

TAMMY LENSKI

Turning
Conflict into
Peace of Mind

THE
CONFLICT
PIVOT

THREE SIMPLE PRACTICES TO DISSOLVE
CONFLICT AT WORK AND HOME

THE CONFLICT PIVOT

Book Club Discussion Guide

1. In Chapter 1 the author says that when you use *The Conflict Pivot* practices regularly you'll learn how to replace habits doomed to get you stuck with habits that set you free. She discusses a poem by Portia Nelson about avoiding the "deep holes in your sidewalk." What are the deep holes in your own sidewalk when you're in conflict? What conflict habits do you have that you think might not serve you well?
2. Anger is a signal that you've been hooked by a conflict. Anger shows itself in the body in a variety of ways: Shaking hands. Shallow breathing. A flush on your face. Rapidly beating heart. Constricted airway. Hunched shoulders. Tears. When you're hooked by a conflict, how does it show in your body? Do others typically notice your anger?
3. The power of story is an important concept in *The Conflict Pivot*. What are some of the earliest stories you remember? What impact did they have on you?
4. Your Stuck Story of a conflict is a montage of the moments most interesting to you, with certain scenes magnified and others omitted. Lenski says your Stuck Story is not *the* story of the conflict; it's *your* story of the conflict. Do you have a Stuck Story about a conflict in your life? Why did you latch on to certain scenes or moments from that conflict and let go of others? How has your Stuck Story contributed to keeping you stuck in the conflict?

5. In Chapter 3 Lenski told a story about where she was and what she was doing when she heard about the early morning events on 9/11. Where were you and what were you doing when you heard? How sure are you of your memories of that day? What do you think about the research Lenski cited about vivid memories being no more accurate than everyday memories? Do you think that research will cause you to change how you handle “who said what to whom?” arguments? What will you do instead in such moments?
6. Lenski shared a story about trying to pump gas at a Mobil station in New Hampshire and almost getting into an argument with the attendant. What “Mobil Station Moment” of your own do you recall? How will you handle such “false alarms” in the future?
7. Freedom from a conflict doesn’t come from pushing discomfort away. Freedom from a conflict comes from drawing closer to it, from becoming intimate with it, from staying present with it, and allowing it to teach you. Do you agree with this premise? What do you think makes it more alluring to blame than to draw closer to our own discomfort?
8. Most people tend to have one or two conflict hooks that are particularly strong and the most common source of frustration, tension, and conflict in their lives. What are yours? What kinds of circumstances or comments most often snag them? How quickly do you notice you’ve been snagged?
9. Some believe that conflict may represent your attempts to relive dysfunctional patterns that were programmed in your past and that you still use in relating to others. Discovering their beginning may well help you neutralize their effect on you. Do you agree with these ideas? What do you think are the sources of your strongest conflict hooks?
10. Totalizing is the experience of viewing something through an all-or-nothing lens. In conflict, people sometimes make totalizing comments like, “He disrespects me.” “You’re a bad parent.” “She thinks I’m incompetent at my job.” Do you ever totalize in conflict? How will you teach yourself to stop?
11. In Chapter 5 Lenski wrote, “Letting go because it’s real but not true is the right choice for your own Mobil station moments, the trivial false alarms in an average day. It is also the right choice when you recognize that your spouse’s attempts to push your buttons aren’t that at all, but simply her being herself and your hyper-vigilant conflict hook sounding the alarm. Or when you notice your conflict hook’s

sensitivity is causing you to over-react to a fellow board member's reasonable questions about your proposal. Make this your mantra for letting go in such moments, much like Tsoknyi Rinpoche made it his: Real but not true." Do you think it's possible for you to completely let it go when the conflict is real but not true? What can you do to help yourself master the art of letting go in such moments?

12. Recalibration Conversations are not problem-solving conversations. Their purpose is not to take a specific dispute and negotiate a mutually agreeable solution. Recalibration Conversations are conversations anchored in identity: How you see yourselves, how you perceive the other is viewing you, how to handle identity quakes when they come up, how to help each other notice when one of you has been snagged. They are a very special kind of heart-to-heart and they have one goal: To begin easing a strained relationship by talking about a topic that often flies below the radar in relationships. Can you imagine having a Recalibration Conversation with someone important to you at work or home? Why or why not?
13. Which pivot did you find most compelling? Which did you find the easiest? The most difficult? Why?
14. In the last chapter Lenski discusses Candy Chang's "Before I Die" walls around the world. How would you answer Chang's question, "Before I die I want to ____"?
15. Psychologist Jeffrey Kottler has made the observation that people who have been in therapy for years can still find themselves "enlightened wrecks" because understanding past mistakes doesn't automatically lead to avoiding them. What will you do with your learning from *The Conflict Pivot* to bridge the gap between what you learned and what you're going to do with it?