

BETTER WORLD PROJECTS
RADICALMEDIA

DIGNITY HEALTH

present

A film by KAHANE COOPERMAN and JOHN HOFFMAN

THE ANTIDOTE

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101 min | 2020 | English | USA

For Press Materials:

[Official Stills & Key Art](#)

www.theantidotemovie.com

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#BeTheAntidote

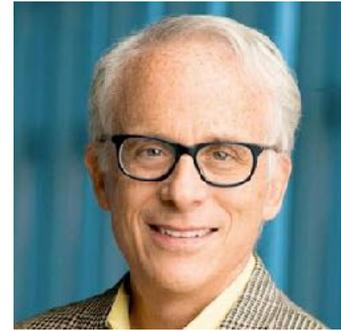
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* * The views expressed in this guide as they pertain to the themes in the film are those of the filmmakers. They do not necessarily reflect the views of collaborating organizations listed in this guide. **

A NOTE FROM THE FILMMAKERS

THE ANTIDOTE aims to drive a national discussion about the role of kindness and decency in a civilized, democratic society. Our journey was guided by the following questions: How do we raise our children? How do we teach our children? How do we live and work together? How do we care for the sick and dying? How do we welcome the stranger? And, finally, how do we lead? We were compelled to better understand the importance of kindness in a world that is also filled with fundamental unkindness such as homelessness, the lack of access to healthcare, not paying people a living wage, racism, sexism and homophobia.



Made in response to the times we are living in, **THE ANTIDOTE** is a feature documentary that weaves together stories of kindness, decency and the power of community in America—a choral essay about people who are making intentional choices to lift others up, despite fundamental unkindnesses that exist in our society. Generational poverty, lack of access to safe, affordable housing and healthcare, discrimination on the basis of race, sex, creed—these issues are at once facts of life in America today and deeply antithetical to our founding ideals. The decline of standards of civility and respect for those who are different or share different values no longer shocks us, even as it threatens the functioning of our civil discourse and democracy. While it's easy to court despair in the face of monumental, structural problems, **THE ANTIDOTE** tells stories of compassionate people intentionally leveraging the resources of their communities to give others a chance at a better life. **THE ANTIDOTE** isn't about an idea or a policy; it is about bringing people into a healthy relation with each other, listening to their wants and desires, respecting their boundaries, and treating them with dignity. It's about who we are. And maybe, who we can be.

In a world where entertainment and social media fueled dopamine are often sought to escape an increasingly traumatic reality, long-form storytelling like this not only has the ability to break through the noise, but more importantly, to build our collective immunity and fuel the creation of a more just world. We will only inspire positivity and expand minds when we ensure that everyone has a seat in the theater or room on the couch to experience **THE ANTIDOTE**'s chorus of stories together. This is a film that begs to be shared, to be discussed and to catalyze deeper thinking as well as a rapid response.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

THE ANTIDOTE is a film that is best experienced communally. Our goal for this guide is to foster civil and supportive dialogue that brings diverse groups of people into healthy relationships with each other, regardless of differences.

This guide has been designed to help you reflect on **THE ANTIDOTE** as a screening host, and perhaps most importantly, to help you guide viewers through a range of thoughts, emotions and reactions that are all part of the viewing experience. It contains information about the essential themes, questions to consider, as well as resources that may be useful after viewing.

We recommend you watch **THE ANTIDOTE** first before reviewing this guide. You will access authentic reactions to the film, then can refer to the guide to help you learn more as you process those thoughts and feelings along with your fellow viewers.



FILM OVERVIEW

The divisions in the United States are what drive headlines and political discourse. But kindness – as a serious response, a vital counterbalance, and a fierce tool to make things better – is instrumental to American life. The country is filled with a constellation of everyday citizens who are going beyond small gestures - or what's often called "random acts of kindness" - and performing intentional, willful, and sometimes large-scale efforts to improve the lives of others.

In fact, the bygone era of unity and hopefulness that politicians often evoke is actually put into action every day, made stronger by the connections different communities find. Searching for examples of that hopefulness was the mission that filmmakers Kahane Cooperman and John Hoffman set for themselves in *THE ANTIDOTE*. They find many, including a Congolese refugee family welcomed by the people of Anchorage, Alaska; a California teacher whose World Religions class fosters kindness towards and respect for others; a single mom in Texas who receives emotional and financial help from her community college so that she can continue her education; a medical clinic that restores respect and provides health care to the homeless population in Boston; In upstate New York, a center that serves differently-abled people who become a vibrant part of their small town; a subsidized housing center in Portland, Oregon that blends the needs of seniors and foster families; a professor of Christian Ethics in Georgia who renounced his anti-LGBTQ+ views and is building an inclusive community in his Baptist church; an Indianapolis community organizer who lives up to his job title of "Roving Listener."



KEY THEMES & MESSAGING

Watching the film can be helpful to promote discussion on a variety of topics. It's important to recognize that, while those who promote unkindness may be louder in volume and more present in the media, there are countless Americans, both individuals and part of organizations, that not only deliberately and intentionally practice kindness, they also celebrate their fellow community members, who like them, aim to lift others up... rather than dragging them down.

Talking about the unkindness that exists in society, like lack of access to healthcare or housing, and its effects on individuals and families isn't easy, but we must talk about them to create change.

The most important thing is to enable people to talk about the ways the film relates to their own lives and beliefs, and to support them in their efforts to tell their own stories and to articulate their thoughts and feelings.

- Kindness vs Unkindness
- Mental health
- Intergenerational connections
- Children
- Education
- Social Emotional Learning
- Poverty
- Immigration
- Healthcare
- Food Access
- Racism
- Familial relationships
- Fostercare
- Community
- Neighbors
- Dignity
- Acceptance versus judgment
- Hope versus despair
- Emotional, social, physical and psychological impacts of homelessness, poverty and neglect
- Homophobia
- Equity in our society

FACTS ABOUT KINDNESS AND COMMUNITY

More Americans report feeling anxious, depressed and concerned about the future of the country and the fractious nature of our politics than at any prior point in history.

Surveys from Centers for Disease Control and the American Psychological Association show consistent increases in our overall anxiety and sadness. Emotions are contagious and just as you can spread fear so, too, can you spread hope and empathy. You cannot be what you cannot see, so showing people stories of folks just like them, working intentionally to lift up others, will inspire similar behavior.



Kindness helps us to feel more satisfied with life and less stressed. On a biochemical level, it is believed that the good feeling we get is due to elevated levels of the brain's natural pleasure chemicals, including, endogenous opioids. They cause elevated levels of dopamine in the brain and so we get a natural high, often referred to as 'Helper's High'. This is the feeling we want to promote over fear and anxiety. In a study published in *Clinical Psychological Science*, researchers found that there is a natural way to help relieve the impact of stress on health, and that is through helping others.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

THE ANTIDOTE was born from the filmmakers John and Kahane's exploration and ultimately beautiful cinematic journey across the United States in pursuit of the answers to six guiding questions:

1. How do we raise our children?
2. How do we teach our children?
3. How do we live and work together?
4. How do we care for the sick and dying?
5. How do we welcome the stranger?
6. How do we lead?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In addition to the discussion questions below, we encourage you to explore these same six questions and the key themes that guided the film's creation to spark conversation about who we are as Americans.

- What observations do you have about the questions that the filmmakers used to create their vision for the film?
- Which emotion did you experience the most while watching THE ANTIDOTE?
- Which story do you find the most relatable? Share your shared experience.
- Which story would you be most interested in continuing to follow?
- What challenges did the film open your eyes to?
- Where did you see examples of leadership in the film?
- What questions do you have after watching the film?
- What are your biggest takeaways from the film?
- How would you define kindness?
- What are some experiences that you have had with “neighbors?”
- How do your experiences impact how you think about community?
- What benefits do you think come from building an inclusive community?
- Have you ever changed your mind about a controversial issue? What changed your viewpoint?
- How can we encourage open-mindedness and have respectful conversations in a time where people feel strongly rooted in their opinions?
- What is one thing you will do to support the film’s mission of bringing people into a healthy relation with each other, listening to their wants and desires, respecting their boundaries, and treating them with dignity?

DIVING DEEPER INTO EACH STORY OF KINDNESS



Anchorage, AK - A Congolese Refugee's Story

Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services, Anchorage resettles refugees from all over the world, and helps them feel at home in a completely new environment. Beyond welcoming the stranger, resettlement means teaching basic skills, showing opportunities to share their culture, helping secure jobs, and navigate the intricacies of life in America.

- How do you think Phoibe, the 103 year-old grandma, felt relocating from Congo and Rwanda to Alaska?
- What can we take away from how the community in Anchorage responds to refugees?



Modesto, CA - World Religions Class

Modesto City Schools is the only school district in the country to require a class on how to respectfully engage with different religions, cultures, and beliefs, in order to graduate.

- How were the students at Peter Johansen Public High School impacted by the World Religions class? What are the pros and cons surrounding making such a course mandatory?
- What can we take away from Sherry McIntyre's teaching strategy?



Amarillo, TX - Amarillo College

Amarillo College has made it their mission to surround students with a Culture of Caring, bringing staff, teachers, and social workers together to create an unparalleled social safety net for their students.

- How does the faculty and staff approach challenges the students at Amarillo College face? What can we take away from their approach to failure?
- In the film, the president of Amarillo College says he used to think it was everyone else's responsibility to deal with the life barriers his students face, but he realized it was actually his own college's responsibility. Do you feel we are all responsible for each other?
- What are some ways that your organization can invest in others to overcome short-term barriers and help them become independent in the long-term?



Boston, MA - Health Challenges

Boston Healthcare for the Homeless Program aims to provide high-quality healthcare to the local homeless population. The program strives to cultivate long-term relationships and more comprehensive care for this often invisible population.

- How has COVID-19 exacerbated the challenges faced by medical providers who serve the homeless community?



Portland, OR - Foster Families

Bridge Meadows is an intergenerational community where elderly people and youth in foster care and their adoptive families live and thrive together as a result of the deep relationships they form with one another.

- Describe a time you felt motivated by your sense of purpose. How can your organization or your current role help to give others a sense of purpose?
- This idea is a simple one, yet addresses the complex needs of two vulnerable populations. Can you think of other ideas that may be mutually beneficial to different groups?



Indianapolis, IN - Building Neighborhood Connections

A community organizer achieves meaningful change by bringing out the gifts and talents of his neighbors at **The Biker Boyz and Girlz Bike Shop of The Learning Tree**, a community bike shop in this overlooked, misunderstood, mostly Black part of town.

- What are some positive experiences that you have had with your neighbors? How do your experiences impact how you build community?
- What can we learn from sharing our vulnerabilities? What can we learn from listening to the stories of others?
- DeAmon, the community organizer, learned to ask his neighbors what they can give instead of what they need. What is the difference and why is it important?

Monticello, NY - The Center for Discovery



The Center for Discovery, in Sullivan County, New York, provides exceptional care to both children and adults with the most medically complex disabilities. Through a nature-based education program, their teaching highlights the ability and potential of each child and adult, integrating them into the local town to create a beautiful model of inclusion.

- What benefits come from building an inclusive community?
- What are some of your organization's strengths surrounding inclusion? What can you improve?

Decatur, GA - David Gushee



In Decatur, GA, a once-traditional Southern Baptist church has paved a path towards inclusiveness for all its congregants, including the LGBTQ+ community. A Sunday bible study class led by David Gushee, an influential Christian ethicist, is the driving force behind this church's major steps towards acceptance.

- Have you ever changed your mind about a controversial issue? What changed your viewpoint?
- How can we encourage open-mindedness and have respectful conversations in a time where people feel strongly rooted in their opinions?

HOW YOU COMMIT TO INTENTIONAL KINDNESS AND BE A CHAMPION OF OTHERS

Share your own stories of kindness with **#BeTheAntidote**. We'd love to hear how you've either personally impacted the livelihood of others.

With new inspiration from the many selfless folks in **THE ANTIDOTE**, make a list of how you can act more intentionally kind in your everyday life.

We have included a "Get Involved" page on our website www.theantidotemovie.com with the following resources for our audience to take action:

- Support the wonderful organizations and important missions featured in the film
- Find opportunities to support local organizations on the [VolunteerMatch Virtual Volunteer Hub](#)
- Support our sponsor organizations, who without this film would not be possible
- Check your [voter registration](#). Save the date for important deadlines. Ensure kindness is a priority in our country's leadership.

Some of the links above take you to third-party resources and information related to the film's themes. By offering these links, we are not affirmatively endorsing, nor recommending these third-party providers. We are not responsible for, and cannot attest to the accuracy of, any third-party information or content.



SOURCES

(SEE "FACTS ABOUT KINDNESS AND COMMUNITY")

1. <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2020/10/election-stress>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/pulse/mental-health.htm>
3. <https://www.dartmouth.edu/wellness/emotional/rakhealthfacts.pdf>
4. <https://www.aifc.com.au/positive-kindness-mental-health/>
5. <https://www.cedars-sinai.org/blog/science-of-kindness.html>