



## *What does it mean to be a friend*

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. *A List of Cages* tackles very complicated, disturbing, and important issues and questions. While Adam and Julian's relationship is the main subject of the novel, who is the main protagonist? Why?
2. Imagine if you were becoming friends with Julian and he trusted you enough to tell you this story. How do you think you would react? How would it affect your friendship?
3. Julian's life is literally saved by his friendship with Adam. Given that Adam and his friends are seniors and Julian is a freshman, how do you think the next three years of high school will go for Julian?
4. The novel shows how the "system" can easily ignore or steamroll people (teachers are checked out; no one catches the signs of Julian's situation; Emerald's mother and family ignore her birthday). It also shows moments where it works (Delores Carter, chiefly). Do you think it's an accurate portrayal of the world for teenagers? Why or why not?
5. Julian says that his mother's lists are just lists, that they don't actually tell him anything about her. Do you think that's true? What meaning do they have?
6. Do you think Julian will be able to move forward and live a "normal" life? Why or why not? Knowing his story, would you be comfortable if he dated someone close to you? Why or why not?
7. Have you ever known someone with ADHD? How does Adam, if at all, remind you of them?
8. One of the most unsettling parts of the novel is the idea that abuse can occur and no one realizes what's happening. Does that idea make you reconsider how you view the people around you in your school or community? Do you think that was part of the author's intent?
9. Do you agree with Adam's decision to not contact the police about Russell's abuse? Part of the reason he agrees not to is Emerald's argument that Russell will only get a few days of jail time and then be back with Julian. Do you think that would happen? How would you have handled it? Do you agree with Adam's decision regarding the hard drive?
10. The book's title comes from a sentence fairly late in the book: "The things I know stay in my head as I stand on my own two feet at the end of the day, and I walk back to my room with my journal to write my list of cages." What does that mean to you? Does everyone have a list of cages? Are they all the same?