



Addiction Graphic Medicine Discussion Guide:

Sobriety: A Graphic Novel by Daniel Maurer and Spencer Amundson

From the publisher...“Through rich illustration and narrative, *Sobriety: A Graphic Novel* offers an inside look into recovery from the perspectives of five Twelve Step group members, each with a unique set of addictions, philosophies, struggles, and successes while working the Steps.”

Why a Graphic Novel?

- Research suggests that we are better at understanding and absorbing information presented in visual forms, such as comics.
- Stories are more engaging than factual information alone. How much easier is it to remember and empathize with something a friend experienced versus hard statistics alone?
- Coined by Ian Williams, a physician in the UK, Graphic Medicine “is the intersection of the medium of comics and the discourse of healthcare.”
 - Graphic medicine, then, combines visual storytelling and medicine, creating a unique opportunity for readers to experience and learn about healthcare experiences through comics.

To Learn More...

- www.graphicmedicine.org – The home base for all things graphic medicine.
- *The Graphic Medicine Manifesto* by MK Czerwiec et al. Available from Penn State University Press.



Created by Matthew Noe as part of the NNLM Region 7 Graphic Medicine Initiative.

This project is funded by the National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and Human Services, under Cooperative Agreement Number UG4LM012347 with the UMass Chan Medical School, Worcester.

Questions for Discussion

1. *Sobriety* introduces us to five radically different perspectives on recovery. Which of these perspectives did you most identify with? Which was the hardest for you to relate to? Why?
2. Did you appreciate the visual aspects of this book? Do you think the format of a graphic novel is more or less effective for a memoir than for a fictional account? How is it different than a memoir written in prose?
3. Does the book remind you of an aspect of your own life? A particular event? A person – like a friend, family member, co-worker, etc.?
4. Can you point to specific passages/panels that struck you personally? Why?
5. Did *Sobriety* change your perspective on addiction and/or addicts? If so, how? If not, why not?
6. Most people have heard of the Twelve Steps recovery program. What was your impression of that program before coming into this book? Did that perspective change after reading *Sobriety*?
7. Shame is a major aspect of addiction, one that is central in *Sobriety*. What is it about shame that makes overcoming addiction so difficult? Is there something that you can do to change that? Something we as a society can do?
8. A great deal of airtime is spent arguing about whether addiction is a disease – and if so, what *kind* of disease. But the medical consensus is that addiction is a disease, not a moral failing. Why do you think this is such a point of controversy in politics, popular media, and society?
9. Have you read other memoirs or stories about addiction? How does *Sobriety* compare to them?
10. As with Matt's story, violence is often a large part of addiction – either as a cause or an effect. Might there be a shared root cause for both violent behavior and addiction? If so, how can we work to eliminate those roots?
11. Would you share *Sobriety* with people in your life? Why or why not?

Remember: These are just suggested questions and there could be many, many more. Don't feel tethered to these – let the conversation flow naturally and use these questions as starting points when conversation stalls.