



Undaunted Hope Readers Guide

To enhance your reading experience, the author, Dr. Claudia Black, has drafted the following questions for you to consider related to chapters and themes throughout the book.

1. Throughout the book, trauma is an underlying theme of the storyteller's history. With trauma history, there is also resilience that shines through. Resilience is the process of adapting to challenging life experiences in a constructive manner. Giving thought to yourself and your life challenges, identify factors you believe have fueled your resiliency.
2. In the commentary in chapter two, Deirdre Stewart discusses boundaries, which are referenced in multiple stories throughout the book. This commentator is discussing listening and talking boundaries, saying that the listening boundary allows us to take in what is real and discard for us what is not. This entails recognizing that when people are talking to us, they are telling us who they are, not who we are. Stewart says, "I liken this to a wetsuit. You can zip it up and can keep out what is true or real for you and choose when to unzip and let the information into your reality." Give thought to an uncomfortable conversation you may have had recently and reflect on how successful you think you were at distinguishing what was true for you and what was not true. Were you able to use your zipper effectively? What would be another visualization or metaphor for a boundary that offers structure yet flexibility?
3. In chapter three, the author discusses toxic shame, and while the stories reflect familial messages that fuel toxic shame, there are also cultural messages that can fuel a sense of inadequacy. What are unhealthy messages you have had to contend with that emanated from your growing up years (either from family or culture)? How have those messages impacted how you feel about yourself and different areas of your life?
4. In chapter four's commentary on Jason's story, Jennifer Angier writes, "Having people confront you while believing in you is often the pivotal act for change." Can you identify a time in your own life where someone's confrontation of you elicited an important change for you?
5. In chapter five's "What is Intimacy" section, Havi Kang lists several components of intimacy: safety, honesty, love, emotional expression, intellectual closeness, religious closeness, trust, acceptance, emotional closeness, physical closeness, spiritual closeness, validation, sexuality, nonjudgment, affection, vulnerability, boundaries, compassion, communication, and stability. Which ones are the most significant for you?

6. Many people struggle with various forms of disordered and unhealthy eating. The stories in chapter six describe people whose relationship with food necessitated inpatient treatment. Yet there will be parts of their stories that some readers who are not as far along in their disordered eating behavior can benefit from recognizing. What did you read about their treatment experiences or ongoing recovery that would be of value for you or someone else struggling at any place on the continuum of disordered eating?
7. There is a tendency in our culture to frown on adults wanting to discuss their childhood in relationship to what is occurring in the present. Yet the author's and The Meadows' philosophy validates this approach as a part of the healing process. Do you see the relevance of exploring family-of-origin issues in the therapy process? To what degree has your thinking shifted since reading these stories?
8. Each of these storytellers ultimately reached out for help. What barriers do you think get in the way of people with mental health and addiction problems asking for help? Have you personally encountered any of these barriers for your own struggles? What are some ways to overcome them?
9. In chapter eight, had the family members not attended family sessions while their loved one was in treatment, how do you think those family members' lives would have continued to be impacted?
10. In chapter six, Kevin Berkes offers commentary regarding the role of spirituality in Victoria's healing. "As she transformed from 'self-loathing' to 'respecting myself' her image of God transformed, and as her image of God transformed, she transformed. ... She found a loving connection with Self, a loving connection with God, and spiritual freedom and peace." How significant do you think finding a spiritual path is in healing trauma? To what degree has spirituality been a part of your life, and has it been a part of any healing for you?

“No matter how extremely painful your history is, you can heal.”

— Foreword written by Bessel van der Kolk, MD