

---

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

High Conflict



# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## High Conflict

---

- 1 High Conflict tells the story of half a dozen different people and communities who were trapped in dysfunctional conflict—and got out. Of all the characters in this book, which story resonated the most with you?
- 2 Did your opinion of any of these characters change as you read the book?
- 3 Can you think of a time in your life when conflict was actually useful? When you learned something you didn't know—about yourself, the problem or the other person? What happened?
- 4 Now think about a conflict you've experienced that was more harmful than helpful. It can be political or personal, big or small. What happened?
- 5 Take a look at Appendix II (“How to Recognize High Conflict in Yourself”). Go through the 11 questions, with that harmful conflict in mind. Which ones do you find yourself answering Yes to?
- 6 What are some of the differences between the good conflict you've experienced and the destructive conflict?
- 7 The author writes about the “fire starters” that trigger high conflict—including group identities, conflict entrepreneurs, humiliation, and corruption. Were any of these fire starters involved in your own experience with less-helpful conflict? Are there any fire starters you would add to this list?

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## High Conflict

---

8

Which of these fire starters seem to be present in conflicts affecting your community or your country right now?

9

Looking back on your own story, what did you learn about the best way to manage conflict as a child? How have you changed your conflict style since then?

10

Can you think of anyone in your life (or in popular culture or politics) who seems to have a pattern of making conflict worse? What do you think is driving their behavior?

11

Who do you most wish would read this book?

12

There are several proven techniques highlighted in the book for making conflict healthier—including “looping for understanding,” “the magic ratio” and “investigating the crock pot” or the “understory” of the conflict. (See the Glossary at the beginning of the book for reminders.) Have you ever tried to do anything similar?

13

If you could redesign social media, politics or journalism, what would you do in order to make it easier for people to engage in good conflict—and resist the temptation of high conflict?

14

If you woke up tomorrow in a town (or church or school or workplace or family) that had mastered good conflict, what would it look like? How would you know? Describe a day in the life in such a place.