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DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR *GROUP CHAT*



ABOUT *GROUP CHAT*

When Farah's husband has an affair (*she f*cking knew it*), her group chat doesn't offer platitudes. They offer Mykonos. A free luxury villa, thanks to Vivian's DJ toy-boy. Clubs, beaches, boats, cocktails, and a week free from school lunches, perimenopausal insomnia and husbands waking them at 5am for run club.

But the five friends arrive with more than just new sunglasses and linen sets. There are sick parents, secret illnesses, sullen teenagers, and marriages that have lost their spark, and possibly their relevance. What follows is late nights and bad decisions, savage honesty, too many cigarettes, and the kind of laughter that only comes when you're with the women who know and love you best.

For Stella — married, stable and increasingly restless — the trip stirs something she can't ignore. Watching her friends, and remembering who she was on this island twenty years ago, begs the question: is choosing security the same as choosing happiness?

Sharp, funny and unflinchingly honest, this is a novel about female friendship at its most powerful, and what happens when the life you've built no longer feels like the one you want.

ABOUT Zoë Foster Blake

Zoë Foster Blake is the founder of Go-To, and the author of eighteen books, including novels, non-fiction and picture books. Her novel, *The Wrong Girl*, was adapted into a network TV series, while her most recent novel, *Things Will Calm Down Soon*, has been optioned for a TV series.



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THEMES

In *Group Chat*, Zoë Foster Blake delivers a sharp, funny and heartfelt exploration of female friendship, midlife, marriage and the sometimes uncomfortable realisation that happiness might look different from what we once imagined.

THE ENDURING POWER OF FEMALE FRIENDSHIP

At the heart of *Group Chat* is the friendship between five women who have shared decades of love, laughter and life experience. While their lives have taken different directions, their bond offers a space where they can be entirely themselves, free from the expectations of partners, children and careers. Through their humour, honesty and occasional bad decisions, Foster Blake celebrates the unique intimacy of long-term female friendships. But she also explores the tensions that can arise when friends know us so well they can see the truths we'd rather keep hidden.

MIDLIFE, IDENTITY AND REINVENTION

For Stella, returning to Mykonos after twenty years becomes an opportunity to reflect on the person she once was and the woman she has become. Like her friends, she has spent much of her adult life building a career, nurturing relationships and fulfilling responsibilities. But what happens when those roles no longer feel like enough? Foster Blake explores the idea that midlife can be a time of questioning and rediscovery, when women begin to reconsider the choices they've made and whether the lives they've built still reflect who they are.

THE INVISIBLE LOAD OF WOMANHOOD

Behind the glamorous holiday are five women navigating the often exhausting realities of contemporary life. From raising teenagers and caring for ageing parents to managing relationships, health concerns and the emotional needs of others, their responsibilities are both familiar and relentless. Their escape to Mykonos offers more than sunshine and cocktails: it's a rare opportunity to step outside the roles they occupy every day. Foster Blake explores the emotional and mental load carried by women, and the importance of finding space for pleasure, spontaneity and friendship without guilt.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CHARACTERS AND THEMES

1. When Farah discovers her husband's affair, her friends respond by organising a trip to Mykonos. What does this gesture reveal about their friendship? Do you think women sometimes understand what their friends need better than their partners do? How do you and your friends support one another during difficult times?

2. The five women have been friends for decades, despite their very different lives and circumstances. What do you think has kept their friendship together? How does the novel explore the difference between the friends we make when we're young and the friendships we maintain as we get older?

3. For Stella, returning to Mykonos after twenty years prompts her to question the life she's built. Why do you think revisiting a place from our past can have such a powerful effect? Have you ever returned somewhere and found yourself reflecting on the person you used to be?

4. The women arrive in Mykonos carrying worries about marriages, children, parents and their own health. How does the novel explore the pressures and expectations placed on women in midlife? Did you recognise aspects of your own life or experiences in any of the characters?

5. The trip gives the women permission to behave in ways they might never consider at home. How does being away from their everyday responsibilities change their behaviour? Do you think holidays allow us to become different versions of ourselves, or do they simply reveal parts of ourselves that everyday life keeps hidden?

6. Humour plays an important role in the women's friendship, even when they're dealing with painful or difficult experiences. How does Foster Blake balance the novel's comedy with its more serious themes? Do you think laughter and brutal honesty are essential ingredients in a lasting friendship?

7. At its heart, *Group Chat* is a novel about the women who know us best and the lives we choose to lead. Which character did you identify with most, and did that change as the story progressed? What do you think the novel ultimately says about happiness, friendship and the possibility of starting again?

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- **Bring your bookish bestie.** Invite each member to bring a close friend to book club. Ask everyone to share how they met, their funniest memory together and the one thing their friend knows about them that nobody else does. Bonus points for embarrassing photographs from your younger years.

- **Host a Greek island evening.** Bring a little Mykonos magic to your book club with a Mediterranean-inspired dinner. Serve mezze platters with hummus, tzatziki, olives, warm pita bread, grilled halloumi and Greek salad. Add seafood, souvlaki or spanakopita for something more substantial. Finish with baklava or Greek yoghurt with honey and fresh fruit. Decorate the table with blue and white linens, candles and fresh lemons.

- **What's in your group chat?** Ask everyone to give their friendship group chat a name, or share the name of an existing one. Then discuss the roles everyone plays. Who's the organiser? The voice-note queen? The one who never replies? The one who always has the best gossip? And who would be most likely to book a spontaneous trip to Mykonos?

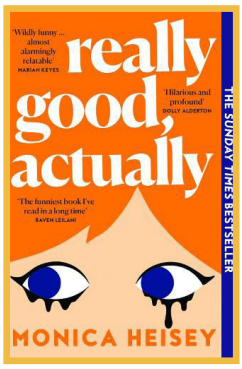
- **Create the ultimate girls' trip playlist.** Ask each member to nominate three songs: one that reminds them of their twenties, one guaranteed to get them onto the dance floor and one that reminds them of their closest friends. Create a shared playlist featuring everything from ABBA and Madonna to Beyoncé, Kylie Minogue and your favourite guilty pleasures.

- **The midlife bucket list.** Give everyone a piece of paper and ask them to write down three things they've always wanted to do but haven't yet made time for. They could be as ambitious as travelling solo or changing careers, or as simple as learning to dance or taking a weekend away with friends. Share your lists and challenge each other to make one thing happen before your next book club meeting.

- **This or that: girls' trip edition.** Finish the evening with a quick-fire round of choices inspired by the book. Mykonos or Paris? Beach club or quiet villa? Aperol spritz or martini? Dancing until dawn or breakfast by the pool? Holiday romance or girls-only getaway? The organised itinerary or absolutely no plans? Encourage everyone to defend their choices.

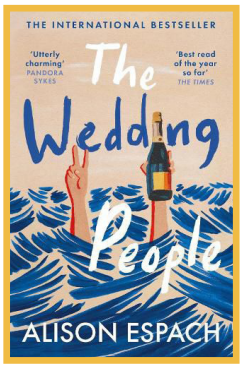
FURTHER READING

If your club enjoyed *Group Chat*, consider reading:



Really Good, Actually by Monica Heisey

A sharply funny and painfully relatable novel about a woman navigating divorce, friendship and the messy process of rebuilding a life when everything has gone spectacularly wrong.



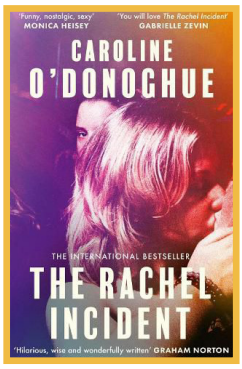
The Wedding People by Alison Espach

A funny, moving and unexpectedly life-affirming novel about second chances, unlikely friendships and discovering new possibilities when life hasn't turned out as planned.



Things Will Calm Down Soon by Zoë Foster Blake

A witty, warm and sharply observed novel about ambition, friendship and the chaos of juggling work, love and life, set against the glamorous and demanding world of the beauty industry.



The Rachel Incident by Caroline O'Donoghue

A funny, nostalgic and emotionally astute novel about friendship, desire and the complicated relationships that define our twenties.

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