

## **Surrounded by Awesome Women Book Club Questions**

### WOMEN WHO RESONATED WITH YOU

1. Who was your favorite character? Did she resonate with you? What was the key takeaway? To thank this woman for sharing her story, will you reach out to this person on LinkedIn and let her know how her story impacted you?
2. What is the role of Network Power described on [page 191](#) in **Chapter Nine** "Powerful Networks Pave the Way" in how women are judged?
3. By these women courageously sharing their stories, they aim to help others. Did you experience similar stories to these women, or do you believe everyone's story is different? Will you share your story with other women?
4. The emotionally charged topics of vulnerable caretakers (described in **Chapter Four** "The Birth of Necessity and Flexibility Entrepreneurs" on [page 96](#)), unsolicited attraction (**Chapter Seven** "How Awesome Women Confront Sexism" starting on [page 151](#)) and flexible work arrangements (**Chapter Four** "The Birth of Necessity and Flexibility Entrepreneurs" starting on [page 81](#)) are addressed in this book. What can you do to offer your support? How can you speak up when you witness blatant injustices?

### IMPROVING WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENTS

5. Do you know anyone with a side job, or a sidepreneur? Do you know any women who are small business owners?
6. In **Chapter Six** "Misfits Awaken and Sidepreneurs Embark," on [page 132-133](#) a job which is a perfect fit is described. Do you know someone in a job which is a misfit? Are they high or low performers at work? How can you change this culture to create an enjoyable work culture?
7. How does gender inequality impact your workplace? Which steps can you take to make your workplace more equal, open, and with a sense of belonging? Why are there some careers which have gender equality?
8. In **Chapter Five** "Institutional Betrayal Ignites the Courage Within," on [page 111](#) betrayal is discussed often including the terms betrayal blindness, betrayal trauma, institutional blindness, and institutional sexism. The common denominator tends to be DARVO - Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim, and Offender which is described on [page 126](#). Have you witnessed DARVO in action?
9. Do you feel Institutional Courage, discussed in **Chapter Seven** on [page 155](#) could be the solution to stopping DARVO when it happens to a survivor?
10. In **Chapter Ten** "Stop Advising Women to Gain Confidence," we learn on [page 209](#) women lack confidence harms women's progression. Executive Presence, as described on [page 217 -220](#), is a way to show confidence in certain workplaces which is deemed as "confident" yet may lead to a proliferation of incompetent leaders. Please discuss if you agree or disagree.

### OPINIONS ON BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

11. Would you consider starting a business? If so, where do you fall on the model discussed in **Chapter Two** "The Awesome Women's Incubator Model" starting on [page 45](#)? If you would not consider it, why not? If you are unsure, when would be a good time career wise?
12. In **Chapter Six** "Misfits Awaken and Sidepreneurs Embark," on [page 146-147](#) Rhonda's journey did not work out. How do you feel about her attempt and her failed journey? Was it a waste of time and money? Did it resonate with you?
13. When launching a business, a key incentive is the flexible work arrangements. Because of this flexibility they gain, do you believe entrepreneurs have real jobs? How would you define a real job?

14. In **Chapter Ten** “Stop Advising Women to Gain Confidence” starting on [page 238](#), successful woman owned businesses are discussed. What are your thoughts on what make a woman’s business successful?
15. How does Cleise Gomes’s story in **Chapter Ten** “Stop Advising Women to Gain Confidence” on [page 241](#) about being an immigrant to the United States compare with your version of other stories of entrepreneurs? Is her story more acceptable because it is a story of being the American Dream? Compare it to [Hannah Anderson’s on page 239-241](#).
16. In **Chapter Eleven** “Entrepreneurs Who Inspire Us,” on [page 244-246](#), [Wendy Baumann](#) grew an incredible business of WWBIC which offers loans to women business owners. What are you feelings about taking on debt to start a business? Do you see the value of groups like the Doyenne group ([page 251-253](#)) and the author’s business MalamaDoe which offer a supportive community?

#### WOMEN’S CAREER PROGRESSION

17. In terms of women’s relationships with each other, can women be not only mentors, but sponsors for each other? How woman take action and sponsor women?
18. In **Chapter Seven** “How Awesome Women Confront Sexism,” the Mentoring Monday event on [pages 159-161](#) and [Suzanne’s story on page 163-165](#), the role men play can enhance or detract from women’s advancement. In **Chapter Eight** “Combatting the Macro Effects of Microaggression” [Dave Vasko](#) relays in [page 179-180](#) the role men play is described as critical. Do you see men making inroads in helping women?
19. In **Chapter Ten** “Stop Advising Women to Gain Confidence,” the story of [Jane Finette on page 223-226](#) depicts how she exited an incredibly successful technology career. Did this book change how you look at career switchers? Favorably or non-favorably?
20. Throughout the book, why women leave technology companies and careers comes up from **Chapter One** “Brusque Endings Create New Professional Realities” on [page 25](#) the [authors](#) medical diagnosis, to **Chapter Five** “Institutional Betrayal Ignites the Courage Within” on [page 111](#), [Jen Schwartz’s](#) exodus from an engineering firm. Do you understand why they would want to leave?
21. Do younger professionals do not experience the friction older professionals had to tolerate? Discuss how **Chapter Ten** “Stop Advising Women to Gain Confidence” [Anne Machesky on page 220-223](#) had to be tough as nails in the 1980s. How does it compares with the portrayal in the media of [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s in Chapter Eight](#) “Combatting the Macro Effects of Microaggression” ([page 183-188](#)). How do both resonate with you?
22. In **Chapter Six** “Misfits Awaken and Sidepreneurs Embark,” on [page 148](#), [Colleen McFarland](#) believes younger workers need data to feel connected to receive needed assistance and leads to them feeling more reassured. Do you believe this need for data demonstrates a lack of confidence?
23. As [Sharlen Moore](#) did by creating Urban Underground in **Chapter Nine** “Powerful Networks Pave the Way” on [page 203-207](#), why don’t you use your network power ([page 199](#)) to speak up at work when you witness injustices and people who do not fit into the norm being dismissed.

#### STALLED CAREERS

24. Why do women choose to not move up the ladder? What is the role of exhaustion, both physical and emotional, in ones drive to progress professionally? In **Chapter Three** “The Inspiring Opportunity Entrepreneur” on [page 67](#) and **Chapter Eleven** “Entrepreneurs Who Inspire Us” on [page 235](#), we hear about women how make it work. How do women like [Amanda Baltz](#) ([page 250](#)) do it all.
25. In **Chapter Six** “Misfits Awaken and Sidepreneurs Embark” on [page 140](#), do you know any technology refugees?

26. Vulnerable caretakers are discussed **Chapter Four** “The Birth of Necessity and Flexibility Entrepreneurs” on [page 96](#). Do Stay-At-Home-Moms need help? Is the grass greener on the other side? Give your thoughts on the differences in the stories of how Carrie ([page 98-99](#)) exited her career, Maggie Cain ([page 107-108](#)) paused her business and Savita Thakur Love ([page 99](#)) continued on professionally.
27. In **Chapter Seven** “How Awesome Women Confront Sexism,” while selling services to their clients, Kellie Freeze ([page 151-154](#)) and Jean Grow ([page 166-170](#)) were recipients of unsolicited attraction and had to walk away from their careers because of harassment. They had to reevaluate and rectify their priorities. How do you feel about this?
28. At times in the workplace, injustices occur which are so unexpected we do not know how to respond. This is evident in many of the stories in the book. These women seemed to be in shock when unbelievable events occurred professionally. Have you experienced something similar?
  - Cindy Machles ([page 103-104](#)) with caring for a sick parent in **Chapter Four** “The Birth of Necessity and Flexibility Entrepreneurs”
  - Nadiyah Johnson ([page 129-133](#)) with dealing with hair discrimination in **Chapter Six** “Misfits Awaken and Sidepreneurs Embark”
  - Jean Grow ([page 166-170](#)) who is propositioned by a client in **Chapter Seven** “How Awesome Women Confront Sexism,”
  - Kellie Freeze ([page 151-154](#)) who is assaulted by an industry leader in **Chapter Seven** “How Awesome Women Confront Sexism,”

#### HELPING WOMEN MEET GOALS

29. This is a book about helping each other meeting goals, yet women are judged harshly. What steps can you take to make the world more friendly towards women with who are the minority with their
  - Communication style (Lucy in **Chapter One** “Brusque Endings Create New Professional Realities” on [page 33-34](#))
  - Age (Ann Benjamin in **Chapter Five** “Institutional Betrayal Ignites the Courage Within,” on [page 111-116](#))
  - Gender
  - Flexible work requests (**Chapter Four** “The Birth of Necessity and Flexibility Entrepreneurs” with Cindy Machles ([page 103-104](#)), Savita ([page 99-100](#)), and corporate settings.
  - Unsolicited attraction (**Chapter Seven** “How Awesome Women Confront Sexism,” on [page 151](#))
  - Caretakers (**Chapter Four** “The Birth of Necessity and Flexibility Entrepreneurs”)
    - In this day and age of COVID
    - Essential workers
30. In **Chapter Eight** “Combating the Macro Effects of Microaggression”, review the list of micro aggressions ([page 180](#)) and tactics of resistance ([on page 185](#)). Evaluate which ones you experience often. Develop an action plan of how to address infractions.
31. What is the next step you will take to support women to promote inclusivity? Some areas where change is needed is with the passage of
  - Equal Right Amendment (**Chapter Four** “The Birth of Necessity and Flexibility Entrepreneurs” p. [109-110](#))
  - The United Nation’s Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, or CEDAW in **Chapter Ten** “Stop Advising Women to Gain Confidence” page [229-234](#))
  - Hair Discrimination, aka The Crown Act (**Chapter Six** “Misfits Awaken and Sidepreneurs Embark” p. [129](#))

- Equal Pay to eliminate the Wage Gap (**Chapter Two** “The Awesome Women’s Incubator Model” p. 27.)
  - Times Up initiatives (**Chapter Ten** “Stop Advising Women to Gain Confidence” page 227-230)
32. How do you feel about Jerramy Fine’s princess quote **Chapter Seven** “How Awesome Women Confront Sexism,” on page 170? “Most of us would agree that dismissing someone purely because she is female is unacceptable. Yet dismissing feminine qualities and feminine expression (including princess culture) is still widely condoned.” Is there a problem with women acting feminine?
  33. In **Chapter Ten** “Stop Advising Women to Gain Confidence”, Jane Finette’s humanity quote on page 226 say “Women very often are driven by relationships. We’re drawn to do work which impacts humanity positively; there’s a reason why women are drawn to industries like education and healthcare because we’re ultimately wired for humanity.” Do you agree or disagree?
  34. In **Chapter Four** “The Birth of Necessity and Flexibility Entrepreneurs” on page 90-92, The Wheel of Life is described as a tool to manage the interconnectedness of our personal, professional and emotional life. Do you believe there is need for this tool in your life? Will you use it going forward?
  35. How would you define working in technology? Is it studying Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math (STEM) in college? Is it working for a company that sells technology? Is it working with computers and their upkeep? Or is it using and analyzing data with differing means of technology?
  36. In **Chapter Six** “Misfits Awaken and Sidepreneurs Embark” on pages 137-142, Grace Hopper, the mother of the computing language COBOL, laid the groundwork in the computing culture to ensure a competitive environment that drove internal competition did not proliferate, but instead a culture where working collaboratively did. She was not alone. Her female counterparts who created the field of Software Engineering, Betty Jean Bartik and the Eniac Six, did as well. Do you agree that women today recognize the value of teamwork? Do women excel in providing a clear understanding of users’ needs and outcomes allowing for projects to run on time, within budget, and according to specifications?
  37. In **Chapter One** “Brusque Endings Create New Professional Realities,” we learn research from *Brotopia* confirms most women who exit STEM do not return. Although after years of tolling away in a technology career, when women approach the age of thirty they can be effective with younger workers and use their knowledge to lead yet, “after twelve years, 50 percent of women left jobs in STEM to work in other fields,” in contrast to the 80 percent retention rate in other fields. Also, they “were 807% more likely to leave their jobs than their peers in other fields” and 32 percent of women didn’t think they would last more than a year. Research shows that when women hit thirty and became mothers, they had to choose between maintaining a healthy marriage with “family demands” and work-life balance or working in STEM. The author realized her coworkers’ lack of long-term career longevity was because of prioritizing their families, a constant threat of layoffs, and a resulting feeling of loneliness in *Brotopia*. What can we do to change this narrative?

## IN STEM

38. **How would you define working in technology?**
  - Is it studying Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math (STEM) in college? Is it working for a company that sells technology? Is it working with computers and their upkeep? Or is it using and analyzing data with differing means of technology?
39. **How can you use your network power? Is there a specific way using technology?**

- As Sharlen Moore did by creating Urban Underground in **Chapter Nine** “Powerful Networks Pave the Way” on page 203-207, why don’t you use your network power (page 199) to speak up at work when you witness injustices and people who do not fit into the norm being dismissed.
  - What is the role of Network Power described on page 191 in **Chapter Nine** ”Powerful Networks Pave the Way” in how women are judged?
40. **Regarding the Generational Divide, do younger professionals experience the friction older professionals had to tolerate?**
- Discuss how **Chapter Ten** “Stop Advising Women to Gain Confidence” Anne Machesky on page 220-223 had to be tough as nails in the 1980s. How does it compare with the portrayal in the media of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s in **Chapter Eight** "Combatting the Macro Effects of Microaggression" (page 183-188). How do both resonate with you?
41. **Why are the attrition rates so high for women in technology?**
- In **Chapter One** “Brusque Endings Create New Professional Realities,” we learn research from *Brotopia* confirms most women who exit STEM do not return. Although after years of toiling away in a technology career, when women approach the age of thirty they can be effective with younger workers and use their knowledge to lead yet, “after twelve years, 50 percent of women left jobs in STEM to work in other fields,” in contrast to the 80 percent retention rate in other fields. Also, they “were 807% more likely to leave their jobs than their peers in other fields” and 32 percent of women didn’t think they would last more than a year. Research shows that when women hit thirty and became mothers, they had to choose between maintaining a healthy marriage with “family demands” and work-life balance or working in STEM. The author realized her coworkers’ lack of long-term career longevity was because of prioritizing their families, a constant threat of layoffs, and a resulting feeling of loneliness in *Brotopia*. What can we do to change this narrative?
  - At times in the workplace, injustices occur which are so unexpected we do not know how to respond. This is evident in many of the stories in the book. These women seemed to be in shock when unbelievable events occurred professionally. Have you experienced something similar?
    - Cindy Machles (page 103-104) with caring for a sick parent in **Chapter Four** “The Birth of Necessity and Flexibility Entrepreneurs”
    - Nadiyah Johnson (page 129-133) with dealing with hair discrimination in **Chapter Six** "Misfits Awaken and Sidepreneurs Embark”
    - Jean Grow (page 166-170) who is propositioned by a client in **Chapter Seven** “How Awesome Women Confront Sexism,”
    - Kellie Freeze (page 151-154) who is assaulted by an industry leader in **Chapter Seven** “How Awesome Women Confront Sexism,”
  - In **Chapter Six** "Misfits Awaken and Sidepreneurs Embark,” on page 132-133 a job which is a perfect fit is described. Do you know someone in a job which is a misfit? Are they high or low performers at work? How can you change this culture to create an enjoyable work culture?
  - Throughout the book, why women leave technology companies and careers comes up from **Chapter One** “Brusque Endings Create New Professional Realities” on page 25 the authors medical diagnosis, to **Chapter Five** “Institutional Betrayal Ignites the Courage Within” on page 111, Jen Schwartz’s exodus from an engineering firm. Do you understand why they would want to leave?
  - In **Chapter Ten** “Stop Advising Women to Gain Confidence,” the story of Jane Finette on page 223-226 depicts how she exited an incredibly successful technology career. Did this book change how you look at career switchers? Favorably or non-favorably?
42. **How can we bring women back to technology?**

- In **Chapter Six** "Misfits Awaken and Sidepreneurs Embark" on [pages 137-142](#), [Grace Hopper](#), the mother of the computing language COBOL, laid the groundwork in the computing culture to ensure a competitive environment that drove internal competition did not proliferate, but instead a culture where working collaboratively did. She was not alone. Her female counterparts who created the field of Software Engineering, [Betty Jean Bartik](#) and the [Eniac Six](#), did as well. Do you agree that women today recognize the value of teamwork? Do women excel in providing a clear understanding of users' needs and outcomes allowing for projects to run on time, within budget, and according to specifications?
- Vulnerable caretakers are discussed **Chapter Four** "The Birth of Necessity and Flexibility Entrepreneurs" on [page 96](#). Do Stay-At-Home-Moms need help? Is the grass greener on the other side? Give your thoughts on the differences in the stories of how [Carrie \(page 98-99\)](#) exited her career, [Maggie Cain \(page 107-108\)](#) paused her business and [Savita Thakur Love \(page 99\)](#) continued on professionally.

#### 43. With this world of COVID and the attitude of virtual workers, there has been a shift in acceptable work environments. Is there a new hybrid model for how to hire back women?

- Why do women choose to not move up the ladder? What is the role of exhaustion, both physical and emotional, in ones drive to progress professionally? In **Chapter Three** "The Inspiring Opportunity Entrepreneur" on [page 67](#) and **Chapter Eleven** "Entrepreneurs Who Inspire Us" on [page 235](#), we hear about women how make it work. How do women like [Amanda Baltz \(page 250\)](#) do it all.
- In terms of women's relationships with each other, can women be not only mentors, but sponsors for each other? How woman take action and sponsor women?
- In **Chapter Seven** "How Awesome Women Confront Sexism," the Mentoring Monday event on [pages 159-161](#) and [Suzanne's story on page 163-165](#), the role men play can enhance or detract from women's advancement. In **Chapter Eight** "Combatting the Macro Effects of Microaggression" [Dave Vasko](#) relays in [page 179-180](#) the role men play is described as critical. Do you see men making inroads in helping women?
- This is a book about helping each other meeting goals, yet women are judged harshly. What steps can you take to make the world more friendly towards women with who are the minority with their
  - Communication style (Lucy in **Chapter One** "Brusque Endings Create New Professional Realities" on [page 33-34](#))
  - Age ([Ann Benjamin](#) in **Chapter Five** "Institutional Betrayal Ignites the Courage Within," on [page 111-116](#))
  - Gender
  - Flexible work requests (**Chapter Four** "The Birth of Necessity and Flexibility Entrepreneurs" with [Cindy Machles \(page 103-104\)](#), [Savita \(page 99-100\)](#), and corporate settings.
  - Unsolicited attraction (**Chapter Seven** "How Awesome Women Confront Sexism," on [page 151](#))
  - Caretakers (**Chapter Four** "The Birth of Necessity and Flexibility Entrepreneurs")
    - In this day and age of COVID
    - Essential workers

#### 44. What are some ways of approaching new hires?

- In **Chapter Six** "Misfits Awaken and Sidepreneurs Embark," on [page 148](#), [Colleen McFarland](#) believes younger workers need data to feel connected to receive needed assistance and leads to them feeling more reassured. Do you believe this need for data demonstrates a lack of confidence?

#### 45. What is the value of having more women represented in management and of having women working together?

- In **Chapter Four** “The Birth of Necessity and Flexibility Entrepreneurs” on [page 90-92](#), The Wheel of Life is described as a tool to manage the interconnectedness of our personal, professional and emotional life. Do you believe there is need for this tool in your life? Will you use it going forward?
- The emotionally charged topics of vulnerable caretakers (described in **Chapter Four** “The Birth of Necessity and Flexibility Entrepreneurs” on [page 96](#)), unsolicited attraction (**Chapter Seven** “How Awesome Women Confront Sexism” starting on [page 151](#)) and flexible work arrangements (**Chapter Four** “The Birth of Necessity and Flexibility Entrepreneurs” starting on [page 81](#)) are addressed in this book. What can you do to offer your support? How can you speak up when you witness blatant injustices?
- What is the next step you will take to support women to promote inclusivity? Some areas where change is needed is with the passage of
  - Equal Right Amendment (**Chapter Four** “The Birth of Necessity and Flexibility Entrepreneurs” [p. 109-110](#))
  - The United Nation’s Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, or CEDAW in **Chapter Ten** “Stop Advising Women to Gain Confidence” page 229-234)
  - Hair Discrimination, aka The Crown Act (**Chapter Six** “Misfits Awaken and Sidepreneurs Embark” p. 129)
  - Equal Pay to eliminate the Wage Gap (**Chapter Two** “The Awesome Women’s Incubator Model” [p. 27.](#))
  - Times Up initiatives (**Chapter Ten** “Stop Advising Women to Gain Confidence” [page 227-230](#))