

READING GROUP GUIDE

Calm the Fuck Down

By Sarah Knight

*This reading group guide for **Calm the Fuck Down** includes an introduction, discussion questions, and ideas for enhancing your book club. The suggested questions are intended to help your reading group find new and interesting angles and topics for your meeting. We hope that these ideas will enrich your conversation and increase your enjoyment of the book.*

Introduction

From the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Life-Changing Magic of Not Giving a Fuck*, *Get Your Shit Together*, and *You Do You* comes more straight talk for people who spend too much time worrying about their problems and not enough on actually solving them.

Sound familiar? Then you may need to **CALM THE FUCK DOWN**.

Just because things are falling apart doesn't mean you can't pull it together. Whether you're stressed about shit that hasn't happened yet or freaked out about shit that already has, the NoWorries Method from "anti-guru" Sarah Knight helps you curb the anxiety and overthinking that's making everything worse. Chock full of Knight's "hilarious, irreverent, and no-nonsense" advice (*Bustle*), *Calm the Fuck Down* gives you the tools to make decisions and solve problems so you can get back to living your best life.

Topics & Questions for Discussion

1. Yay, you finished *Calm the Fuck Down*! How are you feeling? Were there any coping strategies Knight shared that you are excited to try? If you already have tried some, were they effective? What are/were they and why do you think they work or don't work for you?
2. In her author's note, Knight discusses the book's title, writing "you'd be forgiven for thinking I'm the world's biggest asshole for titling [my book] as I have." (p. 3) Why might readers take umbrage with the book title? What did you

think of it on first glance? Did your opinion of the title change after you read the whole book? Why or why not?

3. Knight writes that “in both senses, worrying makes the problem worse.” (p. 12) Explain her statement. What are the two different meanings of “worry” and how does each type have the potential to contribute to feelings of anxiety? When was the last time you unraveled your metaphorical sweater? Share it with your book club (if it’s not too personal) and discuss what you might have done differently if you had read *Calm the Fuck Down*.

4. Did any of the examples that Knight included in her “Shit people in my Twitter feed are worried about” (p. 95) section resonate with you? If so, what did you think of Knight’s advice? Did it help you to address other concerns in your life? Share some of the things in your life that worry you with your book club, then discuss them with your book club. How many of these items are in your control? Having read *Calm the Fuck Down*, describe the actions that you’ll now take to deal with the stress caused by these concerns.

5. Of Caribbean life, Knight says, “[it] may look seductively slow-paced and groovy when you’ve called in sick from your demanding job to lie on the couch bingeing on chicken soup and HGTV... but it can also be **frustrating for those who thrive on reliability and structure.**” (p. 17) Why does Knight compare the idealized version of her life to the reality of it? Did reading that Knight needed to learn how to adjust her attitude for island living help you reframe your own expectations? If so, describe how.

6. What does Knight mean by her statement “Tonight You, meet Tomorrow You”? (p. 108) How does this coping strategy work? What does it help you accomplish in the moment, versus in the future? Try role playing with your book club—pick a partner and talk through how Tonight You will assign current worries to Tomorrow You, and see what Tomorrow You thinks about it!

If you’re still tossing and turning, what are some other tips Knight offered in *Calm the Fuck Down* that might help you in this moment?

7. While one of the “Three Principles of Dealing With It” is to take stock and identify your next steps, Knight notes that ‘I said to swiftly ‘identify’ your next best steps—not necessarily swiftly *take* them.’ (p. 164) Explain her advice. When and why might waiting be a better course of action? How is this different than what Knight refers to as “ostriching”?

8. Let's talk about "spacers," shall we? The drinking kind, yes, and also the life kind. What are they? How did the concept lead Knight to change her behavior? Can you think of areas in your life where a spacer might help you? Apply it, and share how it worked with your book club—perhaps over a round of vodka tonics. Just don't forget the water!

9. Crucial to learning how to calm the fuck down is mastering Knight's NoWorries method (p. 12). How does it work? Why does Knight confess, then, that "the 'NoWorries' Method may be a slight misnomer" (p. 118)? Are there instances when worrying can be helpful? What are they, and how can you differentiate useful worrying from worrying that's going to lead to a freak-out of massive proportions?

10. Knight says that, in her anonymous survey, 77.4 percent of respondents reported that they got annoyed when "something bad happens and people tell you 'everything's going to be okay'." (p. 192) What are your thoughts on this statement? Why do you think that people find it so irksome to be told this? Are you one of the people who always tells *others* that everything is going to be okay? If you are—we're not judging, we promise—can you think of other responses you might employ when something bad happens to a friend? Share them with your book club.

11. According to Knight, "If you're still bending, you're not broken." (p. 175) Before you slap that quote on an inspirational pillow, let's discuss it. What does Knight mean? When is being flexible a good thing? Can you think of any stressful times in your life where some flexibility would have helped? Do you know anyone else who needs this advice (and matching throw pillows)?

12. Knight writes "I don't know if there's actually *more* war, pestilence, extreme weather, or dismaying cultural regression going on than ever before, but I know we're more *aware of it*." (p. 139) How does technology have the potential to contribute to one's day-to-day stress? Short of going into "Total Ostrich Mode," what can you do to combat the bad feelings caused by watching/reading bad news? Can you think of any ways that technology may help *reduce* stress? Share those tips with your book club. Tomorrow They will thank you!

Enhance Your Book Club

1. In ranking her “what-ifs” by probability, Knight determines that her fear that “I show up for a speaking gig and totally bomb” (p. 81) is possible but fairly unlikely to happen. In fact, Knight has been a very successful public speaker — her TEDx talk has more than 4.5 million views! Watch it here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwRzjFQa_Og and discuss it with your book club. Then (bonus!), if one of your “what-ifs” centers around public speaking, check out Knight’s tips in this article: <https://medium.com/tedx-experience/5-tips-for-giving-a-tedx-talk-dbe59560c1ec>

2. Follow #trashcatsofavenidaitalia on Instagram

(<https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/trashcatsofavenidaitalia/>) because any cat that can break a writer’s hand deserves a follow — plus if you’re up late at night, it’ll give you something to scroll through instead of the news. Looking to productively procrastinate? Come up with a go-to list of distractions ranging from your favorite Facebook communities to animal videos that you can bust out when you’re in need of a positive distraction. Share them with your book club, too. Janet likes a good baby hippo video just as much as you do.

3. When it comes to “dealing with it,” Knight notes that readers may be wondering why she doesn’t simply refer them to *Get Your Shit Together*. If you haven’t read that book, read it and discuss both with your book club. While *GYST* is about proactive steps you can take to get your shit together, many of the tips can also help when it comes to calming the fuck down. Were there any that you found particularly helpful? How can the methodologies outlined in each of the books complement each other?

4. Did this No Fucks Given Guide change your life? You’re not alone! Visit <http://nofucksgivenguides.com> to read testimonials from readers like you. And don’t forget to sign up for the No Fucks Given Newsletter while you’re there — subscribers get exclusive access to Sarah Knight’s web series “Advice From My Pool”!