

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Thank you for reading *Stay Calm and Dance On*. I hope you enjoyed the novel. If your book club is looking for something out of the ordinary, then this cozy science-fiction fits the bill! Here are some topics to enhance your reading experience.

The book's title is a metaphor for handling life's unexpected situations. Something gets you down, you get back up (not always easy to do), but you try your best to push through—and keep going. In other words, dance on. One foot in front of the other.

There are plenty of unexpected situations in *Stay Calm and Dance On*. The big one, of course, Nancy learning her mother is an alien, isn't something any of us will experience. But it's fun to use your imagination in thinking "what if?"

1. In Chapter 4, Nancy and Charlene discuss their mothers. Charlene's is a social butterfly; Nancy's a social introvert. From a young age, Nancy thought her mother was "alien" because she was so different from her friends' moms. When she found out her mother literally *was* an extraterrestrial, she felt denial, anger, and more before reaching acceptance. What if you were told a family member was from another planet, how would you react?
2. Should Trixie have waited so long to tell her daughter about her heritage? What are the pros and cons of revealing a family secret?
3. Grief is not a theme in the book, but it seemed to pop up anyway. Milly's husband died ten years before our story starts. In Chapter 7, Milly says, ". . . God and Willy would not want me to be angry." Yet she slams the refrigerator door when talking to Rigel about Willy's illness. Milly had her family, faith, and friends to sustain her. Not everyone is that lucky. When does one seek help with their grief? How does a friend or family member identify when a person is struggling and what can they do to help?
4. Charlene had never lived anywhere except Texas and never far from family. In Chapter 4, she tells Nancy there was nothing left but memories after the movers sucked her home dry. Grief can come not only from death, but other major losses in life. In a sense, Charlene felt she'd lost her old life in Texas and wasn't prepared for a new life in Wyoming's "sagebrush sea." A picture in her office (Chapter 23) included a quote: "You cannot discover new oceans unless you have the courage to lose sight of the shore." How did Charlene feel about that? Have you ever needed courage "to lose sight of the shore" for new adventures/events in your life?
5. In Chapter 29, the Dancing Divas are hesitant to enter the rainforest biodome for fear of what they'll encounter, but together they go in. It wasn't easy, but their decision ends in success. Anything you've dreaded to do that turned into an unexpected joy? Did you do it alone or with others?

6. Did you catch the song references throughout the book? We all know music has multiple health benefits, including boosting energy and mood. Joan gets a little loopy going through the portal the first time and tells Rigel she did a sexy dance for her boyfriend to “Black Velvet” (by Alannah Myles, Chapter 14). Come on! Tell us! What song inspires your sexiness? Is there a certain type of music, or a particular song, that makes you happy and energized?

What about other emotions? Is there a song you avoid because it makes you sad? Or a song that immediately recalls happy memories?

7. In Chapter 23, Nancy says, “I sing everywhere but in public.” Break out the microphone. It’s Karaoke Time! Put together your best girl group or single act. You can easily search for the lyrics on your phone. For inspiration, there are 37 songs alluded to in *Stay Calm and Dance On*. Can you find them? (See next page for list of songs.) Another fun one is Dolly Parton’s “9 to 5” which is not on the list, but it’s the Divas’ next recital piece in the sequel. So, sing like no one is watching and DANCE ON!



If you have comments or ideas for discussion points, please pass them on to me at sharonobert@charter.net or comment on Facebook (Sharon Obert). Thank you, again.

SONG REFERENCES

from

STAY CALM AND DANCE ON

1. Black Velvet – Alannah Myles (1990)
2. Bobby McGee – Janis Joplin (released posthumously 1971)
3. Chain of Fools – Aretha Franklin (1967)
4. Cherish – The Association (1966)
5. Cry Baby – Janis Joplin (released posthumously 1971)
6. Every Breath (You) I Take – The Police (1983)
7. Fever – Peggy Lee (1958)
8. Friends in Low Places – Garth Brooks (1990)
9. Funny Girl – From the musical *Funny Girl* (1968)
10. Getting to know you – From the musical *The King and I* (1951)
11. Girl on Fire – Alicia Keys (2012)
12. Heartbreak Hotel – Elvis Presley (1956)
13. I Love a Rainy Night – Eddie Rabbitt (1999)
14. It's a Small World After All - New York World's Fair Disney ride (1964)
15. John Deere Green – Joe Diffie (1993)
16. Kosmic Blues – Janis Joplin (1969)
17. Last Train to Clarksville – The Monkees (1966)
18. Lola – The Kinks (1970)
19. Midnight Mary – Joey Powers (1964)
20. Piano Man – Billy Joel (1973)
21. Piece of my Heart – Janis Joplin (1968)
22. Queen of the Night – aria from Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (1791)
23. Rainbow Bridge – Jimi Hendrix (compilation album released posthumously 1971)
24. Razzle Dazzle – Richard Gere (From musical *Chicago* 2002)
25. Respect – Aretha Franklin (1967)
26. Rock On! – Michael Damian (1989)
27. Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay – Otis Redding (Released posthumously 1968)
28. Stop! In the Name of Love – The Supremes (1965)
29. Sucker – Jonas Brothers (2019)
30. Sunrise, Sunset – From the musical *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964)
31. The Happiest Girl in the Whole U.S.A. – Donna Fargo (1972)
32. The times they are a-changin' – Bob Dylan (1964)
33. These Boots Are Made for Walking – Nancy Sinatra (1966)
34. Think – Aretha Franklin (1968)
35. To Life! – From the musical *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964)
36. Today – The New Christy Minstrels (1964)
37. We are Family – Sly and the Family Stone (1979)