

THE BALANCE PROJECT

Book Club Discussion Guide

I hope this guide enhances your book club's discussion of THE BALANCE PROJECT: A Novel. Please note that the questions below will give away elements of the plot, so we recommend you read the book before reviewing the guide.

1. For readers with children: before you had your kids, what did you think you were going to do professionally when they were born: Go back to work full time? Be a full-time stay-at-home mother? Work part time? Something else entirely? Did you change your mind once they were born? Six months later?
2. For readers with children: how have your feelings about combining work and motherhood changed as your children have grown up?
3. For readers who are planning on having children: what are your thoughts on combining work and motherhood? How have those feelings been influenced?
4. Do you think women judge each other's choices on this issue too harshly?
5. What are your thoughts on work-life balance? How do you balance your own life?
6. What are your thoughts on having it all? Do you think you can, like Katherine wrote in her book *The Balance Project*, or do you ascribe more to Dr. Elaine Ireland's opinions on the matter?
7. Why do you think some women feel this need to do "it all"? What is it in our society that feeds that?
8. Lucy puts her career advancement (applying for a new job in digital media) on hold out of loyalty toward Katherine. Have you ever done that? Tell about a time when you boldly went for your professional goals.
9. Did you think Lucy was justified in giving Daniel, the New York Post journalist, information for his article about Katherine?
10. Did you feel badly for Katherine when the Post article came out or do you think she got what was coming to her?
11. Lucy said she thought Katherine wanted someone to blow her cover. Do you think Katherine meant that? Have you ever wanted to blow the cover off something about yourself? About someone else? Have you done it? If not, do you plan to?
12. Lucy feared marriage because of her parents' experience. Do/did you have fears about marriage? What in your own life prompted those fears? If you were able to overcome them, how did you do it?
13. What did you think of the two-word note Nick left Lucy at Union Square Cafe the night she was very late for their date?
14. In chapter nine, Katherine talks about having imposter syndrome. Have you ever felt like that?
15. Should Lucy have told Katherine about Theo's affair as soon as it happened? Have you ever been in that position?
16. Kyle Jackson calls Lucy a "meant-to-be girl" in the cafeteria in chapter eleven. Do you think Kyle was right about Lucy? Has anyone ever called you anything that made you so mad but that you realized was true and that spurred you to do something?

17. Should Lucy have forgiven Katherine and vice versa? Do you think either of their transgressions was worse than the other?
18. Were you surprised Katherine quit her job at Green Goddess? Why or why not?
19. What do you think of the new organization Project: Balance? Do you have any out-of-the-box ideas for changing the climate for working women?
20. Were you surprised about what awaited Lucy when she went into Carlo's in the last scene? How and where did you get engaged? Was it a surprise? What would your dream engagement look like?
21. Quotes are a big part of Lucy's life, and Ava and Nick both recognize this. What is your favorite quote in the book and why? Do you have a favorite quote? If so, please share it with the group.
22. In chapter twenty-two, Maggie Stern says: "I know I'm not the best at being, how shall we say this, nice. Unfortunately, it's not enough that I'm overqualified for my job, an effective negotiator, and a competent manager. I have to be nice in the workplace, too. You never see anyone complaining that the men around here aren't nice. Just another double standard for women in the workplace." What are your thoughts on this?
23. Whom do you think Lucy learned the most from: Katherine? Theo? Her family? Which lesson was most valuable? What's the most valuable lesson you ever learned from someone you respect?
24. What's your biggest takeaway from this book?
25. Do you wish it had ended differently? If so, how?
26. Could you identify in any way with Lucy or Katherine? Or both at different stages in your life? In what ways?
27. If you read Susie's debut novel *On Grace*, how did her two books compare? Which did you like more? Did you enjoy Grace's cameo in *The Balance Project: A Novel*?

Be sure to take a photo of your book club with each member holding up a copy of *The Balance Project: A Novel*. Post it to Susie's Facebook page (SusieOrmanSchnall) or tweet it to her (@susieschnall), and she may share it with her followers!