



A Discussion guide for parents and other people who love kids

"Wooden Heart" was written to entertain and to teach children positive, issues-oriented concepts about themselves, other people and their world. We compiled these questions to help you talk to your child about "Wooden Heart" and the themes of coping with grief and friendship. All questions might not be appropriate for all children. Please read through the questions and pick those appropriate to your child. These questions are just a guide to help you start a conversation with your child. Take the conversation wherever you feel comfortable. These questions can be used over weeks or months in an on-going discussion about feelings and growing. Using the characters in the play might help your child better understand these concepts. The questions *in italics* might be for older children with more experience with movies and books.

1. For the adult: At an appropriate time in your conversations about "Wooden Heart", think of a time when you were sad and share that with your child. What caused the sadness? How did the sadness make you feel? (frightened, lonely, angry, like crying, etc) When you were sad how did you act? How did the sadness affect you? What did you do to help yourself feel better? Did it help? Did you talk to other people about your sadness? If not, why not? If so, why? Who did you talk to? Did it help to share your sad feelings? Are there other things you could have done to help your sadness to go away? What are those things? If you are sad again, what would you do to help yourself feel better?

2. Tammy sings a song about, Marbles her dog. How does Tammy feel about Marbles at the beginning of the song? How does Tammy feel about Marbles at the end of the song? Why? How does that make Tammy feel? (sad) Why? How can you tell Tammy is sad? What did Tammy want to do because she was sad? Did it help her sadness? What did the toys tell Tammy about feelings? Are toys ever sad? Why or why not? Do you think a child could really become a toy? Why or why not? Would you want to be a toy? Why or why not? If you want to be a toy, what toy would you be? Why? Is there something you would like about being a toy? Are there things about being a toy that you would not like? What things? It might be fun to make up a story about one of your toys. The grown up could start the story and then ask the child what would come next and then go back and forth making up the story. *What would your world be like if you were never sad? What if everything was always wonderful and just right? Would you like it? Have you ever seen a sad part in a movie (E.T. or Bambi), or read a sad part in a book, and cried? What was that like?*

2. Have you ever been sad like Tammy? Why? Where in your body did you feel the sad feelings? Did you cry when you were sad? Why or why not? Why don't you draw a picture of yourself showing where the sadness is in your body. Have you ever had a friend or a family member that was sad about something? What? Could you tell this person was sad? How? Could you help your friend or family member? When you were sad, what did you do about it? Did you tell people about the way you felt? Did that help? Did people know you were sad before you told them? How? Can you tell me about other feelings that you have sometimes? (happy, excited, surprise, fear, anger, etc.) Do you tell people about those feelings? Do people know you have these other feelings before you tell them? How? How do you share your feelings with people? Do people ever share their feelings with you? Who? How does that make you feel? The next time you feel sad, will you share your feelings with someone? Who?

3. Ragwort, Senorita Magdalena, and the other toy characters have a certain appearance that makes them seem one way, when, deep inside, they might be quite different. Is it always fair to judge someone by their appearance? Do you know someone who looks different on the outside than they are on the inside? Draw a picture of what you look like on the outside and then draw another picture of what you look like on the inside. (Parent: You could do this activity with your child and then explain the differences.) What book, movies, and stories do you know where someone's outward appearance is very different from the real person inside? What would each of the toy characters look like if their real personality could show through? Draw several of them, showing what they truly look like.

4. In some fairy tales, there isn't always a happy ending. Does this play have a happy ending? Did you like the way it ended? Why? Why not? *Is there a better ending that might have been used? What might it be?*

5. *A major theme in this play is the loss of a loved one. What novels, short stories, fairy tales, movies, songs, and poems can you think of where a major character had to cope with the loss of someone they loved? How did they try and cope with their loss? Did it work? Why or why not?*

6. Did Tammy like being a toy? Why? Why not? What did Tammy like about being a toy? What did she not like about being a toy? Can you remember any of the things that the toys said they liked about being a toy? What do you think would be fun about being a toy? What do you think you wouldn't like about being a toy? Did the toys help Tammy? Did Tammy think of a way to get help? Who did Tammy want to call for help? If you were Tammy who would you call for help? Why? *The toy characters (except Bratty Belinda) are there to support and help Tammy throughout this story. Their friendship helps her through the rough time. How? How do your friends help you? Are friends important? How do you find a friend? How do you keep someone's friendship?*

7. *Do you think that feeling emotions helps you to grow up? How? Have you changed because of emotions that you have experienced? What experiences have helped you to grow?*

8. Use the Emotions Vocabulary Chart on the next page to talk about the feelings a person could have. Ask your child to imitate the pictures for a little fun improvisation.

Emotions Vocabulary Chart Alternate



EXHAUSTED



CONFUSED



ECSTATIC



GUILTY



SUSPICIOUS



ANGRY



HYSTERICAL



FRUSTRATED



SAD



CONFIDENT



EMBARRASSED



HAPPY



MISCHIEVOUS



DISGUSTED



FRIGHTENED



ENRAGED



ASHAMED



CAUTIOUS



SMUG



DEPRESSED



OVERWHELMED



HOPEFUL



LONELY



LOVESTRUCK



JEALOUS



BORED



SURPRISED



ANXIOUS



SHOCKED



SHY