

READING GROUP GUIDE

Fuck No!

By Sarah Knight

*This reading group guide for **Fuck No!** 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

With her “hilarious, irreverent, and no-nonsense” (*Bustle*) **No Fucks Given Guides**, Sarah Knight has introduced readers to the joys of mental decluttering while dispensing practical advice on making—and sticking to—a “Fuck Budget,” spending your time, energy, and money (aka your “fuck bucks”) on people and things that make you happy.

Previous books in the series include *The Life-Changing Magic of Not Giving a Fuck*, *Get Your Shit Together*, *You Do You*, and *Calm the Fuck Down*. With millions of copies in print in more than thirty countries, now Sarah has turned her attention to the most powerful two-letter word in the English language: *No*.

In *Fuck No!: How to Stop Saying Yes When You Can't, You Shouldn't, or You Just Don't Want To*, she reminds us that no is an acceptable answer—and it's time to start using it.

Topics & Questions for Discussion

1. Knight begins her book by asking “Why is it so fucking hard to say no?” (p. 3) Can you think of any reasons why you have difficulty in doing so? Did reading *Fuck No!* give you any additional insights into why saying no is often challenging for you or make you more aware of behaviors to avoid? Share them with your book club. (Or if you'd rather keep it to yourself, that's fine too. Remember, no is an acceptable answer!)
2. One of the biggest revelations Knight shares in *Fuck No!* is that she no longer sees “no” as a negative, instead seeing it as a positive. Explain this sentiment. How can saying no be a good thing? What are some of the examples that Knight provides? Can

you think of any instances in your life where saying no had a positive result? What were they?

3. Let's talk about the notion of "no," shall we? In *Fuck No!* Knight's goal is to "reframe the conversation, defang the word, and destigmatize the act of saying *nyet*." (p. 13) Why do you think saying no carries such a stigma? After reading *Fuck No!*, did you view the word differently? If so, in what ways?

4. As *Fuck No!* demonstrates, the act of saying no is highly nuanced. There's the Hard No, the Power No, the "no's" to unwarranted guilt and unnecessary obligations, and so many more. Can you name a few and share examples? Knight writes "ALL relationships thrive on normal, healthy boundaries." (p. 202-203) Think about your own relationships. Have you found that saying "no" has helped to make them stronger? If so, how?

5. Hey, are you okay? No, really—be honest. Are you? Knight writes that if the answer is no, you should probably come clean, and she tells a personal story to illustrate her point. (p. 86) Why do you think she chose to include a personal experience at this stage in the book? How did reading about Knight putting her own advice into practice make you feel?

6. Did you take the quiz on page 27? If so, which kind of Yes-Man are you? If not, take it right now along with anyone else in your book club who hasn't done it yet, and just for fun, let the rest of the members guess your results. Were they right? And whenever you took the quiz, did you get the results you were expecting?

7. Are you a FOMO'er? If so, do you experience FOMO in social settings or professional ones—or both? Throughout *Fuck No!* Knight proposes ways to "Turn that FOMO into JONO ('joy of no')." (p. 26) How can saying no—or accepting when someone else says it—bring joy to you? Can you think of any instances where you were happier that you said no to a social engagement or project? What about times you *wish* you'd said no instead of giving in to your FOMO? Do you think *Fuck No!* has given you some new perspective that will enable you to be true to yourself next time around?

8. How does being honest about your FOMO help you and ensure that your "no" is well received? Why do you think Knight included the "Be explicit" No-Tip (p. 36) in reference to FOMO? What's the difference between a "No-for-Now" and a "maybe"?

9. Let's talk about "No, But" (p. 235), shall we? How does the "No, But" method work? And how is a "No-for-Now" different than a "No, But"? Knight compares "No, But" to

the “Yes, And” game that improv comedians play. How are the two alike? Bonus points: Take a look at the scenarios Knight offers on p. 236-237 of *F*ck No!* and play a practice round of “No, But” with your book club, adding in situations that you’re likely to encounter with your own kids (or other people’s). Fun times.

10. When it comes to a difficult no—whether because you feel guilty or obligated or otherwise anxious about saying that little word—Knight suggests a visualization exercise. Personally, she says she “invoke[s] Baby Shower 2010 as a sort of talisman.” (p. 61) What is Baby Shower 2010, and why was the experience so instructive to Knight? Have you had any similar experiences? Share them with your book club. Then keep them in mind the next time you have a tough no on your hands.

11. Knight conducted an anonymous survey to find out what things readers needed help saying no to the most. She reports that when she asked, “Is there anyone else in your life you wish you could say no to?” a common answer was “Me”—as in *myself*. (p. 88) Were you surprised to read that this answer came up so often in her survey? Why do you think we have trouble setting boundaries and enforcing them for ourselves? Do you agree with Knight that “‘No’ always begins with you.” (p. 90). Why or why not?

12. And onto more strategy: when it comes to saying no, sometimes you need to bring out the big guns. And by “big guns” we mean “the Power No” and “the Walkaway.” What are these tools? What makes them so effective? Can you think of any notable times where you have employed one or both of these methods of saying no? If so, what was the result of doing so?

13. When it comes to saying no in her relationship, Knight writes that something that’s worked well for her is a system she calls “Mutual Veto Power (MVP).” (p. 209) What is it, and how does it work? If you’re in a relationship, think about various decisions that you and your partner have made. Are there any instances where employing MVP would have made for an easier process? Can you think of any other positive side effects from using the MVP system? What are they?

14. In the epilogue, Knight recounts a story about a New York City subway ride she took where a child screamed repeatedly about wanting a seat. Why does Knight include this vignette? What does this story convey about being on the receiving end of a “no?”

15. Knight writes “I hope that if you didn’t see whatever *specific* issue you may have been looking for reflected in these hallowed pages, you’ve at least picked up plenty of techniques, strategies, and general No-Tips with which to approach it.” (p. 261) What

tips did you find most helpful and why? Did you find any of Knight's strategies particularly insightful? Discuss them with your book club.

Enhance Your Book Club

1. Sarah Knight writes "No nirvana is closer than you think." (p. 33) Discuss the concept of the "no nirvana" with your book club. What does yours look like? Does it involve Island living and sloughing off the corporate life as it did for Knight? Or something else entirely? Not sure how to even figure out what your "no nirvana" would be? Luckily there's help. Check out the very first No Fucks Given Guide, *The Life Changing Magic of Not Giving a Fuck*, and let the mental decluttering begin!
2. Throughout *Fuck No!*, you've gotten quite good at saying no. Great job! Now, it's time to practice something else: personal policies. (p. 46) How does Knight define personal policies? Why are they so effective? Brainstorm some personal policies so that you can be armed and ready next time you find yourself equivocating about saying yes when you really want to say no.
3. "Can I pick your brain?" Why is it that any conversation beginning with that phrase makes Knight so twitchy? Think about the brain-picking requests that you get most frequently. Do you wish you could say no more easily, to save time and energy on your part? Why not follow Knight's suggestion and come with a list of resources that you can easily cut, paste, and share next time someone asks to pick your brain? (Oh, and don't forget to include <http://letmegooglethat.com/> for requests you don't have the time or inclination to answer at all...)
4. To learn more about the other books in Sarah Knight's No Fucks Given Guides, visit the official site at nofucksgivenguides.com. While you're there, read other articles by Knight along with testimonials from readers like you who have had their lives changed by her books. You can also sign up for her newsletter, download the rest of the Reading Group Guides, and listen to all of the podcast interviews she's given over the years. Who knows, you might get so good at giving fewer, better fucks and saying no that you won't even need her anymore! (We're sure she'll understand.)