

Drowning in Timidity

Women, Politeness, and the
Power of Assertive Living

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BOOK CLUB GUIDE

DROWNING IN TIMIDITY

WOMEN, POLITENESS, & THE
POWER OF ASSERTIVE
LIVING

Getting Started

BEFORE JUMPING INTO DISCUSSION:

Considerations for the group leader —

- Envision your role as the responsible facilitator, not the subject matter expert or the boss of the gathering
- Your job here is to confirm date, time, location, and to start, maintain, and end the gathering
- Prepare at least 5 questions in advance, some of which may be used as back-up questions or conversation starters if discussion lags
- Ask group members to contribute prior to or at the start of the group meeting
 - Participants for this book club discussion may benefit from guidance and comfort at first, so consider strategies for making their participation easy (write questions or discussion prompts on slips of paper without their names on them, for example, that get drawn from a bowl)
- Step up and step back as discussion ebbs and flows. Clarify any vague responses by asking follow-up questions.
- Realize that silence is not the enemy. With this book, we're trying to build assertiveness, so allow participants time to gather their thoughts and build up the nerve to contribute
- Avoid spending the entire session on one topic
- End book discussion on time, even if the socializing continues

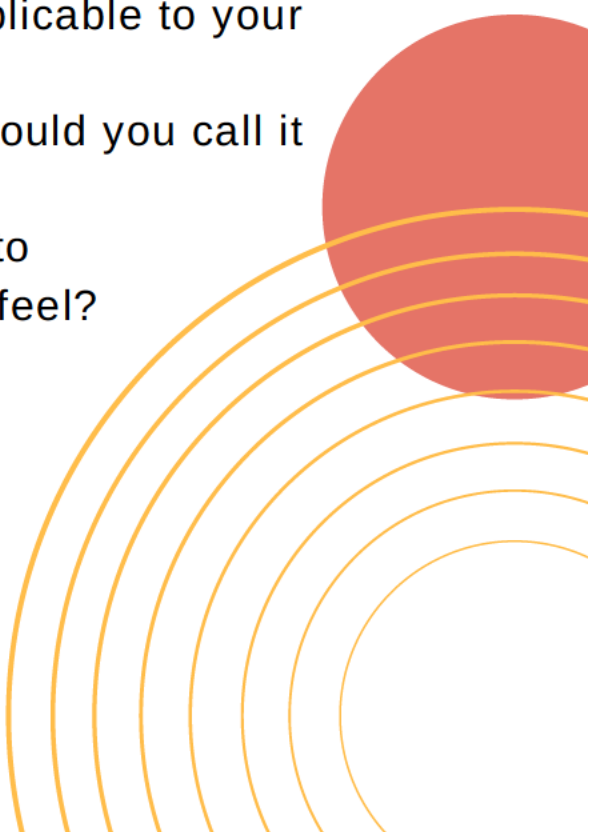


Discussion Questions

BOOK OVERVIEW

- How did this book make you feel as you were reading?
- Would you read another book by this author? Why or why not?
- Did you do the exercises suggested in the book? Why or why not?
- How did you think of assertiveness before reading this book? Does the author change the way you think and feel about assertiveness?
- How do you feel about the assertive women in your life? Did the book change the way you view them?
- What was the most useful concept or tool you are taking away from the book?
- Are there suggestions you do not plan to follow? Why?
- In what way does the book feel most applicable to your life right now?
- What do you think of the book's title? Would you call it something else?
- What do you think the cover was meant to convey? How does the cover make you feel?

ASSERTIVENESS

- Were you raised to be assertive?
 - How did your parents expect you to set boundaries?
 - Has anyone had any assertiveness training? If so, when and where?
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ASSERTIVENESS

- In what spaces are you comfortable being assertive?
- Where or with whom does assertiveness feel difficult or impossible?
- Who will admit to resorting to passive-aggressive behavior? Does it accomplish what you want?
- Who will admit to aggressive behavior (steamrolling)? What does it cost you when you use that strategy?
- Do you understand how to stay in assertiveness, rather than slip into passive-aggressiveness or aggressive behaviors?
- Has anyone tried clear, direct communication with a friend or partner since reading the book? How did that go?
- What exercises from the book have you been trying?
- What is the hardest part of engaging assertively for you?
- How can we help each other take the book from thought to action?

ACCOUNTABILITY

- What did the authors' examples about racism and other political issues make you consider about your own behavior?
- If we did a self-assessment right here, in what relationships do you know you have more work to do to engage assertively? (**Self**-assessment. Avoid the easy temptation to point out others' areas for growth.)
- How are you measuring your practice and growth?
- Are there any relationships you believe aren't worth the effort? Why?
- Are we only engaging assertively in relationships where we have authority or seniority?
- Are we using assertiveness for ourselves or against others? Is that assertiveness?
- What part of the other person's negotiation are we responsible for?



RAISING ANGRY GIRLS

- How does the title of this section make you feel?
- Do you wish you had been encouraged to express anger when you were younger?

Note: Recognize that there are often people who have experienced sexual harassment and assault in groups of any size. Depending upon familiarity, trust, and comfort level, a participant may share uncomfortable experiences from the past. Do not shut them down. Do not share someone else's story.

Tread carefully and respectfully. Avoid victim-blaming. Avoid why or why didn't you questions. Remember, even the most assertive person you know may not be able to stop someone from harming them or others, and the only person who deserves blame for harm is the person who cause the harm.

24-Hour Support Hotlines and Online Resources

National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-4673 www.rainn.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233 www.thehotline.org

1 in 6 (men and boys) 24-hour online chat 1in6.org

Trevor Lifeline (LGBTQ youth) 1-866-488-7386 www.thetrevorproject.org

RAISE ANGRY GIRLS

- Did you realize that the author has worked in sexual harassment and assault prevention? How does that impact how you feel about her advice?
- How do you balance wanting to raise well-behaved children and wanting them to feel empowered to stop someone who is making them uncomfortable?
- Did any of the sex ed or sexual assault prevention training you had seem effective? Do we think the sex ed young adults and teens are getting today has improved?

ASSERTIVENESS AT WORK

- Have you ever negotiated your salary?
- Have you ever asked for a raise?
- What non-monetary work conditions might you be able to ask for?
- How regularly do you participate in meetings?
- What is stopping you from participating more often?
- Do you have a mentor or sponsor?
- Do other women in your workplace engage assertively? Aggressively?
- How can we support each other to engage more assertively in our respective fields?

FINAL THOUGHTS

- Remember, assertiveness is a skill that can be learned.
- Practice is required, and people cannot read your mind.
- You won't always get your way.
- What one thing will you do in the next 24 hours to assert yourself? In the next 7 days?