

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RUDY

GRIT, SELF-DETERMINATION,
AND THE REFUSAL TO QUIT

DISCUSSION GUIDE



“
It's not whether you
get knocked down;
it's whether you get up.

— VINCE LOMBARDI

Up at
5am.
Again.



Watch Rudy with an open mind and heart. Use these questions to explore the deeper psychological themes behind the story.

1

A DREAM THAT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE



- What makes Rudy's dream feel so impossible at the start of the film?
- Have you ever had a dream that others told you was unrealistic?
- What did that experience teach you about yourself?

2

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF GRIT



- How would you define grit in your own words?
- What moments in the film best show Rudy's grit?
- Where in your life could more grit make a difference?

3

SELF-DETERMINATION: OWNING THE CHOICE



- Rudy's motivation comes from within, not from rewards or approval.
- How does his motivation reflect the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness?
- What goals are you pursuing because they are truly yours?

4

THE COST OF GRIT



- What sacrifices did Rudy make along the way?
- How does the film show the hard parts of pursuing a big dream?
- What are you willing to give up for what matters most to you?

5

THE POWER OF BELIEF



- How does Rudy's belief in himself change over the course of the film?
- What helped him build that belief?
- Who or what helps you believe in yourself when the path is hard?

6

WHAT IT REALLY TAKES TO REFUSE TO QUIT



- What does the final scene teach us about perseverance?
- How can you keep taking "the next small step" in your own life?
- What does success look like for you—and why?

REMEMBER

★
Grit isn't about being
the best.
It's about refusing
to give up on what
matters most.

REFLECT & APPLY



What is one dream
you've been told is
unrealistic?



What small step
can you take
today toward it?



Who can encourage
and support you
on the journey?



Why does this
goal matter so
much to you?



DR. MICHAEL ZAKALIK, PSY.D.
Psychologist for Parenting | Z Psychology



Understanding minds.

Strengthening connections.

