

Your Fire Brunch

Two to eight women. Ninety minutes. Room for all of it.

A companion to Your Fire Years by Colleen Ann Murphy, MD. The four original book rounds are retained below. The conversation cards quote The Fire Pages and Chapter 22. Welcome and hosting notes are adapted for this guide.

Before they arrive

Invite a friend. When you can, include a woman ten years older and one ten years younger. Send a chapter or the free Fire Score link. Print copies of Her Card for the table; it is page two of the score download. Add pens and something good to eat. “No hosting talent required. No matching plates. Nobody cares about your kitchen.”

An invitation you can send

“Come over for coffee, something good to eat, and the conversation we keep meaning to have. Menopause, sex, the absurd bits, and what we want next. Come exactly as you are. Want to pick a day?”

Start with this

You can arrive tired, angry, curious, quiet, or ready to laugh. Nobody owes the table a number, a medical history, a sex story, or a hopeful ending. Passing is always an answer. Ask before offering advice. Keep personal stories at the table; ask permission before photos or sharing.

“What’s your Shrug story?”

You go first. The appointment, the comment, the year you wondered whether it was only you. Listen. Leave room for laughter and for the part that still hurts.

Let the table talk.

The four book rounds

Run two, or all four. Anyone can pass.

1. Recognition: "Which page was you?" Read the line out loud. Let it land.
2. Numbers: "I'm a ____." Share only if you choose. A number is information, never a ranking.
3. Wanting: "The thing nobody tells you about sex after fifty is ____." Optional. Run it only if the table has earned it. Solo, partnered, dating, uninterested: nobody has to want the same thing.
4. Done: "I'm done tolerating ____." Go around twice if you want to.

And what do we want now?

Choose a possibility card. Travel. Pleasure. Food. Learning. A business. A quiet afternoon. Ask what she wants for herself, without turning her answer into homework.

"What did you love doing at ten years old, before anyone was watching? Describe it. Then schedule it."

"What do you wish someone had explained?"

"What would you like help asking about?"

"Describe your laugh. The real one, the one that embarrasses you. When did you last hear it, and who was in the room?"

Bring back the ridiculous.

The book gives you two remotes in one bed, a chin hair with tenure, and a great deal nobody warned us about. Read a favorite passage. Tell your own story. Laugh with one another; nobody's pain has to become the punchline.

Take something with you.

Raise the coffee.

Invite someone to read the Toast. Read the Manifesto together, one line per woman. These are the book's exact words. Nobody has to have reached every feeling or experience in them to belong.

One thing. Your choice.

Choose a question, a next step, or someone to reach out to. It might be a conversation with your clinician, looking up a class, or asking a friend to dinner. Invite a check-in if you want one.

Hand her the match.

Offer each woman a printed copy of Her Card to take home and pass along. It contains the full twelve-item Fire Score, the "handed to me by" and "handing the next one to" lines, and STRIKE UP A CONVERSATION. Leave the names blank unless she wants to fill them in. A page, a text, a conversation: she chooses how to pass it on.

Ninety days later.

Retake your Fire Score at ninety days. Meet again if you want company. Ask: "What has changed—and what is still hard?" Then: "What came up when you felt better?" and "What would you like next?" Relief, grief, no improvement, and new plans all have a place. Nobody has to report progress to keep her seat.

A table is company.

The host is not acting as anyone's clinician. This gathering is for conversation and general education, not diagnosis, treatment, or personal medical advice. Bring treatment questions to a clinician who knows you. The Fire Score is an original tracking tool, not a validated diagnostic test.

Print only what you want.

The kit includes Your Fire Score and Her Card, optional place cards, conversation cards, the full Manifesto, and the Toast. Free resources: unpausedclub.com/fire-brunch and unpausedclub.com/fire-score.

Your Fire Score

Rate each one as you have lived it over the past month. First instinct, no softening. 0 none · 1 mild · 2 moderate · 3 severe · 4 very severe.

The heat. Flashes, sudden sweats, the flush that arrives without warning and the night you wake up soaked

The sleep. Waking between two and four, or not falling off in the first place, or waking early and lying there

The mood floor. Flatness, tearfulness, the drive that used to be there and is not, sadness you cannot pin to a cause

The edge. Irritability, a shorter fuse, inner tension, anger that has surprised or frightened you

The wave. Anxiety, inner restlessness, the panicky feeling that comes up out of nowhere

The fog. Losing the word mid-sentence, walking into rooms, reading the paragraph three times, forgetting the name

The drain. Physical and mental exhaustion that sleep does not fix, running on empty by early afternoon

The wanting, gone quiet. Desire lower than it was, or absent, or something you now manage rather than feel

The dryness. Discomfort, burning, or pain with intimacy, tissue that does not feel the way it used to

The bladder. Urgency, going more often, leaking when you laugh or run, the infection that keeps coming back

The frame. Aching joints, stiffness in the morning, muscles that complain at things that used to be nothing

The mirror. Skin drier or thinner, hair shedding, the reflection that reads as older than you feel

TOTAL: _____ / 48 Date: _____ Signed: _____

"I'm a _____. " Retest at ninety days.

An original tracking instrument from Your Fire Years. Not a diagnosis. Free, scored, and printable at unpausedclub.com/fire-score.

Her Card

The second one is not a mistake. Tear this one out and give it away. Same twelve questions. Same five minutes. Somebody you know has been managing this alone and does not know it has a name. Rate each one as you have lived it over the past month. 0 none · 1 mild · 2 moderate · 3 severe · 4 very severe.

The heat. Flashes, sudden sweats, the flush that arrives without warning and the night you wake up soaked _____

The sleep. Waking between two and four, or not falling off in the first place, or waking early and lying there _____

The mood floor. Flatness, tearfulness, the drive that used to be there and is not, sadness you cannot pin to a cause _____

The edge. Irritability, a shorter fuse, inner tension, anger that has surprised or frightened you _____

The wave. Anxiety, inner restlessness, the panicky feeling that comes up out of nowhere _____

The fog. Losing the word mid-sentence, walking into rooms, reading the paragraph three times, forgetting the name _____

The drain. Physical and mental exhaustion that sleep does not fix, running on empty by early afternoon _____

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The bladder. Urgency, going more often, leaking when you laugh or run, the infection that keeps coming back _____

The frame. Aching joints, stiffness in the morning, muscles that complain at things that used to be nothing _____

The mirror. Skin drier or thinner, hair shedding, the reflection that reads as older than you feel _____

TOTAL: _____ / 48 Date: _____ Signed: _____

"I was a _____. I'm a _____."

This card was handed to me by _____

I am handing the next one to _____

STRIKE UP A CONVERSATION.

With your doctor. With your mother. With your sister. With your daughter.

Then never shut up about it.

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A place at the table.

Cut the outer borders. Fold each card on the dotted line.



01 / THE FIRE PAGES · 3

What do you want?

Not to add to your list, but to remind you that you can still learn and accomplish great things: name one thing you want in the next six months. The best orgasms of your life. Five pull-ups. The perfect cherry pie. Learning to lie back and receive spectacular oral sex without apologizing once or checking the clock, which for some of us is the harder skill. Mastering the at-home hot oil massage. The category is open. The category is very open.

Your Fire Years · The Fire Pages

02 / THE FIRE PAGES · 4

Your first kiss.

Remember your first kiss. Write it in all five senses. Take your time on the fifth.

Your Fire Years · The Fire Pages

Cut along the borders. Pick a card. Passing is always an answer.

03 / CHAPTER 22

Now write yours.

Not a vague one. A list, with places on it, and at least one thing you have never done and have no business attempting.

Your Fire Years · Chapter 22

04 / THE FIRE PAGES · 7

Before anyone was watching.

What did you love doing at ten years old, before anyone was watching? Describe it. Then schedule it.

Your Fire Years · The Fire Pages

Cut along the borders. Pick a card. Passing is always an answer.

05 / THE FIRE PAGES · 10

Not caring counts double.

List three things you can do now that the woman at twenty-five could not. Not caring counts. Not caring counts double.

Your Fire Years · The Fire Pages

06 / THE FIRE PAGES · 9

One woman. One sentence.

Name a woman who made you feel safe. Write one sentence she said to you.

Your Fire Years · The Fire Pages

Cut along the borders. Pick a card. Passing is always an answer.

07 / THE FIRE PAGES · 6

Mention the thermostat.

Write the online review you would leave for perimenopause if it were a hotel. One star is permitted. Be specific about the amenities. Mention the thermostat.

Your Fire Years · The Fire Pages

08 / THE FIRE PAGES · 11

The real laugh.

Describe your laugh. The real one, the one that embarrasses you. When did you last hear it, and who was in the room?

Your Fire Years · The Fire Pages

The Fire Years Manifesto

Read it the way it is meant to be read. Out loud, in company, one line per woman.

They called it the pause. Nobody asked us. So we take the pause out of menopause, and we light the rest of it on fire.

We were told it was just age. Just life. Just menopause. It was just unmeasured.

We do not accept The Shrug.

Normal is not the same as unmeasured. If it matters, we measure it. And we measure only what changes a decision. Feelings get dismissed. Numbers get treated. We arrive as charts now. Trending, dated, un-shruggable. And the chart is the bodyguard. Never the woman.

We were offered too little for so long that too little began to look like all there was. It isn't.

We do not eat less in order to be less. We cannot build armor out of restriction. Muscle is our currency. Strength is what nothing feels like.

We do not whisper about sleep, rage, fog, or desire. Wanting is health. The Shrug survives on silence, and we are done supplying it.

Grace is what they hand you when they have run out of treatment ideas. We declined.

We do not shrink to The Shrug. We ignite.

Thirty-five to eighty-five is fifty years. It is longer than everything before it. Kings get bunting for less.

We were always going to burn. A fever burns the house down. A bonfire is the thing people gather around. We are done being feverish.

We are not asking permission anymore. It is much less impressive than it looks, and it is available to everybody.

We are done being just anything. Just age. Just life. Just menopause. Just normal.

We flip the pillow, and we flip it again, and we show our daughters where the cool side is.

And we do not burn alone. Sisterhood is handing each other the match.

We are not asking for too much. We were never asking for too much.

There is no application. There are no dues. We did not invent this club.

We took it back.

Welcome to your Fire Years. Light it properly, and take your sisters with you.

We are un-effing-paused.

The Toast

For the loud part of the brunch. One woman stands. Everything with a handle gets raised, and coffee counts.

To us.

To the generation that made granny panties a power move.

We are not forty-is-the-new-thirty. We are not fifty-is-the-new-forty. We are not marked-down merchandise hoping to pass for a younger model. Fifty is the new fifty, and fifty is sexy as hell. Not because a magazine allowed it. Because we decided it, and what we decide, we build.

We are not afraid of a number. A number never lifted a barbell. A number never raised a child, buried a parent, started over, built a business, rebuilt a life. We did that. The number just kept count.

Our skin glows because we tend it. Our muscles are strong because we load them. We sleep like women with nothing left to prove. We eat like women who plan to be here a very long time. Our vulvas are plump and juicy and thriving, and if that made anybody at this table flinch, take a sip and catch up.

We have energy for days and standards for miles. We put the fire in grandmother.

And we do none of it alone. Shoulder to shoulder, sister to sister, hot flash to high five. A club. A coven. A cavalry.

These are not our fading years. These are our Fire Years.

And we did not come here to smolder.

We came to blaze.

Clink accordingly. Then never shut up about it.