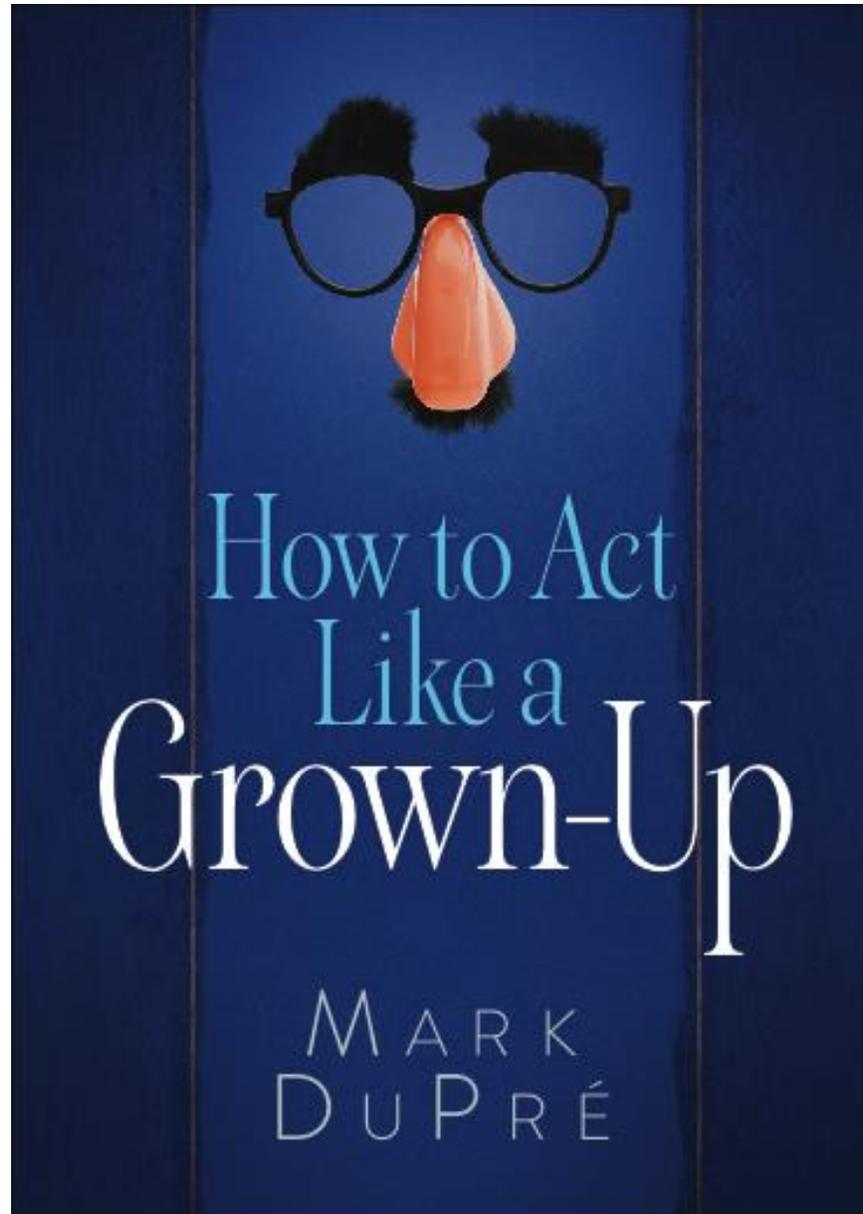


Discussion Guide
to



How to Act Like a Grown-up is meant to be an enjoyable read and a springboard for some really good discussion sessions.

These questions are meant to be starting points for group leaders or for groups wanting to dig more deeply into the topics covered in the book. These questions are just suggestions and conversation-starters. You can choose just one question to discuss, and then find the conversation taking another direction. Or you may ask the people in your group to take one of the questions, think about it, and then come with some thoughts prepared. Or you can go through all the questions—your choice!

I'd be interested in hearing what works for you and what I could do to help with the discussion.

Enjoy!

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Quotes Page

Reread the quote from Lincoln. Do you feel you have to follow in the footsteps of an older family member? If so, who, and why do you feel that way?

Does looking at another successful person make you feel like a loser by comparison, or does it challenge and motivate you? How could you take something that starts as a negative comparison and turn it into a motivation? Have you ever done that?

What do you think of C. S. Lewis' quote? Do you agree with him? How would *you* describe the silliness of children and the silliness of grown-ups? What kind of silliness do *you* have sometimes?

Preface

What kinds of criticism have you heard older people give about your generation? Do you think they have a point sometimes? In what specific ways might they be right? Are there any areas in which you completely agree with the criticism you often hear? What do you think they don't understand about your age group?

Did you ever hear a criticism that you completely rejected at first, and then later came around to agreeing with? What was it?

Do you feel that the older people in your life understand you, or not? If the answer is yes *and* no, what do you think they understand, and what do you think they don't?

Do you think experience counts for anything? If so, what?

What do you think you could do to get the most learning from older people? Brainstorm and come up with a few good ideas.

Do you get flack from older people for the way you dress, or your music, or your attitude?

Do you make fun of younger kids? In what ways?

Do you think it's a good idea to act like a grown-up even if you don't feel like one inside?

Be a Real Winner

Do you feel like a loser if you lose a game or a competition?

Do you think that winning a game or competition makes you a better person?

Do you think you're worthless, or do you know anyone who does? If you feel like you're worthless sometimes, *when* do you feel that way?

How would you help someone who feels worthless not to feel that way?

Do you agree with the author that everyone has worth and is deserving of respect? Why or why not?

Is it hard for you not to compare yourself with other people? If you do, why, do you think? Can you see why comparing is a bad idea?

Are you cool with the idea that there will always be people who do some things better than you?

Does trying to be the best *you* that you can be sound silly to you? Discuss the benefits of thinking that way.

What do you have or do that makes you different, and maybe unique? How could that be made into a good thing?

Being on Time

Are you generally on time, a little late, or quite a bit late? Would others agree with your assessment?

Try this exercise, preferably in the group:

Make a list of all the “ingredients” that go into being late or being on time in each of the following categories:

- What “machines” do you need?
- What do you regularly do?
- What do you *need* to do?
- What do you need to have around?
- What information do you need?
- What decisions do you need to make?
- What is helping you or hindering you from being on time, e.g., in your home or dorm room or apartment?

Now think about or talk about what you can do the night before.

(Note: It’s more fun and more helpful to do this as a group exercise, even if you’re just discussing one person or one situation at a time.)

After talking, think about what is necessary to do and what isn’t.

What could you change if you’re chronically late to some things? Or phrased another way, what things might you have to do differently to get to places on time? What’s the hardest part of making those changes? Why?

Do you think you can make the necessary changes and stick to them?

Being Wrong

How big a deal is it to you to be wrong? Is it hard to admit, and if so, why do you think it is?

What do you tend to do when you find out you've been wrong? Are you happy to know the truth, or bummed that you've been wrong? If both, which feeling is stronger?

Do you take the time to reevaluate people and actions when you find out you've been wrong? Give some examples of how you've done this and how it made a difference.

Did you ever make a mess by acting on wrong information and then finding out later that you were wrong? What happened? When you found out the truth, what did you do? What did you go through mentally and emotionally when you found out? How hard was it to backtrack and make things right? Were you able to "clean up your mess"?

Has anyone ever wrongly judged you and then found out the truth later? What did they do when they learned the truth? What can you learn from what they did or didn't do?

Buying Stuff at a Store

What crazy stories do you have of what people have done ahead of you in line? If it was not cool, why not? If it was, why was it?

What's the worst or silliest thing you've ever done when you've been in line?

What's your version of the ideal person ahead of you in line at the store?

Cell Phones

When's the last time you heard someone use a cell phone in an inappropriate way? Were they too loud, talking too personally where others could hear, or something else?

What's the most annoying misuse of a cell phone you can remember?

What do you think about letting the people you're with take precedence over whoever is calling? Do you think it matters? How do you rightly acknowledge the people you're with when someone calls?

Can you see that how you answer a cell phone might be related to what kind of circumstance you're in—social, professional, etc.? How might that make a difference?

Do you feel like you *have* to answer your cell as soon as it rings? Why or why not?

Clothes

Do you see how sometimes a person's clothes can *stop* people from seeing the real them? Do you have any examples from your own life?

Do you realize that you have a style of clothing? How would you describe it?

What is the role of clothing—seriously?

Do you believe in “dressing for the occasion”? Why or why not?

What's the worst clothing choice you've ever seen? Why was it so bad?

Comparison

Do you think of comparison as a good thing, a bad thing, or something else?

Do you compare yourself to others? How? Do you always come out on the losing end of your comparisons?

How could how comparison be a positive thing? What constructive ideas or practices could you learn from a comparison to others?

Share a positive experience you had with comparison, and what you got out of it.

Do you think it's possible to change the way you view the process of comparison?

Crossing the Street

Do you ever cross a street without looking?

Do you think you have a right to cross the street without bothering to look?

Do you have an attitude about walking across a street, or have you ever seen anyone with attitude when they were crossing?

Why might someone not be quick to stop when you're crossing?

Driving

Do you think that driving is a matter of personal expression, like your clothing or the way you sing or draw?

What are all the things that you have to think about when you're the one driving?

What are some of the major distractions that would prevent us from giving our top priority to driving safely?

When you're the first in a line waiting for the light to change, do people have to honk to get your attention when it changes?

Did you ever have a car coming at you that seems like it's not going to stop because of how late the driver put on the brakes? What did you do?

What do you really think about using seatbelts?

Do you know of anyone hurt or killed in a car accident caused by bad driving choices? What happened?

What things freak out pedestrians? What could you do as a driver not to freak them out?

Does it bother you that statistics show that younger drivers have more accidents, and more fatal ones? If it does, why?

Do you think it's an insult when someone tells you that you lack experience in something?

Entitlement

What do children feel entitled to?

What do you think you're genuinely entitled to? Why do you think that?

What would the world be like if everyone felt that way?

What things did you feel entitled to when you were younger that you don't feel the same way about now?

What's the difference between feeling entitled and feeling grateful?

Can you see the danger for yourself in continuing to feel entitled to receive something just because you always have?

What does continuing to feel entitled do to a person as they grow up, and how does it affect others around them?

Facebook, etc.

How often do you use Facebook? What's the main way you use it?

Has it helped your personal relationships, or has it replaced personal connecting for you? For either answer, how?

What are the dangers to people who aren't smart about how they use Facebook? What can happen and why?

What's the funniest example of TMI you've seen on Facebook?
What's the saddest example?

What's the absolute worst thing you've ever seen posted? Why was it so bad?

What could hurt a person that is posted on Facebook that they might never know about?

Who do you know who uses Facebook in the smartest way? Why do you think that?

How publicly do you want to live?

Financial Independence

What's your definition of being financially independent?

Do you want to be financially independent?

What are some of the stages that you could go through between where you are now and complete financial independence?

Why might someone want to be independent from his/her parents? What reasons are good and what are not so good? Why?

What might be your next step toward financial independence?

Do you think your parents or guardians would be helpful in getting you to financial independence, or do you think you'll have to do it on your own?

Finish What You Start

What does a determination to finish something bring to the way you do it? Do you have any examples?

What happens when you don't determine to finish something you start? What kinds of things could happen?

Did you ever start a big project without a strong sense of the goal in your mind? What was it, and what happened?

Think of the last time that you tried something that just fizzled out? Why did it fizzle out? What could you do next time so that something you try doesn't fizzle out?

Going to Class—High School

Do you think it's possible to be popular with everyone? Do you think it's possible to have everyone like you? Why or why not?

Do you think it's possible to be nice to everyone? Why or why not?

What's your idea of being a good student?

What do you think your teachers' ideas might be of a good student?

If you're between 15 and 25, do you realize how much you've changed since a year ago? In what ways have you changed? What does that suggest for the next few years?

How do you think you'll get smarter about things a year from now, or five years from now?

What's the best and healthiest student-teacher relationship you've ever had? Why was it good? What did the teacher do to help? What did you do that made it work?

If you're older than a high schooler, what would you like to say to a high schooler to help make their experience better?

If you're a high schooler now, what would be your best advice about relating to other students and relating to teachers that you could give someone just starting high school?

Going to Class—College

College students: If you occasionally skip class, why? Do you think it's a good idea—and why or why not?

Do you see going to class as an effective use of your time? Why or why not?

Do you generally listen in class, or does your mind wander? Do you surf the web, or text, or draw?

How can you get the most out of attending class with a bad or boring professor?

Do you think your different professors would say that you're a good student? Why or why not? If you're not, what could you change to become a better one?

Do you think you're fully aware of how much money is being spent for you to attend college? (Remember that someone or many people are paying for your education, even if you aren't directly.) Who is paying for your education? Try to name them all.

Do you think you use your time well as a student? Do you think of time as your friend, or what you're working against? Where are some adjustments you could make to make time your friend?

Did you ever connect directly with a professor when things were going badly in your life in a way that affected your classes? Did you ever connect with him/her when you were struggling with the subject? What happened?

Interviewing for a Job

What's the funniest/craziest story you've heard about a job interview?

Have you ever had a strange experience with a job interview? If so, what was weird about it?

Do you think that clothing, your hair, make-up, etc. can get in the way of an interviewer connecting with a person? How?

What are the best ways that an interviewer can see the real person (or the real you)?

Investing

Is the idea of investing something other than money new to you?

What kind of investments have you made, aside from anything having to do with money?

What emotional investments have you made? What have been the good ones, and what bad investments have you made? If they were good, why; if bad, why?

Do you think of time as an investment? What are the things you invest most of your time in?

What are some examples of investments that might be fun or emotional, but really don't matter much in the long run?

What are the most important investments you could make?

Did you ever make what you thought was a good investment in a friendship and then found out that you shouldn't keep investing? What happened? How did you stop investing? Do you think you handled it right? What stages of emotions did you go through?

Why is it so hard to divest sometimes? How would you go about divesting after realizing you've made a bad emotional or relational investment?

Do you feel like you always have to have girlfriend or boyfriend? (Ask your closest friend for a reality check if you answer no.) Can you see that it's not really healthy to feel that way?

Invitations

In what different ways have you gotten invitations—in person, by email, by phone, by Facebook? Something else? What are the expectations of the sender when they send you one?

Did you ever get a written invitation that said RSVP? Did you respond?

What are your stories of people you've invited to something—those who said yes and didn't come, or said no and came anyway, and who came but brought unexpected people with them? Or do you have a really crazy story? How did you handle that? What did you learn from that?

It's Not About You

What's your earliest memory of when you realized that you were not the center of the universe? What was your reaction to that?

Was that healthy knowledge brought to you through a difficult experience? Did that experience cause you to get a little cynical?

How is not being the center of the universe a good thing?

How does self-centeredness show up in our thoughts and actions?

What systems do you become a part of "out there" in the real world as you step out of your home or dorm?

Love

Have you ever been infatuated with someone? What was it like?

What's your definition of love? Has it changed over the years? What was it before? How do you think it might change in the future?

Do you see how infatuation might be the first stage of a life-long love relationship? Do you see how it might not be? What might short-lived infatuation look like?

In what ways can time be a gift to a relationship? What can happen over time? What effect would giving time have on a relationship?

Do you sometimes live in a fantasy world when you begin a relationship? Do you avoid the challenges that living in the real world can bring to a relationship?

Were you ever "sure" that a certain person was "the one," and then found out later he/she wasn't? Do you feel you learned anything from that? Whatever you learned, was it a good lesson to learn?

What kinds of tests have you seen people give each other in a relationship? Do you think that was healthy to do that?

Be real: What's the most difficult part of giving the gift of time to someone you're in a relationship with?

Seriously—what's the rush?

Have you ever asked for the opinion of any of the three groups mentioned in the book: family, friends, advisors/counselors? Can you see how input from different perspectives could be helpful?

Do you have these three groups of people in your life? If not, how would you go about getting them?

Have you ever said that no one has ever been love in the way you have? Or that no one can understand your love relationship? Have you really???

Marriage

How do you feel about marriage, and why do you feel that way? Do you think your attitude is realistic? Do you think it's healthy?

If you want to be married sooner rather than later, why?

What do you think makes for a successful marriage?

Did you know that arranged marriages are generally more successful than other kinds? Why do you think that might be?

What do you think is the relationship between love and commitment in a marriage?

Do you think that being in love is enough to keep a marriage going and growing? Why or why not?

Do you think the author is right when he says that two can't live as cheaply as one? In what ways can they? In what way can't they?

What would having a solid financial foundation bring to a new marriage?

Would you consider some kind of premarital counseling before you got married? Why or why not?

Why might rushing into marriage hurt the marriage?

What could be the advantages of waiting?

Meeting People

Do you look people straight in the eye when you meet them? If you don't, are you afraid to?

What's your handshake style: limp, firm, too firm?

Is it hard for you to make it "all about them" and "not about you" for a moment when you meet someone?

Money and College

Do you think it's worthwhile to go to college?

Do you think that it is (or was) worthwhile for *you* to go to college? Why/why not?

Do you (or did you) avoid the topic of money when talking about college? Why or why not?

Would you rather not think about having to pay back the loans?

Do you think someone else (family, the school, taxpayers) should pay for your education? Or part of your education? What's your reasoning here?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of going to a two-year school and then finishing your degree at a four-year school?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of working before going to school or taking breaks to work and earn money while you're going to school?

Talk to various people who feel they handled the college-and-loan question well in their own lives, and some who regret their decisions. What did they do? What did you learn from hearing their stories?

Owning Your Youth

How do you feel about being your age? What do you think are the benefits of being your age? What are some limitations?

What are the benefits of being older than you are?

Is your mind and heart always set on the next significant birthday (16, 18, 21, 25)? Why? If it is, do you see how that could stop you from enjoying your life right now?

What's your best/most interesting/saddest/funniest story about someone older trying to act or look too young? What do you think about that?

What's your best/most interesting/saddest/funniest story about someone trying and failing to act older than he/she was? What are your thoughts on that?

What do you think about that line from the movie *Juno*?

Are you insulted when someone says you're too young? Since there is nothing wrong with being a certain age, if you were insulted, why?

What are you not very experienced in yet? Are you OK with that?

How would you describe the *you* of three years ago? With that perspective in mind, how might you describe the *you* of three years from now?

What are the three biggest things you've learned in the last three years?

Does it bother you that some things take time? What are some of those things?

What don't you know yet?

Sexuality

What do you think of teenagers who begin to show off their bodies as they hit a certain stage of physical development? Do you/did you do that?

What's the difference between thinking that you *are* your body as opposed to *having* your body?

How do movies and TV shows present dream worlds rather than reality when it comes to sex? What are the dangers of that?

How can you own your sexuality? How can it own you?

“Becoming a sexual being is a stage.” What do you think about that statement?

What are the biggest mistakes you can make with your sexuality?

Share a story of someone who seemed to forget that having sex can lead to pregnancy. What happened?

Suicide

Have you ever seriously considered taking your own life? Or did you know someone well you either did or tried to? What were some of the things that led to that?

If you were ever close to helping someone prevent a suicide, what helped him/her to not do it?

“When you get older, your life gets bigger.” What does that mean? Do you see how it can help to know that when things get hard?

What are some of the lies that would lead someone to commit suicide? What are the truths that counter those lies?

Do you see how suicide merely transfers someone’s pain to other people? Describe the ways that could play out with you or someone you know well.

Did you ever see the movie *It’s a Wonderful Life*? What would be the possible effects on the people around you if you weren’t here? Listen closely to the answers of people who care about you.

The Trust Thing

“Parents want to feel confident (do you hear me—*feel* it right down to their toes) that you’re not going to hurt yourself” (p. 119). Do you agree with the author on this? How have you seen that in your life?

Did you ever get away with fooling your parents or guardian?

Why wouldn’t parents necessarily believe their kids when the kids say they can be trusted?

Do you think it’s unfair that “...your parents are looking at your past at the same time you’re looking toward your future”? Why or why not?

Did you ever set a pattern of untrustworthy behavior? What was the result?

What were the different levels of responsibility that you’ve been entrusted with?

In what ways can you earn back trust after you mess things up?

Voting

Have you voted in a local, state or national election? If you're old enough to, why did you or didn't you?

Do you think voting is a big privilege for you? Why or why not?

Are you aware of what other countries have gone through to give people the right to vote? If so, share what you know.

Do you think it's important to vote? Why or why not?

Why would the author think that you shouldn't complain if you don't vote?

Watching Movies

How is watching a movie at home different from watching it in the theater?

What's the "public whisper"? If you know, do you know how to do it?

What's the rudest thing you ever saw anyone do in a movie theater?

Did you ever just sit back and let a movie take you for its ride, without commenting or communicating with others while you were watching? If so, what was your experience with the movie?

Talk about this thought: Movies are an art, just like a painting, and can be viewed as more than just entertainment. But to enjoy them at that level, you would have to view them like you would paintings—sitting back and studying them seriously.

Have you changed your movie theater behavior in any way as you've gotten older?

You're Not a Loser (Unless You Choose to Be)

Deep down, do you really feel that losing at something makes a person a loser?

What's *your* definition of a loser?

“If you lose at something, it means you're trying. And if you're trying, that means you're not a loser” (p. 131) What do you think about that thought? Do you agree with it?

The author think that someone is a loser is a person who stops trying or doesn't learn from their mistakes. What do you think about that definition?

Do you know other stories like the one about Edison and the light bulb? If not, Google some and share them.

Do you think of mistakes as failures, or as an opportunity to learn something? What can you learn from making a mistake?

Do you know anyone who doesn't seem to learn from mistakes? What can you learn from that?

Do you think it's worthwhile trying to take in the thoughts in this book and change a few things in your own life? What are the biggest changes you think you need to make? Why those changes in particular?