

Disney

ALEXANDER

and the Terrible, Horrible,
NO GOOD, VERY BAD DAY

FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE

One day
can change
everything.





Expect the Unexpected...Or There Are No Accidents, Only Opportunities

The day after Alexander suffers a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day—with little empathy from his family—Alexander's family has certain expectations about how their day will go. Emily is confident that she will rock her debut as Peter Pan in the upcoming school play. Anthony and his girlfriend just know that they will be crowned Duke and Duchess of the prom. Although he has been out of work, Ben hopes that his interview at a video game design company will land him a new job. Kelly is eager for a job promotion after all the hard work she has put in on a recent children's book campaign. And Baby Trevor looks forward to a day of bliss with his fav bumblebee pacifier. Let's just say their days don't go quite according to plan.

A silly misprint in the children's book threatens to derail Kelly's promotion. Ben's job interview(s) go haywire when Baby Trevor eats a green highlighter in lieu of his newly destroyed pacifier. And, later over drinks and dinner with his prospective employers, Ben bursts into flames. When Emily wakes up sick on the morning of her first performance, she downs far too much cough syrup, which leads to a hilariously happy—and far too memorable—theatrical debut. Anthony doesn't get the tux he wanted for the prom—the alternative is baby blue—and he's forced to pick up his date with the rest of his family in their beat-up minivan after his driving test goes seriously wrong.

Through it all, Alexander sympathizes with his suffering family members because he knows what it means to experience the unexpected. As his family navigates their chaotic day, it is easy to see where Alexander gets his perseverance and positive spirit. While our days rarely go as expected, a calm, positive spirit and a determination to succeed can help us overcome the unexpected bumps in the road. In a way, Alexander's family sees that these accidents are also opportunities for them to rally around one another, love one another, and help each other. Through them, they grow as a family and become better equipped to handle future obstacles.

Questions for Discussion

- What expectations do you have for your day, your week, or your life? Can you imagine any events that could stand in the way of those expectations?
- When have unexpected events challenged your expectations? How did you overcome them or change your expectations?

Be Careful What You Wish For

Although Alexander has a family that loves and cares for him deeply, he's got it fairly rough. If something can go wrong in or around his life, it probably will. When the world seems to conspire against him on the eve of his birthday, he makes a wish that the rest of his family could understand what it is like to have a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day, too.

Of course Alexander doesn't want any real harm to come to his family, he's just frustrated. But when things quickly fall apart for his parents and siblings the next morning, he's sure that his wish brought on all of the chaos. He apologizes to his family, but they quickly forgive him because they know there is nothing that one kid could have done to bring about all that craziness.

We know that our wishes can't automatically change the future. If they could, we'd all win the lottery. But Alexander's birthday wish should make us pause and think about what we wish for and, more importantly, what we do to make those wishes come true. If our wishes can't change the future, they can certainly change us for the future. When we want something bad enough, we will do whatever it takes to get it, maybe even hurting others in the process. On the other hand, if we wish for a better life for those around us, we may work hard to make that happen.

Questions for Discussion

- When have you wished for something good? What did you do to make it happen?
- Have you ever wished for something bad to happen to someone else? What made you make that wish? What happened, and how did it make you feel?





This Isn't the End of the World

A little dose of perspective goes a long way. In a way, this is what happens when Alexander's family has a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day. Alexander has rough days, but when he sees his family's day fall apart before his very eyes, his own troubles don't seem so tough, and he tries to do whatever he can to help them through their difficult experiences.

To put it simply, Alexander realizes that his bad days really aren't the end of the world. When he looks around him at all the chaos, he realizes that things could be worse. We have all had tough experiences in life. We have all felt like we were facing the end of the world. But we have all also woken up the next day to realize that it wasn't. We dust ourselves off and realize that things could have been worse.

If we take the time to really look around us, we might find that there are people dealing with more difficult issues than we are. Hopefully this perspective will lead us to look at our own experiences with clearer eyes. Maybe we will set aside our own frustrations and try to help others get through their own terrible, horrible, no good, very bad days.

Questions for Discussion

- When have you felt like it was the end of the world? How did it get better?
- Have you ever seen someone in a worse situation than you? How did you help?

Family First

If we're lucky, we come from families where our parents have chosen us over most everything else, making sacrifices for our benefit along the way. Occasionally, as kids, we have the opportunity to return the favor.

Anthony and his girlfriend have grand plans for their prom night. Perfect date? Check. Perfect tux? Well, not really. Perfect ride? Maybe not. Perfect night? Not so fast. While Anthony is willing to roll with the punches and have a good time, his date can't look past the surface "imperfections" that stand in the way of her royal plans. When she insults him and his family, Anthony sees through her outside beauty to the crazy, impossible-to-please interior. He looks around at his family and, even though they are all a crazy mess, realizes that they have always been there for him, cheering him on and picking him up, even on this terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day.

Anthony ditches his date to stick with his family, which pays off with an over-the-top Australian-themed birthday party for Alexander. At the end of the day, no matter how messed up they may all be, our families are there for us, or they should be. They're really all we have. And we should be there for them too, even if it drives us a little crazy!

Questions for Discussion

- Have you ever felt like you had to choose between family and friends? What happened? How did you reconcile it?
- Have your family or friends ever chosen you over someone else? How did that make you feel?





There's Always Time (and Reason) to Party

Alexander's birthday is the centerpiece of everything that happens in the film. Think about it: his birthday wish seems to set the chaotic following day into motion. Throughout the day, his parents rush around in all the chaos still trying to plan the perfect party for him. Against all odds, Ben and Kelly, with some help from great party planners, pull off a magical party for their son. Even though things didn't go quite according to plan, they still have so much to celebrate. It's Alexander's birthday, they made it through the day as a family, and Ben and Kelly's job situations actually worked out exactly like they hoped.

Part of making it through this crazy world involves taking time to stop and celebrate. Even though things might be falling apart around us, we can still find (even small) reasons to celebrate. You have your health, you have people who love and care for you, you passed a difficult test, your team won the game, and the list goes on and on. Part of celebrating is being thankful for the good things in our lives. Celebrating and remembering these good things will help us overcome those terrible, horrible, no good, very bad days that occasionally confront us.

Questions for Discussion

- Have you ever celebrated during a difficult time? What was happening around you and how did you smile through it?
- Have you ever helped others celebrate during difficult times? What did you do and how did it help?