

DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF

Seinfeld

Social Norms and the Comedy of the Unwritten Rules

These aren't
the rules...
They're just
the rules.

— Jerry

SHOW SNAPSHOT

Jerry and his friends navigate the tiny moments of everyday life in New York City. Nothing earth-shattering happens—and that's the point. The comedy comes from the unwritten rules we all follow... until someone breaks them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1 THE UNWRITTEN RULES



What are some "unwritten rules" you notice in everyday life (at work, in friendships, in public spaces)? How do you learn them?

2 WHEN RULES GET BROKEN



Think of a time you (or someone you know) broke a social rule. What happened? How did people react? What does that tell us about how powerful these rules are?

3 SMALL THINGS, BIG IMPACT



Seinfeld shows that tiny things—waiting too long to call, double-dipping, talking too long—can cause big problems. Why do small transgressions bother us so much?

4 IDENTITY AND THE GROUP



How do social norms help us belong? When might following the rules help you fit in? When might stepping outside them help you be authentic?

5 CHARACTERS WHO DON'T GROW



The main characters rarely learn lasting lessons. What might that say about human nature? Do you see growth in any of them? In what ways?

6 THE COMFORT OF THE FAMILIAR



Why do we keep coming back to shows like Seinfeld, where nothing really changes? What is comforting—or funny—about the routines of life?

TODAY'S OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Explore the unwritten rules that shape our behavior.
- ✓ Understand why breaking them creates comedy—and consequences.
- ✓ Reflect on how we relate to others, and to the rules we live by.

"It's not a lie...
if you believe it.

— George

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Social norms are invisible, but powerful.



Breaking a rule reveals the rule.



Awkwardness is our social alarm system.



We all want to belong, and we all slip up.



The little things often matter more than we think.

TRY THIS!

- ✓ This week, play "social detective."
- ✓ Notice the unwritten rules around you.
- ✓ Pick one small rule you'd like to follow (or break mindfully). Notice the impact.
- ✓ Reflect: What did you learn about you—and about others?

REFLECTION PROMPTS

- What rule feels the hardest for you to follow?
- Which Seinfeld character do you relate to most—and why?
- How can you be more aware of the rules you live by, without letting them control you?
- What would the world be like if there were no social norms? What if there were only rules?



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Understanding
minds.



Strengthening
connections.