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**Educator Resources**

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# **Discussion Questions and Topics**

**An Episode Guide**



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[www.nyc.gov/WeSpeakNYC](http://www.nyc.gov/WeSpeakNYC)

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This guidebook was created as a resource for facilitators leading **We Speak NYC (WSNYC)** community Conversation Classes for mid- and upper-level English language learners in New York City. WSNYC is a program developed and administered by the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs that partners with community-based organizations and The City University of New York (CUNY) to bring free ESOL materials and Conversation Classes to immigrant New Yorkers. All materials are available on the WSNYC website—[www.nyc.gov/WeSpeakNYC](http://www.nyc.gov/WeSpeakNYC)—as a resource for educators interested in incorporating the WSNYC series and accompanying materials into their classrooms.

## Episode-Specific Discussion

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# Discussion Questions and Topics

## An Episode Guide

### Introduction

This guidebook has discussion questions specific to the topic of each We Speak NYC (WSNYC) episode. There are *Before-You-Watch* questions and *After-You-Watch* questions. The purpose of the *Before-You-Watch* questions is to connect the topic of the episode to the lives of your students—to activate their prior knowledge, experience, and thinking about the episode topic and to open the door to learning and discovery.

The *After-You-Watch* questions refer specifically to the characters and plot of the episodes. They go deeper into exploration of their topics and strategies for managing the real-life issues presented in the episodes.

Use or adapt the discussion topics and questions in this guide as appropriate to the level of your class.

**Please visit the About page of the WSNYC website for information about the WSNYC Program and Conversation Classes near you:**

[wespeaknyc.cityofnewyork.us/about/](https://wespeaknyc.cityofnewyork.us/about/)

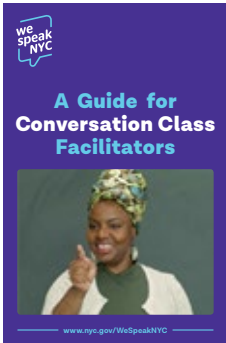
If you would like to join the program as a volunteer facilitator, you can sign up through the **Sign-up** link. On the Sign-up page, you can also get information about how your organization can partner with the New York City Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs to host a WSNYC Conversation Class.

# Additional WSNYC Educator Resources

The following resources are available in the [Teacher Resources](#) section of the WSNYC website.

## Facilitator Guide

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The **WSNYC Facilitator Guide** contains an introduction to the goals and methods of the WSNYC Program, tips for facilitators, and pre- and post-watching activities for discussion about the WSNYC series. The Facilitator Guide can be adapted for use by all teachers incorporating the WSNYC series into their instruction.

## Actions You Can Take

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**Actions You Can Take** is a resource that serves as a companion to **Discussion Questions and Topics: An Episode Guide**. It contains specific actions that students can take to manage situations relevant to the topic of each episode, with links to City services and community resources.

## Study Guides

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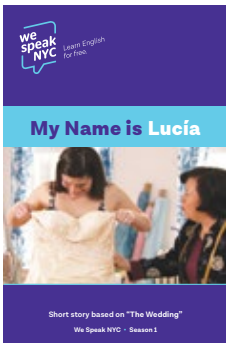
The **WSNYC Study Guides** are student workbooks that reinforce language skills and content learning from the episodes. There is a Study Guide for each episode. Each Study Guide begins with a 10-12 page storyboard with pictures and dialogue from the episode, followed by content- and language-rich exercises for self-study.

## The Languages We Speak: A Teacher Handbook



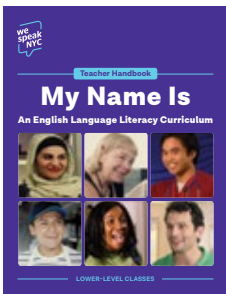
**The Languages We Speak** is a teacher handbook with classroom activities for using the WSNYC Study Guides for interactive practice in the ESOL classroom. It also contains an introduction to pedagogical principals and methods used in the WSNYC Program.

## My Name Is: Short Stories



On the WSNYC website, there is a series of short stories for low-level learners called **My Name Is** that tell the plot of the episode from the point of view of one of the supporting characters. There is also a curriculum for teaching English language literacy skills that accompanies the series.

## My Name Is: An English Language Literacy Curriculum



This is a curriculum for teaching the English language literacy skills that low-level learners need to read the **My Name Is** series of short stories. It contains lesson plans and handouts for each **My Name Is** short story.

You can find more resources in [Teacher Resources](#) on the WSNYC website.

# Guidelines for WSNYC Discussions

WSNYC episodes deal with real-life problems and solutions. Please keep in mind the following guidelines for discussions in WSNYC Conversation Classes organized by the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs:

- When issues and questions about services come up in discussion, refer to the episode and ask what the characters do to solve problems. Ask what a particular character says or does to deal with issues you're discussing.
- Your class discussions may involve asking the students to talk about their own experiences. Make sure students know that they do not need to share any personal information that makes them uncomfortable.
- Some of the topics in the episodes may be sensitive for students. Prior to each WSNYC Conversation Class, share with the Site Coordinator the topic and services that will be covered in the upcoming episode. Ask the Site Coordinator whether there will be a social worker and/or legal service provider available before or after class that the students can contact to ask more detailed questions.
- The week prior to showing *Respond to Domestic Violence* and *Rafaela's Test*, let students know about the topic that the class will discuss in the next session. Tell them that together as a class they will be talking about how the characters in the episode respond to the situations in the episode, and about the City services available to support all New Yorkers. Remind the Site Coordinator about the upcoming episode topic and ask about any additional resources the site may have available for community members dealing with domestic violence or mental health challenges. Contact the WSNYC Team with any additional questions.



- Remember, you are not expected to be an expert on any of the topics or City services that are related to an episode. As a volunteer facilitator, you are there to help facilitate conversation and English language learning. Some people in your class may expect you to have technical knowledge or to be an authority on a topic. Let them know that you are not an expert but that they can go online or contact 311 to learn more about the City services available to them.
- Do not give information that you're not sure about. Remind people to call 311, and that 311 has interpreters in their language.
- If you have additional questions about City services or how to handle difficult situations, contact the WSNYC Program Team. They are there to help guide and support you.
- See **Actions You Can Take** for a list of actions students can take to manage situations relevant to the topic of each episode, with links to City services and community resources.

# Discussion Questions and Topics

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## ***Before You Watch*** **Discussion Questions**

1. How many of you are parents or take care of children?
2. How many of you have children in school?
3. What can you do to help your children in school?
4. When can you visit your child's school? (before school? after school? other times?)
5. What is a parent-teacher conference?
6. Do you go to parent-teacher conferences (meetings)? What can you tell us about them?
7. What can you do to prepare (to get ready) for a parent-teacher conference?
8. What questions do you have about helping children in school?  
With the person next to you, say or write 1 or 2 questions.

**Let's watch *Welcome Parents*. Let's meet the parents in the episode and see what they do to help their children in school.**

# After You Watch

## Discussion Questions

### Getting Involved in the Education of Your Children

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Carmen and Fatima want to be prepared for the parent-teacher conferences. They think it's their responsibility to help their children in school. At first, their husbands resist getting involved. They feel that it is the job of teachers to help their children.

- What do you think is the responsibility of parents in their children's educations? What actions do Carmen and Fatima take to get involved? How do they show leadership in their communities and at home? What actions can parents take to get involved with their children's education?

### Questions for Parent-Teacher Conferences

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Carmen, Fatima and other parents make a list of questions to ask the teachers.

- What do you think are good questions for a parent to ask a teacher? Make a list of questions.

### Practicing Your Lines

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In the beginning, Juan resists taking action to prepare for the parent-teacher conferences, but he advises Carmen to think of questions to ask and to practice asking them.

- How does "practicing your lines" help prepare you for real-life situations? Have you ever rehearsed questions or words you would like to say to somebody? For a job interview? For speaking with a doctor? For talking to a teacher? For asking someone to go on a date? For getting a service at a library or store? When is the next time you want to practice your lines? What lines will you say?

## ***Before You Watch*** **Discussion Questions**

1. How many people here have children in high school? Who knows anyone with children in high school? Did anyone here go to high school in New York?
2. What can you tell us about high school in New York?
3. What do you think is difficult for immigrant students in high school in New York?
4. What can a student do to succeed in school?
5. What can parents and family members do to help?
6. What can teachers and guidance counselors do to help?
7. What questions do you have about high school in New York City?  
With the person next to you, say or write 1 or 2 questions.

**Let's watch *Stay in School* and see  
what we learn about "staying in school."**

# After You Watch

## Discussion Questions

### Talking and Listening

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When Uncle Juan finds out that his nephew Diego is not going to school, he is very upset. Aunt Carmen tells him that when Diego comes home, they will talk with him and listen to him. Talking with and listening to Diego was the first step in helping him.

- Do you think most parents know what is going on in their children's lives at school? Why is good communication important? What are the obstacles to good communication? How can parents and children overcome these obstacles?

### Helping Someone to Graduate

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After talking and listening to Diego, he decides that he wants to stay in school. Uncle Juan and Aunt Carmen work with him to find out how he can get the help he needs.

- What specific actions do they take? What are the challenges in taking these actions? What programs do you know that could help someone like Diego? How can you find out about other programs?

### Peer Groups

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Diego learns that there are free after-school classes for students who need help. He also joins a peer group—a group of students who have similar situations.

- What do think are the benefits of a peer group? What kinds of peer groups have you heard of? Have you ever been part of a peer group? What was the experience like?

### Your Immigrant Story

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In Diego's peer group, he talks about arriving in New York. It was not what he expected and it wasn't easy for him.

- What was your experience when you first arrived? How has your life changed here over time? What obstacles did you face and how did you overcome them? What challenges are you facing now? What actions can you take to overcome these challenges?

## ***Before You Watch*** **Discussion Questions**

1. The name of the episode is *Love and Money*. Let's talk for a moment about money first. Where do people usually keep their money?
2. If you get checks from work, where do you cash them?
3. What do you think about banks? What are your experiences with banks in New York City?
4. What questions do you need to ask at a bank to get good service? With the person next to you, say or write 1 or 2 questions.
5. Let's talk about dating for a moment. Where do you think are some good places to go on a date in New York City?
6. On a first date, what do you think are good topics to talk about? In your opinion, what are some topics to avoid—to not talk about?
7. On a date, who do you think should pay—the man, the woman, the older person, the younger person?
8. Do you need to spend a lot of money to impress someone (to make them like you)? Why or why not?

**Let's watch *Love and Money* and see  
what we learn about these two essential topics.**

## ***After You Watch*** **Discussion Questions**

### **Dealing with Complications**

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Jorge says to Abdul, “Banks are so complicated.”

- Do you feel the same way? What questions do you have about banks? What does a person need to open an account at a bank? How do you choose a bank? How do Abdul and the cook, Sue, help Jorge? How does the nail salon manager, Rose, help Sophie? How do you manage complicated situations?

### **Credit Cards**

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Credit cards can be useful but can also be costly. Sue tells Jorge that he can get in a lot of trouble with a credit card.

- What do you think about credit cards?

### **Impressing Someone**

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Jorge tries to impress Sophie by making her think that he has a lot of money. Sophie assumes that Jorge is rich because he takes her to a fancy restaurant. She pretends to have a lot of money too.

- Do you think it is important to impress somebody on a date? If yes, why? Later in the story, Sue tells Jorge that Sophie will love him for who he is. What do you think she means? Do you agree with her? Why or why not?

## ***Before You Watch*** **Discussion Questions**

1. What do you know about diabetes?
2. What questions do you have about diabetes? With a partner, say or write a couple of questions, and then share them with the group.
3. Let's talk for a moment about going to the doctor. How many of you go for regular check-ups?
4. What does a doctor do in a check-up?
5. What can you say when you can't understand the doctor?
6. What can you do if you don't have health insurance?
7. Let's change the topic and talk about dreams (hopes, big things you want to do) for a moment. In *New Life Café*, the main character's dream is to open a café. What are your dreams?
8. Is it easy to make your dream come true? What do you do when things get difficult? Are you the kind of person who says, "***can't** do it!*" Or do you say, "***can** do it!*"?

**Let's watch *New Life Café* and find out what the title means, and what is it all about.**

## ***After You Watch***

### **Discussion Questions**

Health care may be a sensitive topic. Talk about what the characters do to manage their health care. Ask what the characters learn from their experiences. Let people know that they do not need to share any personal information that they do not want to share.

#### **Check-ups**

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Rosa goes to a doctor for a check-up and finds out that she has a serious health condition.

- What do you think about getting regular check-ups? Why should everyone get them? What do you need to do in order to get a check-up?

#### **Coming to Terms with Health Conditions**

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Rosa finds out that she has to make changes in her lifestyle in order to manage her health. At first, she resists making changes.

- Why do you think she resists? How does she overcome her resistance? Who helps her? How do they help? What do you learn from Rosa's experience?

#### **Your Right to Health Care**

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The receptionist tells Rosa that she doesn't need a social security card to see a doctor. There is another person in the waiting room who tells her that he doesn't have immigration papers. The receptionist tells him that he doesn't need papers, and can get an interpreter for free.

- What fears do some people have about getting health care? Do all immigrants in New York City have the right to health care? Where can you learn more about your rights to health care in New York City and services available to you?



## Affordable Health Care

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Rosa doesn't have health insurance. She asks the receptionist if there is a program to help her pay.

- How can you get free or low-cost health insurance in New York?

## Taking Charge When You Don't Understand

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The first time Rosa sees the doctor, she has difficulty understanding him. The second time, she takes charge by asking the doctor to speak slowly.

- What do you think about Rosa's action? What does she tell the doctor? What can you do to make sure you understand someone?

## Taking Notes

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Eddie takes notes when the doctor is explaining to Rosa how to manage her diabetes.

- What are the benefits of taking notes in a conversation? What are the difficulties in taking notes? What can you do to take good notes?

## ***Before You Watch*** **Discussion Questions**

1. Do you know anyone who has asthma?
2. What do you know about asthma?
3. What questions do you have about asthma? With the person next to you, say or write 1 or 2 questions.
4. In the story, a character named Mario is poor. He doesn't have health insurance. What do you think he can do?
5. Mario has other problems too—love problems. His girlfriend left him and he's very sad. What are your suggestions for Mario?
6. One more question: The title of the episode is *Asthma: The Soap Opera*. We talked a little about asthma, but what's a soap opera? Soap + opera... What do you think?

**Let's watch *Asthma: The Soap Opera*.  
Let's find out what a soap opera is, and see what Mario does!**

## ***After You Watch***

### **Discussion Questions**

#### **The Experts**

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Mario interviews people who have asthma—“experts”—to learn about the illness.

- What makes them experts? What can they tell Mario that a doctor might not be able to tell him? What can a doctor tell Mario that a person with an illness might not know?

#### **Affordable Health Care**

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Mario is poor but he learns that he can take his son to a doctor.

- How can you get free or low-cost health insurance in New York City? Who can help you choose the right program?

#### **Managing an Illness**

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The doctor tells Mario that he needs to manage his son’s illness. Mario looks confused by the word “manage.”

- What does it mean “to manage an illness”? What do you need to know? How do you manage an illness?

#### **Mario’s Complicated Life**

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Angela leaves Mario because her father doesn’t accept him. Then, Mario’s ex-girlfriend Maria comes back. Maria helps Mario find a doctor, but she doesn’t stay with Mario because he is still in love with Angela. Also, the doctor falls in love with Maria. In the end, Angela returns to Mario because her father hears that he is a good man.

- What do you think about Mario? What do you think about Angela? What do you think about Maria?

## ***Before You Watch*** **Discussion Questions**

1. Has anyone here ever quit or tried to quit smoking?
2. What was it like?
3. How did you do it?
4. Who helped you? What did your friends do? What did your family do?
5. Did you get help from anyone else? Who?
6. What questions do you have about quitting cigarettes? With the person next to you, say or write 1 or 2 questions.
7. What is the most difficult thing you have ever done in your life? How did you manage it?
8. Last questions: Did you ever do anything in your life that made you feel like a champion? What was it? How did it feel?

**Let's watch *No Smoking* and meet another champion.**

## ***After You Watch*** **Discussion Questions**

### **Resistance and Change**

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Sasha is a champion swimmer. He is also a champion resister! First, he resists seeing a doctor. Then, he resists the doctor's advice. After that, he resists his friend Rishi's help. In the end, he accepts the need to change.

- Have you ever resisted doing something that you needed to do? What was the experience and what made you change?

### **Friendship**

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Rishi is Sasha's friend. He doesn't give up trying to help him.

- What motivates Rishi? Have you ever supported someone like Rishi supports Sasha? What do you learn from Rishi's experience?

### **The Hero**

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- Who do you think the hero of the story is? Do you think there is more than one hero? How are they heroes? Who are some heroes in your life? In what ways are you a hero?

## ***Before You Watch*** **Discussion Questions**

1. Is anybody here married? Anybody else?
2. Do you remember your wedding day? What was it like? Did everything go smoothly (easily)? Were there any problems?
3. What do you need to do to prepare (to get ready) for a wedding? What kinds of workers do you need? What other jobs are needed?
4. What information do you tell people who are coming to a wedding? What else?
5. Let's talk for a moment about directions. Do you think that finding an address is easy in New York? Why or why not?
6. Have you ever gotten lost in New York or anywhere else? What did you do when you got lost? What did you say?

**The title of the episode is *The Wedding*.  
We are all invited. The problem is, it might  
not happen, and we might get lost on the way!  
Let's watch *The Wedding* and see what happens.**

## ***After You Watch***

### **Discussion Questions**

#### **Your Big Break**

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Uncle Sasha gives a wedding photography job to his niece, Tanya. He tells her that this is her big break—her big opportunity. The band gets a big break to play at the same wedding. Ahmad also gets a big break. He is going to be the head waiter at the wedding.

- Have you ever gotten a big break? What happened? When and where was it? How did you benefit from it?

#### **Immigrant City**

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At the end of the episode, the wedding coordinator, Mr. Joseph, says that without immigrants, there would be no New York City.

- What do you think he means? What economic contributions do immigrants make to New York City? What cultural contributions do immigrants make to New York City? What other contributions do immigrants make to New York City and the country as a whole?

#### **American Time**

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The bandleader tells his bandmates to be on time. He calls it “American time.”

- Is there such a thing as American time? Is the attitude toward time different from the country you grew up in? If so, how is it different?

#### **Lost and Found in New York City**

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The band gets lost on the way to the wedding.

- Why do they get lost and how do they find their way? Mohammad gets lost on his way to his cousin’s food cart. How does he get there? Probably everyone has had the experience of getting lost in New York. Talk about a time when you got lost and found your way in New York City. What did you learn from the experience?

## ***Before You Watch*** **Discussion Questions**

The week prior to showing *Respond to Domestic Violence* let students know about the topic that the class will discuss in that class. Tell them that together as a class they will be talking about how the characters in the episode respond to the situations in the episode, and about the City services available to support all New Yorkers. Remind the Site Coordinator about the upcoming episode topic and ask about any additional resources the site may have available for community members dealing with domestic violence. Contact the WSNYC Team with any additional questions.

1. In this episode, you will meet a group of actors in a theater. They are rehearsing—practicing their lines. Have you ever acted in a play or film or something else? What was it? What role did you play? Did you practice your lines?
2. Have you ever practiced your lines for something in real life—for example, before saying something important to somebody? What was the situation? What lines did you practice?
3. What about practicing lines in English. Do you ever practice saying things in English (outside of class) before using the words in real life? When do you practice? Where do you practice?
4. In the episode, the actors are practicing their lines in a play about domestic violence. It's a serious subject. In the play, one of the characters doesn't have immigration papers, and she is abused. What do you think she can do? Who do you think can help her?
5. Where can somebody get information about services for victims of domestic violence?

**Let's watch *Respond to Domestic Violence* and see what we learn about this important subject.**



## ***After You Watch***

### **Discussion Questions**

Domestic violence is a difficult subject. It can be helpful to talk about what the characters learn in the story. This steers the discussion to the characters in the episode and not the students. At the same time, it helps people to share their feelings and learn from the episode.

#### **What the Characters Learn: Grandpa**

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- What does Grandpa learn about his grandson? What does Grandpa learn about his daughter-in-law? What does Grandpa learn about his son? What does he do to respond to domestic violence? What do you think about his actions?

#### **What the Characters Learn: Billy's Mom**

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- What does Billy's Mom learn about getting help? Who helps her? How do they help her? What do you think she should do?

#### **What the Characters Learn: Billy's Aunt**

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- What does Billy's aunt think when Grandpa (her father) tells her that Billy was beating his bear? What does she think that Grandpa should do or not do? Does she change her mind? How and why? What do you think about her actions? Why does the aunt tell the policewoman that she and Billy's Mom have a friend who is a victim of domestic violence? Why do you think they say "friend"?

#### **What the Characters Learn: Policewoman**

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- What does the policewoman tell Billy's Mom about her rights? What advice does she give Billy's Mom? Why does the actor who plays the policewoman, Renata, start to cry after the rehearsal of the police office scene?

There may be people in the class who are or who have been victims of domestic violence, or who know victims. Let the students know that there are experts to talk to and who have good information to help. Refer students to **311** and the Domestic Violence Hotline: **1-800-621-4673** or to [www.nyc.gov/domesticviolence](http://www.nyc.gov/domesticviolence).

## ***Before You Watch*** **Discussion Questions**

1. The title of the episode is *The Hospital*. What is a hospital? What is a purpose of a hospital?
2. What are the jobs in a hospital?
3. What does a nurse do to help a patient get better? What else does a nurse do?
4. When is teamwork—working together—important? What jobs require a lot of teamwork?
5. What about the working environment? Do you think it is important for the workplace to look good?
6. What can you do to make your home or your workplace look beautiful?
7. Does anyone here make art? Who likes to draw? To paint? To take pictures with a camera?
8. What else do you like to do in your free time?

**Let's watch the show and see what happens in *The Hospital*.**

## After You Watch

### Discussion Questions

#### The Power of Caring

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The nurse, Alisha, wants to find a way to help a patient who is feeling sad after her accident.

- How does Alisha do it? Can Alisha’s caring attitude be applied in any profession? How?

#### The Power of Art

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Mrs. Medina says, *“The most beautiful picture is not on the wall in this art show. It’s the picture I have in my heart of the wonderful people who work in this hospital. There is beauty in the hands of these workers and in the goodness of their hearts.”*

- What do you think she means? Do you agree with her? Why or why not? Do you think art has the power to heal?

#### The Power of Community

---

The workers organize an art show in a hospital. Together, they convince the reluctant Dr. Collins to approve the project. Together, they put on a successful art show. Their actions demonstrate (show) the power of community.

- What is the power of community? What are the challenges to working together as a group? How do people working together overcome these challenges?

#### The Artist in Everyone

---

Dr. Collins asks Halina, the food service worker, *“Do you know any artists?”* She answers, *“Yes, we know a few.”* Actually, many of the workers have artistic talents. Halina takes beautiful and interesting photographs. Clayton does “mop art.” Another staff member makes costumes for the West Indian parade.

- Do think that anybody can be an artist? What artistic abilities do you have?

## ***Before You Watch*** **Discussion Questions**

1. Do you like to be prepared for things? For example, before you go to shopping, do you make a list?
2. When is preparation very important? What activities or events in life do you think it is important to prepare for? How do you prepare for them?
3. What about emergencies, for example, earthquakes and hurricanes?
4. Have you ever experienced an emergency? Were you prepared? What did you do to be prepared? What did you learn from the experience?
5. What do you need to do in order to be prepared for an emergency?

**Let's watch *The Storm* and see what happens to a family when a big storm hits town.**

## After You Watch

### Discussion Questions

#### Being Prepared

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- Do you consider yourself prepared for an emergency? How can you be more prepared? What are the most important things you learned from the episode?

#### Difficult Choices

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Aku left her cell phone at home and everyone is worried about her. Kojo makes the decision to go out to find her. He and Alberto put themselves in danger, but they do not find Aku.

- Do you think it was necessary for them to go out to look for Aku? How can you avoid this dangerous situation?

#### Responding to Alerts

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After the storm alert, Alberto says, *“Oh, don’t worry... They always make these things look worse than they really are.”*

- What do you think Alberto learned from the experience of the storm?

#### Good Neighbors

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Ms. Chen takes a leadership role in her building.

- How does she do it? What leadership qualities does she have? What leadership qualities do you have?

#### Picnics

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- What do you take when you go on a picnic? How do you prepare? What do you think makes a great picnic? What is your favorite spot for a picnic in New York City?

#### The Same Boat

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- What does Kojo mean when he says, “We are all in the same boat.”? Do you agree with him? In what ways are we all “in the same boat”?

# Discussion Questions and Topics

## SEASON 2

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## ***Before You Watch*** **Discussion Questions**

1. Before we watch the episode, let's talk about work for a moment and the start of our working lives. What was your first job?
2. Was it a part-time job? Was it a full-time job?
3. How old were you when you got your first job? Were you a student at the time?
4. Why did you get the job?
5. How did you get the job?
6. What did you learn from the experience?
7. What about non-paying work such as volunteering in the community? Have you ever done it? What was your experience?
8. Why did you volunteer? What did you learn from the experience?
9. One last question: the title of the episode is *Shumi's Pantry*. What do you think that may mean?

**Let's watch *Shumi's Pantry*. Let's find out what the title means, and see what Shumi learns from her experience.**



## After You Watch

### Discussion Questions

#### Customer Service: When and How to Advise Customers

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Shumi wants to help people eat well. However, she gets into trouble when she gives customers advice about food purchases.

- When do you think it is appropriate to give advice to customers? How could Shumi do it in a more appropriate way? What words and phrases are useful for giving suggestions?

#### Food Help Programs and Concerns about Eligibility and Access

---

Shumi learns about the food program SNAP and about food pantries. Food pantries are for anyone who needs food right away. You don't need to apply to get food at a food pantry. You need to apply for SNAP and there are some eligibility requirements.

- In the episode, Shumi's mother is reluctant to apply for SNAP. Why do you think she is reluctant? What do you think she should do?

If students ask about eligibility requirements for SNAP or other social services, refer them to the website [access.nyc.gov](https://www.access.nyc.gov). If the organization where the class is held has a social worker or legal service provider, suggest that the students speak with them to learn about eligibility for Federal benefits such as SNAP. They can also ask about other programs that may be available to them.

### Volunteering

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Shumi volunteers at a food pantry. Volunteerism is a feature of American culture. Our Conversation Class is led by volunteers!

- Why do you think people volunteer? What are the benefits of volunteering? Have you ever volunteered—here in New York or in your country of origin? If you would like to volunteer, what kind of volunteering would you do? Why?

### Education: Goals and Opportunities

---

Gabriela goes to free ESOL classes at the library. She also wants to get an High School Equivalency (HSE) diploma. She encourages Umme to find a nursing program, so Umme can achieve her goal of being a nurse again.

- What are your educational goals? What steps do you need to take to meet your goals? Where can you find out about programs? Who can help you? What challenges do you face in pursuing your goals? How do you balance work, family and school?

## ***Before You Watch***

### **Discussion Questions**

1. The episode we're going to watch today deals with work. Before we meet the characters, let's talk a little bit about our own working lives. How many jobs have you done in your life—paying jobs and non-paying work such as work at home? Make a list.
2. What are some of the jobs on your list?
3. Do you change jobs often? Or, do you keep a job for a long time? What do you prefer?
4. Let's talk about careers for a minute. What are the differences between a job and a career?
5. How do you get a career? What are the steps?
6. Let's talk about goals. What are your educational goals?
7. What are your work or career goals?
8. Last questions: The title of the episode is *The Seed for a Good Life*. What do you think that means? What do you think the seed for a good life is?

**Let's watch the show and plant some seeds.**

# After You Watch

## Discussion Questions

### Job & Career

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César is frustrated going from job to job. He wants a career.

- How do you get a career? What are the differences between a job and a career? What do you need to get a career? What do you learn from César's experience?

### Planting the Seeds

---

At first, César resists going to a career center and taking classes, but he changes his attitude.

- What causes him to change? What does Simon tell César that makes him change his attitude toward education? What seeds are you planting in your life?

### Education and Career Goals

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- What are your educational and career goals? What steps will you take to achieve your goals? Where can you get help finding an educational program or a career? What services are mentioned in the episode? What other services do you know about?

Anyone—with or without immigration papers—can get help from a Career Center at a library.

To be eligible for career training and recruitment at **Workforce1**, you need to have employment authorization (a work permit) from the federal government.

### Career Vocabulary

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There are many expressions in English about finding jobs and careers. For example, Nana asks the class, “*What can you say in an interview to sell yourself—to convince an employer to give you a job?*”

- What do you think it means to “sell yourself”? What do you think the expression “soft skills” means? What do you think “hard skills” means? What does the expression “marketable skills and experiences” mean? What marketable skills and experiences do you have?

### IDNYC

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César and Gabriela tell Jian about IDNYC—an ID card for all New Yorkers, with or without papers.

- What are the benefits of IDNYC? How can you get an IDNYC card?

### Community Gardens

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- Have you ever grown anything in your home country or here in New York? What and where? What is a community garden? Where is the closest one to your home? How do you become a member?

## ***Before You Watch*** **Discussion Questions**

1. The title of the episode is *Rolando's Rights*. What are some examples of rights?
2. Let's talk about worker rights. What rights do you think all workers have?
3. Did you ever do some work and the company didn't pay you? What happened? What did you do?
4. What do you do if you get sick? Do you go to work?
5. What do you think "sick leave" means?
6. What do you think "paid sick leave" means?

**Let's watch the show and meet Rolando.  
Let's learn about his rights and yours.**

# After You Watch

## Discussion Questions

### Worker Rights

- What rights do all workers in New York City have? What did you learn in the episode about paid sick leave? What other rights did you learn about in the episode? What questions do you have about worker rights?

### Individual and Collective Action

- How do the workers in *Rolando's Rights* win their rights? What steps do they take? What individual actions do they take? What do they do collectively (together)? How do they help each other? Who shows leadership in the episode? How do they show leadership?

### Role-Playing

Rolando tells Janus that he wants to practice what he will say to his old foreman.

- Why do you think he does that? What is the benefit of “practicing your lines”? Have you ever practiced your lines like Rolando and Janus to prepare for a situation? What lines do *you* want to practice?

### Lionel Roars

- When Rolando goes to pick up his son at school, what are the students doing? What is the play about? What do you think Rolando learns from his son and the play?

**DCA has a new name:** The **Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP)**. The office that protects Worker Rights at DCWP is called: **Office of Labor Policy & Standards**. The DCWP website says: *We are a dedicated voice in City government for workers in NYC. We protect and promote labor standards and policies that create fair workplaces to ensure all workers can realize their rights, regardless of immigration status.*

## ***Before You Watch*** **Discussion Questions**

1. This episode is called *Making New Friends*. That's right, it's about meeting new people and making new friends. How do you make new friends?
2. How do you make friends in New York City?
3. What about age? Do you think it is easier to make friends when you are young or old?
4. In your opinion, what challenges do seniors face when making friends?
5. What other challenges do seniors often face in life?

**Let's watch *Making New Friends* and make friends  
with a couple of seniors.**



## ***After You Watch*** **Discussion Questions**

### **“I’m not old.”**

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When Silvia tells her father about her visit to a senior center, he says, “*Why do I have to go there? I’m not old.*”

- Do you consider Luis old? Why or why not? What advice does the social worker give Silvia about her father? Do you think it is good advice? Why or why not?

### **Tenant Rights**

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Mrs. Belkina asks the social worker, “*What rights do tenants have?*”

- What did you learn about tenant rights from the episode? What questions do you have about tenant rights?

### **Making New Friends**

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- How do you make friends in New York City? What challenges are there to making friends here? How do you overcome these challenges?

## ***Before You Watch*** **Discussion Questions**

1. The name of the episode is *Sonam's Mom*. That's right, it's about someone named Sonam and his mom. Let's talk about moms for a moment. Maybe some of you are mothers. But let's talk about *your* mothers. Does anybody here live with their moms? Did you come to New York together?
2. Let's talk about families, not just moms. How many people in our class came to New York with your family?
3. How many came here alone?
4. If you came alone, did you eventually reunite with your family? How did it happen?
5. What was it like to be reunited with someone in your family whom you didn't see for a long time?

**Let's watch *Sonam's Mom* and learn their stories.**

## After You Watch

### Discussion Questions

#### Notary vs. Lawyer

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- What is the difference between a notary and a lawyer? What does a notary do? What does a lawyer do? Why do you think free immigration legal help is important?

Give students page 18 in the Study Guide, which has definitions of notary and lawyer.

**notary:** *a person who does some official functions, such as validating signatures, but is not the same as a lawyer and is not authorized to give immigration legal advice or to represent you as a lawyer*

**lawyer:** *an attorney; a trained and licensed legal professional who can give advice and represent you in legal matters*

#### IDNYC—an ID Card for all New Yorkers

---

The lawyer talks about the IDNYC card. An IDNYC is an ID card for all New Yorkers, with or without immigration papers.

- What are the benefits of an IDNYC card? How can you get one?

#### The American Dream

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The American Dream is not only a cheeseburger deluxe.

- What do you think the American Dream is? How can you achieve it?

## ***Before You Watch***

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How many streets do think there are in New York City?
2. How many neighborhoods are there in New York City?
3. Do you have a favorite neighborhood? What do you like about it?
4. Do you like exploring different neighborhoods? What do you like about it?
5. What can you learn from exploring different neighborhoods?
6. Let's talk a little more about learning and education. There are different kinds of learning—learning from the world outside (on the street, at work...) and learning in the classroom, in schools. Before our class, how many of you went to school in New York City? What was the experience like? Was it similar or different from school in your country? How was it similar or different?
7. Were there people from different countries and cultures in your school?
8. How did you find a school? How did you enroll?

**Okay, let's watch the episode. The title is *Crossing the Street*. In the video, the characters learn in different ways. They learn from the real world outside of school, and in the school system too. They cross the street from one neighborhood to another. Let's watch and cross the street with them.**

## ***After You Watch***

### **Discussion Questions**

#### **Pre-K**

---

Martin wants to find a great Pre-K for his daughter.

- What does he learn about Pre-K at the Family Welcome Center? Why do you think Martin wants to enroll Isabel at a Pre-K with a lot of Spanish-speaking families? What does Martin do before he enrolls Isabel in the Sunrise Pre-K? What fears does he overcome? How does he overcome them?

#### **Pursuing a Career/Informational Interview**

---

Lian wants to be a Pre-K teacher in the future. In the beginning of the episode, she tells her aunt that she is going to speak with the director of a Pre-K. She says it's not a job interview.

- What kind of interview is it? What does Lian learn from the interview with Ms. Lin? Have you ever had an informational interview? What did you learn from the experience?

#### **Balancing Work and Education**

---

Lian works in her aunt and uncle's bakery. She likes baking, but she wants to become a teacher. Her aunt and uncle support her career goals.

- What are your career goals? Who supports you in reaching your goals? How do they support you? Do you support anyone to help them reach goals? How do you support them?

### Family Engagement in School

---

Lian brings her uncle into her Pre-K to teach the children a little Chinese. Martin goes to his daughter's Pre-K to show the children some Mexican toys and games.

- How do you think Uncle Chen and Martin benefit from these experiences? How do you think the children benefit? In your opinion, what is the role of a parent in a child's education?

### Crossing the Street

---

- Why do you think the episode is called *Crossing the Street*? What kinds of borders do Martin and Lian cross in the episode?

## ***Before You Watch***

### **Discussion Questions**

The week prior to showing *Rafaela's Test*, let students know about the topic that the class will discuss in that class. Tell them that together as a class they will be talking about how the characters in the episode respond to the situations in the episode, and about the City services available to support all New Yorkers. Remind the Site Coordinator about the upcoming episode topic and ask about any additional resources the site may have available for community members dealing with mental health challenges. Contact the WSNYC Team with any additional questions.

1. This episode is called *Rafaela's Test*. It's about a woman named Rafaela and a test she has to take. Let's talk a little about tests. How do you prepare for a test?
2. Do tests make you nervous? Why or why not? In your opinion, what can make tests stressful?
3. What can you do to manage and reduce your stress when you have a test?
4. What can you do to manage stress in general?
5. Where can you go? Who can help?

**In this episode, you will meet a character named Rafaela. Rafaela is dealing with anxiety about a test, and facing other difficult issues. Let's watch the show and see how Rafaela manages, and the support she receives.**

## After You Watch

### Discussion Questions

***Rafaela's Test* is a story about managing stress, anxiety and depression, and how to give and get support when someone struggles with these issues.**

*Rafaela's Test* may bring up strong emotions. Many people have had experience—either their own or the experience of someone they care about—with anxiety, depression or other mental health issues. When you show and discuss the episode, refer to the characters in the story and what they do to help manage their problems. Ask what the characters learn from their experiences. It may also be helpful to ask what the students learn from the characters.

#### What the Characters Learn: Rafaela

In the beginning, Rafaela says she is fine, but she is not doing well. She resists getting help. She thinks she can help herself, and she doesn't want to be a burden on her family.

- What makes her change and seek help? What do you think she learns from her experience? What do you learn from her experience?

#### What the Characters Learn: Rafaela's Mom

Early on in the story, Rafaela's mother is angry with Rafaela. She doesn't realize what Rafaela is going through. She doesn't know how to help her daughter. She loses her patience with her.

- Why do you think she is impatient with Rafaela? What makes her change? What does she do to help Rafaela? What does she learn from the experience? In what way is Rafaela an inspiration to her mother?



## What the Characters Learn: Zara

Zara is very concerned about Rafaela. In the beginning, she tells Rafaela not to worry about the test. After Rafaela's panic attack, she visits her at Rafaela's home. She encourages her to seek help.

- What do you think she learns from the experience? What do you learn from Zara's actions?

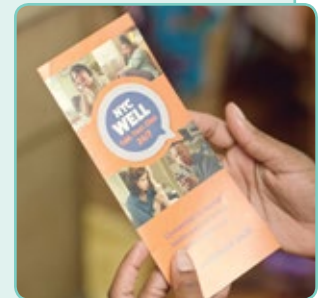
## What the Characters Learn: Martin

After Rafaela takes the test, she doesn't want to open the envelope. He's happy when he learns that she passed the test. But Rafaela doesn't seem happy. Martin reminds his mother about *NYC Well*.

- What do you think Martin learns from the story?

### About *NYC Well*

- *NYC Well* is a free New York City program that helps people find support to help manage stress, depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues. *NYC Well* also helps people who are dealing with substance abuse.
- The *NYC Well* website—[nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/](https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/)—has useful tips to manage and reduce anxiety and stress.
- *NYC Well* is free and confidential. It's available day and night, you can call, and if you don't want to talk on the phone, you can text or chat. The phone number is: **1-888-NYC-WELL**. You can text "WELL" to: 65173
- *NYC Well* peer support specialists (peer counselors) are people who have experienced anxiety, depression or other mental health conditions, and their own experiences can help you get through difficult times.
- *NYC Well* peer support specialists and counselors can introduce some of the options that are available for you to deal with your mental and emotional challenges.
- *NYC Well* has interpreters in more than 200 languages.



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# Learn English

with our stories

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You can make a difference  
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