

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR **THEY BETTER CALL ME SUGAR**

1. Sugar Rodgers grew up in very difficult situations, especially the poverty she experienced and periods of homelessness. Unlike some of her friends and family, she was able to get herself out of these conditions. Other than being a great basketball player, what other factors contributed to this?
2. How did each of Sugar's parents shape her development?
3. Sports provided a way for Sugar to cope with her rough life experiences. What benefits did she accrue through athletic competition? What does her experience suggest about the impact of restrictions on girls and women in sports?
4. When Sugar first started playing golf, her mother was skeptical about the sport. Why would her mother have been concerned about her playing golf?
5. How might Sugar's life have been different if she'd stuck with golf rather than playing basketball?
6. As a kid, Sugar was considered a "tomboy." In today's world, are girls who like sports still considered "tomboys"?
7. Sugar's mother told her "that tomboys still needed to get their hair done." Sugar writes, "As a kid, I didn't agree with her, because I hated it. A hairstyle for me was rocking cornrows." What kinds of special pressures do girls who love sports have to face?
8. As a girl, Sugar would sometimes earn money by competing on the basketball court against drug dealers. Was this a bad decision on her part?
9. Sugar and many of her friends and family didn't like having to interact with the police. What does it say about our society that people who have to cope with a lot of crime in their neighborhoods don't feel comfortable around the police?
10. More than one boy asked Sugar to the senior prom, but she turned them all down. She finally agreed to go with her niece Kakie, though she left as soon as her picture was taken. Why didn't going to the prom interest Sugar very much? Would Sugar's life have gone in a different direction if she was more concerned about having a boyfriend?
11. Sugar writes, "Ultimately, my [college] degree was worth more to me than [playing professional basketball] because nobody could take away my knowledge." Why is her degree so important to her if she earns her living as a professional basketball player?
12. Soon after joining her first WNBA team, the Minnesota Lynx, Sugar had a minor injury and was worried that this would get her kicked off the team. Do you think many athletes have to worry about losing their jobs when they get injured?
13. Sugar describes competition as being just as hard mentally as it is physically. What are some of the mental/emotional challenges that she faced as a top athlete?
14. At the end of the book, Sugar writes about "self-talk and positivity." What is "self-talk"?

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