

Discussion Questions

"The Surprising Power of a Super Good Dumpling" by Wai Chim

- How does Anna's mom's mental illness affect her daily life?
- We see Anna meet with her guidance counselor, Miss Kennedy, periodically; she passes judgements on Anna's life and accomplishments from an outsider's perspective, and criticizes Anna for being "mediocre." Why doesn't Anna initially share the truth to others about her home life?
- How does stigma around mental illness make it difficult for people to reach out for mental health help on behalf of their family members?
- Although Anna's home life is shaped by her parents' cultural norms as Chinese immigrants, it is also affected by her mother's mental illness. How does this combination of factors affect Anna's ability to be transparent with others about what is going on at home?
- How does Anna's dad initially react to indications of her mom's deteriorating mental health?
- Anna has a lot of joy and pride in her culture as she connects with others through Chinese cooking. However, how have her parent's positionality as Chinese immigrants affected their attitudes toward mental health and the care it requires?
- How does Anna's mom's trip to the hospital affect the family (both in terms of routines and what they are forced to confront)?
- Why do Anna and Lily feel guilty for experiencing relief upon hearing that their mom was in the hospital?
- Why does Anna value her relationship with Rory, especially as she navigates developments in school and her family life?

Discussion Questions

Continued...

- Rory shares part of his mental health story with Anna; how does his vulnerability affect Anna's views about seeking help and living with mental illness?
- Even after her mom goes to the psychiatric hospital and is getting help, Anna struggles as she has to take care of her family and her mother's condition does not seem to be improving. Rory suggests that Anna journals or talks to someone rather than keeping all of her feelings to herself. How does this act of sharing (through journaling) help Anna navigate the situation?
- As her mental health becomes more stable after returning from the hospital, Anna's mom reflects on how her condition has affected her family.
- As her mental health becomes more stable after returning from the hospital, Anna's mom reflects on how her condition has affected her family; she acknowledges that her behavior (as a result of her mental illness) has hurt Anna and their family, and she promises that she will take care of herself, her mental health, and her family. However, Anna's mom ends up having to go back to the hospital a second time. How does her family react to this?
- Why is it important but necessary to accept that "it's okay not to be okay," especially when dealing with your own mental health or that of a loved one?
- Why is it important but necessary to accept that "it's okay not to be okay," especially when dealing with your own mental health or that of a loved one?
- Is this book (*The Surprising Power of a Good Dumpling*) a good representation of mental health? Why or why not?