layla to come along to the shelter as well. Layla agrees to come and look for Max at the shelter.

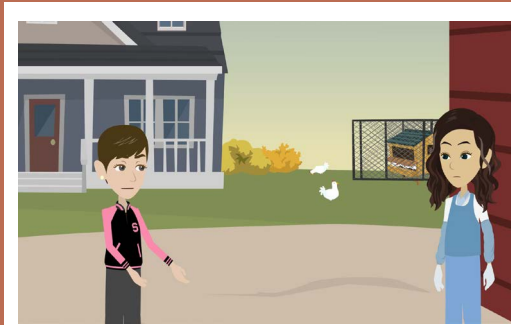
Later that evening, Monica and her grandmother are making dinner. Monica asks her grandmother for a ride to the animal shelter the next day. She admits that she did not ask her father for permission and complains to her grandmother about her father. Her grandmother shares a story about Monica's mother and father and suggests that Monica talk to her father.

Facilitator Notes

This episode aligns with Sessions 4-5 of the *Powerful Families, Powerful Communities* curriculum. The goal of this discussion guide is to help participants reflect on questions of context, behavior, and accountability.

Episode 5 includes conversations that touch on opioid misuse, parental death, family rejection, and racism. These conversations may be upsetting to some participants. Watch for signs of distress and adjust the conversation accordingly.

Layla's character in particular is the target of many false or dangerous assumptions. Until this point, she has come across as the stereotypical "popular mean kid." In Episode 5, Scene 1, we get hints that her character is more complicated than we assumed. She does indeed do "mean kid" things like make fun of Cameron's disability, and she makes extremely dangerous and selfish decisions. She is also a child who grapples with issues that many people face, including pressure to perform, fear of failure, and fear of fitting in. These issues make it more difficult to simply write her character off, yet she still needs to be accountable for her actions and decisions.



Vocabulary Alert!

Layla tells Monica that she worked to be a flyer. In cheerleading, a flyer is the person who is at the top of the pyramid and in the air during stunts. Learn more about cheerleading at usacheer.org/ and watch the 2022 Team USA in action at go.ncsu.edu/youtube.cheer.flyer

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One option to start this discussion is to have youth describe Monica, Layla, their grandmother, and Monica's father in three words. You can return to this list to discuss whether or how their descriptions might have changed after viewing Episode 5.

Opening

Think of a time when you were surprised by something another person says or does. What did you learn about that person at that moment?

As we watch Episode 5, look for a moment where you feel surprised by something a character says or does in the video. We will discuss our ideas after the video ends. (Optional: Write down the timestamp so we can easily find the right place in the video when we share.)

After Watching the Video

After the video, facilitate a discussion with the group. Begin by reminding the group of the expectations set during Session 1.

Round-robin Question

It is important for everyone to contribute to this question as a way to build trust and practice listening. You can choose to go in a circle or let participants "popcorn" respond. An option that doesn't involve speech is to hold up a piece of paper with a timestamp written on it.

In as few words as possible, describe the moment you felt surprised by something a character says or does. Don't tell us yet why you picked that moment, just let us know where it is.

(Optional: Tell us the timestamp of the moment you picked.)

As participants share, replay the clip they describe. (If multiple people picked the same moment, replay it the first time only in the interest of time.)

Comprehension Questions

These are suggested questions. It is not necessary to ask every question in this list. Participants may answer some of the questions before you ask them, or they may bring up their own questions to explore. As a facilitator, your job is to listen far more than you speak. In general, ask a new question only if conversation has hit a dead end and 30 seconds of silent time doesn't break the stalemate, or if you sense the discussion veering into unproductive territory. You may also want to ask follow up questions if a participant makes an interesting point that no one else takes up spontaneously. Finally, if you have some very vocal participants, you may need to occasionally break in to invite quieter participants to speak or to repeat a point that might have gone unheard.

Talking Tips

This discussion may veer into a discussion about risky behaviors, and that is a perfectly fine and reasonable direction for it to go. However, if participants start separating the characters into good/bad, rather than the decisions the characters make, challenge them to explore the characters' reasoning.

Important moments to discuss:

- Layla's "they aren't making me" speech in Scene 1
- Layla's last line in Scene 1
- Grandma's long speech in Scene 2

If participants do not bring up these moments on their own, play the clip and prompt them to consider what assumptions are being made.

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Tell why you selected the moment you did.

- *In Scene 1, Layla says “I can’t miss practice or I’ll lose my spot for the competition and you know how hard I worked to be a flyer this time. Also, I promised Shauna and I can’t let her down.” What effect does this statement have on the viewer?*
- *In Episode 5, Scene 2, Monica’s grandmother says, “It may seem like your dad is being unfair but it is all out of love for you, Monica. You must understand, your father has lost a lot.” Why do you think Monica’s grandmother brings up her father’s past at this moment?*
- *How would you summarize the advice that Monica’s grandmother gives to her?*
- *Monica accuses her grandmother of taking her father’s side, which her grandmother denies. To what extent do you think that Monica’s grandmother actually is giving good advice versus excusing her father’s behaviors? Explain.*

Closing Questions

There are three closing questions. The first question asks participants to apply their ideas to the fictional story shown in the video, while the second question asks them to generalize a relationship. The final question asks them to apply that generalization to their own lives. Participants may spontaneously ask one another the first question or address it through discussion, but be prepared to ask it if they do not. .

“Context” means all the circumstances, conditions, facts, or things around a situation or action. To what extent, if any does knowing more about Layla or Monica’s father change how you interpret their behavior? Explain.

To what extent, if any, should context change how we hold someone accountable for their behavior? Explain.

How can you fairly hold someone accountable for their behavior?