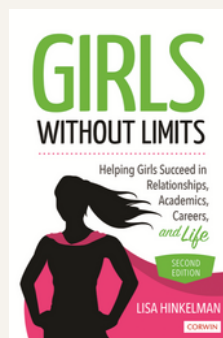


GIRLS WITHOUT LIMITS

Book Study Discussion Guide

*A guide for parents, caregivers and mentors
to help girls succeed in relationships,
academics, careers and life*



Includes conversation starters and reflections for your book club discussions

A WELCOME FROM THE AUTHOR: DR. LISA HINKELMAN

Hello there!

You have no idea how thrilled I am that you have picked up my book and –even more – this book study guide! I still have to pinch myself every time I am reminded that this second edition of *Girls Without Limits* is a best-seller with Corwin Press and is serving as a guide to thousands of parents, caregivers, mentors, counselors, teachers and educational leaders across the country.

I have poured my heart and soul into working with, researching, counseling, educating and empowering girls for more than fifteen years - both as a professor of Counselor Education at The Ohio State University and as the Founder/CEO of Ruling Our eXperiences (ROX). ROX is a non-profit organization devoted to the health, safety, education and empowerment of girls (www.rulingourexperiences.org) and has impacted more than 30,000 girls across the country and leads the nation in producing original research centered on girls' lived-experiences.

At ROX, our focus is on developing a deep understanding of the issues facing girls and then using our research to effectively equip girls, and their adult influencers, with the tools they need to navigate the challenges that they face during the teenage years. While I am very aware that not all girls experience the *exact* same things and have the *exact* same struggles, I do know that there are significant similarities in what girls see, hear and experience during their growing up years. I also know that the adolescent and teen years can impact the way that a girl: learns to cope, manage her emotions, love her body, define her relationships, set interpersonal boundaries and plan her future. This is why it is so important to me that she is well-prepared with the skills and competencies she needs to handle the hard stuff *and* that the adults who are helping her figure it all out are also giving her the support and encouragement that she needs to reach her full potential.

My hope is that by reading this book and spending time with other girl-champions discussing the concepts, ideas and case studies, you will be challenged to approach your interactions with girls with a new, empowering lens and develop some hands-on, concrete strategies to implement immediately in your day-to-day conversations with girls.

Please reach out to our team if we can be an additional support for your conversations in any way. The ROX staff is available for programming, consultation, guest speaking and professional development and we can be reached at 614-488-8080 or at info@rulingourexperiences.com.

With sincere gratitude and appreciation,

Lisa Hinkelman, Ph.D.
Author, *Girls Without Limits*
Founder, *Ruling Our eXperiences*



TIPS ON LEADING THE DISCUSSION GROUP

As the book club facilitator think of yourself as the conversation starter not the person who has to be the expert on the book. You have the opportunity to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to respectfully share their opinions of the book with the group and to help encourage discussion of the concepts and ideas presented. You aren't required to know all of the answers, but you are the person who can help keep the conversation flowing and the ideas generating!

THE ROLE OF THE LEADER: TO FACILITATE THE CONVERSATION

1. Be prepared and ready for each group discussion. Ensure you've read the chapter(s) being discussed and reviewed the suggested talking points. You may want to add questions that aren't included in this guide or go in an entirely different direction. Go for it – these are just suggestions to get you started!
2. Create a comfortable space for sharing thoughts and ideas. You may want to set expectations at the first meeting of your club. Things you might think about or address at your first gathering might be:
 - Length of meeting time and meeting schedule. How many times do you want to gather and for how long each time?
 - Clarity around your role. You are here to help start the discussion and keep it moving, not to be the teacher or the expert.
 - How will the group agree to keep the participants' sensitive stories, opinions and contributions private/confidential? Sometimes providing a suggestion such as, *"What is said here stays here, but what is learned here leaves here"* can help everyone know that the conversation is not "secret", but that sharing details of personal stories or struggles outside of the group conversation is not cool.
 - Occasionally remind participants that all ideas, opinions and experiences shared during the meetings hold equal value and will be respected.
3. Keep the meeting on track as you are able and end the sessions on time. Setting up an expectation at the start shows all members that you respect their time and it will also ensure that participants regularly attend the meetings. If sessions regularly go over the scheduled time, attendance will likely drop off.
4. Manage the conversation and member participation. Ensure that each person is able to share their thoughts and opinions and that no member is dominating the conversation or remaining silent during the meetings. Tangents and personal story-telling/sharing anecdotes will happen, and while these conversations can add richness and dimension, sometimes, re-focusing the conversation can ensure everyone is part of the discussion.

5. Ask members to briefly give their opinion on the chapter/topic at the beginning of the meeting. If a member has been quiet throughout the previous sessions, consider starting a session by offering them a chance to share their thoughts or insights.
6. Model respectful communication for your group and intervene if a topic becomes heated or disrespectful. Civil discourse, our ability to discuss and disagree respectfully, is important for learning and it is our different opinions and our shared experiences that create the best learning environments.

GENERAL STRATEGIES AND TIPS: PROMOTE GREAT DISCUSSIONS

1. You do not have to feel pressured to agree, disagree or comment on every statement made by a reader.
 - Turn questions or topics back to the group by asking, "What do others think about Courtney's comment?"
2. Ask open ended questions.
 - Avoid yes/no, true/false or multiple choice questions. Say, "Share some of your thoughts on this week's reading" rather than "Did you like the reading this week?"
3. Ask follow up questions to deepen the breadth or depth of the conversation.
 - "Tell us more about ..." or "Could you share an example ..."
4. Make connections between members' comments and ideas.
 - Link group members' comments to each other and the questions. "Max, I noticed you were shaking your head in agreement when Kylie was speaking. Do you have a similar thought?"
5. Facilitate discussion rather than teach or lecture. By allowing other members in the group answer questions first, you will promote conversation and help everyone feel like their opinions matter.
6. As you promote a dialogue, you'll want to ensure that the participants are looking around at one another, not directing their comments to you as the "leader". You may have to model this for the group when you and/or others are talking.
7. Try to be comfortable with some amount of silence. Don't feel like you have to jump in if no one answers a question or a prompt immediately. Sometimes, people may need to think and process before they respond. As awkward as it may feel, part of being a good facilitator is being comfortable with silence.
 - If the silence feels like it is going on too long, the members may need you to clarify, expand upon or rephrase the question.
8. At the end of each meeting, determine when the next book study session will be held as well as which chapter(s) should be read in preparation.

STRATEGIES FOR STAYING ON TRACK: MANAGING ENGAGEMENT

Sometimes group members may talk too much or not enough. As the facilitator, you can help encourage conversation by helping guide the discussion, and at times, intervene if necessary.

The over-talker

- Cut in on a long-winded group member with, "That's an interesting point you just made. Did anyone else get the same impression or a different one?", "You've made some interesting points, Amy. Let's hear from another reader. Holly? What did you think?", or even, "Amy, I need to interrupt you for a second because I saw Holly trying to jump in."

The non-talker

- Engage silent readers by posing open-ended questions directly. But don't badger the members who really don't want to overtly participate. Some individuals learn by observing and taking in what others are saying rather than speaking themselves. Try asking, "What did you agree or disagree with in the chapter, David?"
- Some people speak a lot and others do not. It is not our job to force anyone to speak, they may be getting the benefit they desire by attending and listening. If somebody is fully engaged in the process but only chooses to speak occasionally, there's really no need to 'do' anything about it.

The tangent starter

- You may find that a member of the group easily gets off on tangents and can take the conversation into an entirely different direction than what was intended. There are times when this diversion can be helpful or productive, but there are times where the discussion can be negatively impacted by the tangent. If you notice this happening, you might say, "Let's get back to the end of chapter 4. What did you think at this point?" or "I have a question about the situation on page 125. What's really happening here?", or "Before we get too far down that path, let's try to wrap up this part first."

The insensitive person

- It's difficult to imagine a good discussion without some differing opinions or some level of disagreement. However, there are ways to express a difference of opinion in a constructive way that builds trust and openness within the group.
- If you feel that someone in your group is too vocal or insensitive in their disagreement with another member, consider taking the person aside and gently pointing out what you observed and/or how it impacted another member. You might say, "I noticed that when you were disagreeing with Tom's comments, he seemed to shut down and didn't speak up again for the entire session. Did you happen to notice that?"

The interrupter

- There is often an interrupter in a group discussion. This is a person who doesn't let others complete their thoughts or ideas before sharing their own. In being respectful to all group members, it is important to control interruptions by saying, "Hold that thought, Sheryl. We'll want to hear it again once Angie has finished."

The expert

- You may find that your group has an "expert" – a person who believes that they have all of the right answers and approaches to each topic or situation and states their position firmly and as though they come from a place of authority. Sometimes this person can intimidate or annoy the others in the group so you'll want to ensure that you reiterate that different experiences and different approaches work for various relationships and families and that we are all coming to these conversations to explore and learn.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

HOW TO USE THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE: PREPARING TO START

The goal of this guide is to provide prompts that can help facilitate discussion in a casual setting. Included are a set of general conversation starter questions that can be applied to any chapter as well as chapter specific questions for prompting deeper conversation.

GENERAL CONVERSATION STARTERS: TO USE WITH ANY CHAPTER

- What were your big takeaways from this chapter?
- What challenged you about this chapter?
- What are you thinking about differently because of this chapter?
- What new ideas or strategies that were highlighted in this chapter have you tried or are you planning to try? What was the outcome?
- What are you still wondering after reading this chapter?

CHAPTER 1: WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON FOR GIRLS, AND HOW CAN WE HELP THEM?

- Why do you want to take part in this book study? What information are you hoping to gain and learn?
- Do you believe that the "drama" cited in the chapter is just a natural part of being a girl, or is it something that has been made up?
- In the section titled, "How Can We Help Girls?" what have you already tried with your girl? What might you want to work on or try to implement?

CHAPTER 2: STREAKS, LIKES, FOLLOWERS, AND FRIENDS: THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN GIRLS' LIVES

- What were your reactions to taking the "Do you have tech biases" quiz?
- While monitoring social media and being aware of how your girl is engaging with technology is an important part of keeping her safe, this chapter highlights that monitoring and setting limits cannot be our only strategy. Keeping girls safe online requires skill building and preparation, much like driving a car! What are the skills girls need to safely navigate technology and social media? What can you do to help your girl build these necessary skills?

- After reading this chapter, how do you see yourself approaching conversations about social media with your girl?

CHAPTER 3: BEING A GIRL TODAY IS HARD: GENDER ROLES, BODY IMAGE, AND CONFIDENCE

- What types of expectations did you experience growing up and how are those expectations similar or different to what your girl is likely seeing or hearing? Where do you see restricting or empowering messages given to girls? If you have a boy in your life as well, do you feel that expectations differ?
- How do you see social media and culture playing a role in your girl's self-esteem and self-worth? How much of an influence has it been on her physical appearance, attitude, future goals, and expectations for herself?
- In what ways can you transition your language away from external attributes to internal qualities to further support your girl's self-esteem?

CHAPTER 4: MEAN GIRLS: DEALING WITH DRAMA AND RELATIONSHIPS

- Do you feel that you commonly handle conflict passively, passive-aggressively, aggressively, or assertively? How might this effect how your girl manages conflict?
- When your girl comes to you regarding conflict with a peer, how do you typically respond? How does your girl typically respond?

CHAPTER 5: RELATIONSHIPS, DATING, AND COERCION: DEVELOPING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS IN AN AGE OF SEXTING, SWIPING, AND SNAPPING

- After reading this chapter, do you think differently about how to react to conversations/observations on romantic relationships or "advice" you may have given? What might you do differently?
- Think about the idea of "starting the conversation" regarding healthy dating relationships – how might you start the conversation with your girl?

CHAPTER 6: "LIGHTEN UP," "I WAS JUST JOKING," "BOYS WILL BE BOYS," AND OTHER STUFF GIRLS HEAR: ADDRESSING DISRESPECT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- What were your reactions to reading about gender-based disrespect?

- What types of conversations have you had (or do you hope to have!) with your girl regarding disrespect and sexual harassment?
- What resonated with you or challenged you after reading the section “*What About the Girls Who Are ‘Asking for It’?*”

CHAPTER 7: LOOKING OUT FOR GIRLS: IDENTIFYING AND PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- What types of conversations have you had (or do you hope to have!) with your girl regarding sexual violence in relationships?
- The concept of victim blame can be a really hard one to understand. What resonated with you, or challenged you, after reading about this concept?
- What are some of the ways you can help your girl practice standing up for herself, sharing her opinion and communicating assertively?

CHAPTER 8: THE PRESSURE TO BE PERFECT: STRESS AND COPING IN AN AGE OF PERFECTIONISM AND HELICOPTER PARENTS

- What were your reactions to reading about perfectionism?
- Have you noticed perfectionistic tendencies impacting your girl or other girls?
- What are some ways you can help your girl build a growth mindset?
- What are some behaviors or strategies you could role model to help your girl cope with stress and build her confidence in herself?

CHAPTER 9: ACADEMIC OR INSTAGRAM INFLUENCER? WHY GIRLS FEEL THEY HAVE TO CHOOSE

- Does your girl feel proud of her intelligence? How do you know?
- Consider the concepts of *plasticity* and *nature vs. nurture*. What new awareness do you have on these concepts as they apply to your girl's interest, activities, and future goals?
- What are some opportunities that your girl may need that will help her consider her potential and future possibilities?

CHAPTER 10: WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP? HOW STEREOTYPES ARE HOLDING GIRLS BACK

- Think about your own career decision-making process. What were your influences? What do you think is currently influencing your girl?
- What types of conversations have you had with your girl surrounding career aspirations and goals? What does she like to do? What is she good at? How does she think about what is possible for herself?
- How might your girl be exposed to a wide range of occupational options, including career where she might not see many women?

CHAPTER 11: CEOS, POLITICIANS, AND SUPERINTENDENTS: BUT WHERE ARE ALL THE FEMALE LEADERS?

- What leadership traits do you see in your girl? Does she see these traits in herself? How can you help be become aware of her own traits of leadership?
- How can you support your girl in leadership endeavors or provide exposure to leadership experiences?
- How can you support your girl if she doesn't find success in a situation where she tries to take the lead?

CHAPTER 12: WHAT GIRLS WANT

- Think about the themes of communication and trust between you and your girl. What do you think is working well? How do you know it is working? What would you change to improve your communication and connection?
- Which of the chapter themes resonated the most with you regarding your relationship with your girl?

CHAPTER 13: WHAT GIRLS NEED

- Which "needs" from this chapter do you feel are a struggle for you and your girl?
- How can you support your girl being the expert in her own life, even when you may disagree with her viewpoints or choices?
- How do you know that you are supporting your girl in the way that she wants to be supported?
- In what ways do you express a hopeful and optimistic attitude toward your girl's growth and development?