

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF FALLING DOWN

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Grievance, Lost Identity, and
A Man Who Believed He Was
the Victim

“I'M THE BAD GUY?
HOW DID THAT
HAPPEN?”

ABOUT THE FILM



Falling Down follows an unemployed man who believes he's been pushed too far by a world that has disrespected him. Over the course of one scorching day in L.A., his sense of grievance escalates into violence.

This guide explores the psychology behind his breakdown and what we can learn from it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

LOSS OF ROLE & IDENTITY



- What roles defined the protagonist's identity?
- How did losing those roles affect him?
- What roles in your life are most important to your sense of self?

2

GRIEVANCE & SELF-DECEPTION



- How does he convince himself he is the real victim?
- What facts does he ignore or twist?
- How can self-deception make anger feel justified?

3

ESCALATION & CHOICE



- What small frustrations add up for him?
- Where could he have made a different choice?
- What helps you pause before anger takes over?

4

ISOLATION & THE FAILURE TO SEEK HELP



- Who in his life might have helped him?
- Why do you think he didn't reach out?
- What keeps people from asking for help today?

KEY THEMES



LOST IDENTITY
When the roles that define us are stripped away, we can feel invisible and adrift.



GRIEVANCE MINDSET
Focusing on unfairness can narrow our view and distort reality.



SELF-DECEPTION
We can build stories that make our anger feel righteous.



CHOICE POINTS
Every moment contains the choice to pause, reflect, or escalate.



CONNECTION MATTERS
Isolation fuels rage. Connection and support can save lives.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Grievance doesn't give you the right to harm others. Pain is real. Violence is a choice. Help is strength, not weakness.

TRY THIS



PAUSE & NAME IT

When frustration rises, stop and name what you feel in one word: angry, hurt, ignored, overwhelmed. Naming creates space.



CHECK THE STORY

Write down the story your anger is telling you. Then ask: What else could be true?



REACH OUT ON PURPOSE

Choose one person you trust and have a real conversation. Connection is a buffer against rage.



MOVE YOUR BODY

When anger builds, take a walk or do something active. Move the body to move the emotion.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

- What does this film say about the dangers of resentment?
- How do you know when your frustration is becoming unhealthy?
- What kind of world do you want to build, one choice at a time?

CONVERSATION STARTERS

What would you tell the protagonist if you could speak to him?

What small changes might have redirected his day? His life?

How can our communities create more safety and respect for all?

SPOILER-FREE PROMISE

This guide avoids spoilers so you can use it anytime, even before watching.

NEED SUPPORT?

If you or someone you know is in crisis or having thoughts of harming yourself or others, help is available.

- Call or text **988** Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (U.S.)
- Text **HOME** to **741741** Crisis Text Line
- Visit findahelpline.com for local resources



You are more than your worst day. Help is there, and things can get better.



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