

# CALM WITHIN THE STORM

## BOOK CLUB GUIDE

**Book Club Guide for Award-Winning  
Calm Within the Storm:  
A Pathway to Everyday Resiliency**

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# Welcome

It is with such joy and appreciation that I welcome you to this book club experience.

In full disclosure, all my life I dreamed of being included in a book club. I love the idea of sharing space and building community with people who are engaged in reading and reflection. As a power reader (I am not sure if power reader is an actual term – I know our lab Luna is called a 'power chewer' for her speed of chewing through bones and toys, and I think I am on that wavelength when it comes to books). Once I get my hands on a book, I rarely come up for air until it is over.

One of my purest moments of joy is falling in love with books so viscerally that I forget the need to sleep. I've spent many nights lost in books, only to find myself depending heavily on coffee the next day to help me meet my obligations. And for this, I will not apologize. Books have been a friend to me when I had none. Books have taken me so far away from my pain when the world became too much. They've given names to nameless feelings, offered me courage when I was broken, and allowed me to hold hope. Books will always be a life raft for me. And writing a book brought healing and connection like no other.

One of my guiding life principles is something I've termed "collisions and collaborations." These are magical moments when you come into an experience and find an ally—the missing link to creating something bigger than yourself. Something you could never have done without that very person you collided with, and now collaborate with. Within this book, there are hundreds of collisions and collaborations. You will see them, and you will start to recognize them in your own life too.

The first collision and collaboration I wish to present to you is Laura Cipolla. Laura is a former educator with the York Region District School Board in Ontario, Canada. Laura is also an extraordinary human. When I think of Laura, words like warrior, teacher, coach, friend, ally, leader, and advocate come to mind. Laura is a powerful woman living rightly, and I am proud to call her a friend. Now, this very Laura I write about here is the heart and mind behind the chapter questions you are about to explore.

I welcomed Laura into this collaboration to share her expertise as an educator to author the reflection questions. Each chapter has a series of questions and reflections that will allow you to navigate *Calm Within the Storm* with a greater depth and breadth of understanding. Thank you, Laura, for lending your voice here and guiding us as only a masterful teacher can.

As you embark on this book club adventure, please know you are now part of our community. The questions here are meant to make us think and talk—and it's so important to us that the space we hold for one another is a safe space. You are welcome to come as you are.

As I wrote in the book, our paths have now crossed. And that, my friend, is a wonderful thing.

**I'm so glad you're here.**



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## Book Club Experience Basics

To help cultivate lively and thoughtful discussions, we have prepared questions by chapter. Please feel free to pick and choose what works best for your group. There is absolutely no right way to book club this! You will also see that Laura and I have included some of our favourite books (both fiction and non-fiction) that inspire us to go deeper into a dimension mentioned in the chapter. We've also included a song title, because every big idea needs a soundtrack! Feel free to use these suggestions as a springboard for deeper dives! We are so curious what your book club would pick!

We designed the questions to spark reflection and discussion, while also offering opportunities to consider how the ideas might be applied. How can we bring this book into our personal lives and professional practices? How can we use this book to help navigate the inevitable storms in life? As educators, we often ask our learners three key questions:

### WHAT?

What are the big ideas?

### SO WHAT?

Why does this matter?

### NOW WHAT?

What are you going to do about it?

**In any book, lesson, or experience, if you can answer these three questions, you are well on your way to learning something new!**

**“The sun will never reveal as much about yourself as the storm does.”**

- JMSTORM

## Introduction Questions

- What does “you are going to be okay” mean to you?
- Is there an old story you are holding onto that is making you feel “stuck”?
- What is your resiliency road map so far in life?
- What is your intention for reading this book? What are you hoping to discover, shift, or better understand?
- What are you most curious to learn about yourself in terms of resiliency?



**“Just because you are carrying it well, doesn't mean it's not heavy.”**

### ROBYNE'S CHOICES

- 📖 Permission to Feel by Dr. Marc Brackett
- 🎵 The Calm Within the Storm by Peter Katz

### LAURA'S CHOICES

- 📖 Untamed by Glennon Doyle
- 🎵 The Calm Within the Storm by Peter Katz

## Chapter One

### THE SENTENCE

1. What sentence would sum up your **life**?
2. Reflect on a time you thought you were sinking. What mantra would you tell yourself to try to stay afloat?
3. What are you afraid of? *If nothing comes to mind, try these prompts: What are you afraid of losing? What are you afraid of never having?*
4. If you had to write your own mission statement, what would it say?  
*\*Aim for at least three sentences.*
5. Think about a time you weren't strong at a skill you think you should have been. How did it feel?
6. If comfortable, share a personal story that led you to pick up this book on resiliency.
7. What part of this book made you feel an **emotion** strongly?
8. What is something you have read that you would like to learn/investigate more?
9. What action can you or will you take to help strengthen your community, school, union, or other organization?



**“I can do hard things.”**

#### ROBYNE'S CHOICES

-  The Body Is Not an Apology by Sonya Renee Taylor
-  You Oughta Know by Alanis Morissette

#### LAURA'S CHOICES

-  Redeeming Love by Francine Rivers
-  Burning by Maggie Rogers

## Chapter Two

# RESILIENCY REDEFINED

1. What are you most curious about in terms of **resiliency**? Career? Personal life? Relationships?
2. What is an example of a time when you knew something to be true in your head, but your heart wanted a different outcome? How did it unfold?
3. In your opinion, why do you think we engage in social comparison if it hurts us? Do you have an example of how this has affected you or someone you know?
4. What brings you **joy**?
5. How will you adopt a new approach to resiliency? What are some things you might change or add to your life?
6. What is your **truth**? How do you align your truth with resiliency?



**“The answers you seek to some of the greatest questions in your life are not actually in books. They are in you.”**

### ROBYNE'S CHOICES

-  The Power of Now *by Eckhart Tolle*
-  Waiting on the World to Change *by John Mayer*

### LAURA'S CHOICES

-  Don't Just Sit There! *by Biet Simkin*
-  How High the Moon *by Ella Fitzgerald and Lionel Hampton*

## Chapter Three

### STRESS

1. How can you foster a different relationship with **stress**?  
What are some steps you are taking?  
Also, what steps are you thinking you could incorporate?
2. On page 57, Dr. Robyne discusses the **Yerkes-Dodson Human Performance and Stress Curve**. Think about what gives you the most stress and why? How are you able to get into your peak zone?
3. I encourage you to visit page 61. Take 3-5 minutes and answer the Stress Mindset Questions. Report back to the group your findings on how stress impacts your health.
4. Do you believe that stress is bad for you? Do you think stress should be avoided? Do you believe that your stress is going to kill you?
5. What do you hold as your truth around stress? How will you develop **new perspectives** and plan a course of corrections when the old beliefs come up?
6. If you are a leader in your organization, how will you be intentional with your thinking to ensure your staff understands the difference between stress and distress?



**“I finally accepted that I could not calm the storm, but I could calm myself, and the storm did pass”**

#### ROBYNE'S CHOICES

-  The Upside of Stress by Dr. Kelly McGonigal
-  The Search by NF

#### LAURA'S CHOICES

-  Breath by James Nestor
-  Alright by John Legend

## Chapter Four

### FEAR

1. How do you define **“fear”**?
2. On page 69, Dr. Robyne explains an adrenaline rush: “We think about it, decide about it, and then experience it as fear or excitement.”
3. Do you feel that **fear is a barrier**?
4. Take 5 minutes and create a fear-setting list. You can refer to pages 78-79.
5. Is there something you aren’t doing in your life because you are scared? After this chapter, are there steps that you may take in order to combat that fear?
6. How will you help and support others with their fears? In your workplace? Your personal life? With your kids?
7. How do you feel your fear?
8. What is your intention for this upcoming year? Can you identify any fears around your **intention**?



**“Courage doesn’t mean you don’t get afraid. Courage means you make the conscious decision to not let that fear stop you.”**

Can you think of a time you had this adrenaline rush? If so, can you explain it?

So, how do we choose bravery when all our body, mind, and heart are screaming for is safety and comfort?

#### **STEP 1:**

What is your fear?  
Can you control it?

Define: What is the worst thing that could happen?

Prevent: What can you do to prevent the worst thing from happening?

Repair: If the worst thing happens, how would you repair it?

#### **STEP 2:**

What will it cost you if you don’t do it?

#### **STEP 3:**

What could go right?

#### ROBYNE’S CHOICES

- The Gifts of Imperfection by Dr. Brené Brown
- Don’t You Worry Child by Swedish House Mafia

#### LAURA’S CHOICES

- A Promised Land by Barack Obama
- Wild World by Cat Stevens

## Chapter Five

# STIGMA

**“How different the world would be if our mistakes became lighthouses for people who are headed off-course instead of being a spotlight on our failures.”**

1. What was your initial reaction to the definition of **stigma** on page 88?:

### STIGMA

A mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person.

2. What are you doing to dismantle stigma in your family, organization, workplace, or community?

- Structural stigma
- Social stigma
- Self-stigma
- Association stigma (emerging)

Based on the definitions provided on page 91 and 92, can you provide an example on any of these forms of stigma? How will you help unpack the potential harm that stigma has on people?

3. What do you think the biggest difference is between shame and **guilt**?

4. How do we disarm shame?

5. How do you **“win your morning”**? If you don’t, how will you start?

6. In your role, whether it be personally or professionally, what will you do to reinforce **authenticity**?

7. What is your daily practice when disarming shame with authenticity? See page 98.

#### ROBYNE'S CHOICES

-  *Wild by Cheryl Strayed*
-  *Rainbow by Kesha*

#### LAURA'S CHOICES

-  *Greenlights by Matthew McConaughey*
-  *Believe by Q-Tip (feat. D'Angelo)*

## Chapter Six

# BELONGING

1. Why do you think belonging is the first pillar of **resiliency**?
2. Why is community a key component to helping foster your **resilient self**?
3. In your opinion, what impact has social media had on our connection with others?
4. Why is a sense of **belonging** so important?



**“Our deepest desire is to belong.”**

5. Why is the relationship you have with yourself crucial?
6. Why do you think our sense of belonging is deeply intertwined with our identity?



**“Our sense of belonging is deeply intertwined with our identity and connects our lives to those of our ancestors. It is imperative that we recognize that we are here, we matter, and we carry on the legacy of those who have walked before us.”**

### ROBYNE'S CHOICES

- Secret Lives of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd
- You'll Be in My Heart by Phil Collins

### LAURA'S CHOICES

- Lead from the Outside by Stacey Abrams
- Holding On by Gregory Porter

## Chapter Seven

### PERSPECTIVE

1. Why do you think that perspective can be viewed as an alignment between two key parts: attitudes or mindset, and emotions?
2. As per Carol Dweck, how can we frame challenges to be more useful and helpful for our development?
3. Why is **“yet”** an important word when discussing feedback?
4. Why do you think Dr. Robyne views mindset and emotion as allies, not as cause-and-effect variables?
5. How do you practice mental nimbleness? Will you be more mindful of the language you use?
6. Have you had a **“fail-forward”** moment or “setback”? How did you learn from it?
7. Take 2-5 minutes to free-flow write and answer these questions:

**What are you grateful for?**  
**What can you not live without?**  
**What kind of person do you want to be?**  
**If someone was going to describe you in five words, what would those words be?**  
**What would you want those words to be?**

8. Now, make your “to-be” list. How do you want to be? Reference page 138 if you want some questions to consider.
9. What is a habit you already have? Think: coffee drinking. Now, pair it with a new habit that you want to build. How could you use it to build gratitude in your daily life?
10. How will you incorporate **mindfulness** into your life? Or if it is already something you practice, what are you doing?

#### ROBYNE'S CHOICES

📖 Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day by *Judith Viorst*  
🎵 I Will Wait by *Mumford & Sons*

#### LAURA'S CHOICES

📖 Talking to Strangers by *Malcolm Gladwell*  
🎵 Let It Be Me by *Ray LaMontagne*

## Chapter Eight

# ACCEPTANCE

**“Time does not heal—acceptance does.”**

1. Why, in your opinion, was Michael J. Fox tempted to suffer in silence when he was first diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease?
2. Why are action questions important while discussing **acceptance**?
3. What is the most challenging thing about acceptance?
4. What do you do when you can’t accept something?  
Why is it important to know that we don’t want a whole team of Tom Bradys?
5. If we change our language from “have to” to “get to”, how could this change our thinking?
6. Is acceptance a **choice**?
7. Why is it imperative that we treat emotional healing with the same importance as physical healing?
8. In terms of acceptance, one approach discussed is Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) on page 155. This is an approach to changing patterns and disruptive thoughts.

**FIRST, WRITE DOWN THE ANSWERS. THEN, SHARE OUT LOUD.**

State the event / State what caused the event / State the feelings / State the plan

**In small groups, if you are comfortable, discuss why it’s important to feel your emotions.**

9. **Emotions** left unattended have a tendency to lead to stigma. How can we meet our emotions with more self-compassion and less judgement?

### ROBYNE’S CHOICES

- 📖 The Last Kingdom by Bernard Cornwell
- 🎵 Everybody Hurts by R.E.M.

### LAURA’S CHOICES

- 📖 The Skin We’re In by Desmond Cole
- 🎵 Be OK (Acoustic Version) by Ingrid Michaelson

## Chapter Nine

### HOPE

**“We will never know the full impact of what being filled with hope can do for ourselves and others.”**



1. Why do you think Dr. Robyne said in this chapter that depression is a disease that attacks **hope**?
2. Why do you think in Western society there is a tendency that emotional health problems are treated like physical health problems, with medication? Do you think medication combined with other methods could work effectively?
3. Do you think there is a link between a lack of hope and mental health disorders? Why?
4. Dr. Robyne says that hope is a choice on page 163. How do you interpret that? Do you agree or disagree. Why?
5. Do you believe transformational thinking will allow us to create, foster, and protect a positive internal environment even in the presence of adversity, challenge, and setbacks? How is hope connected to this idea?
6. What does resilience have to do with **hope**?
7. Do you have a relationship with **nature**? Why or why not? Do you think it could benefit you?
8. What tools in this chapter do you think you could use in your personal and/or professional life?
9. When have you experienced a time of rapid change that you have had to overcome? What helped you adapt to this change?
10. When you are confronted with a new challenge, how does that make you initially feel? Do you see this as an opportunity?
11. What are examples of fictional or non-fictional characters that demonstrated hope?
12. What fosters a **growth mindset**? Do you think it's important in terms of resiliency?
13. Are there any instances in which **hope** doesn't serve you or benefit you?

#### ROBYNE'S CHOICES

- Everything is F\*cked: A Book About Hope by Mark Manson
- You Say by Lauren Daigle

#### LAURA'S CHOICES

- Becoming Kareem by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar
- My Shot by Lin-Manuel Miranda (Hamilton Soundtrack)

## Chapter Ten

# HUMOUR

1. What are five things that make you **laugh**?
2. How is humour embedded in your life? Consider how it plays a role in both your personal and professional life.
3. What does **“play”** look like when discussing parental resiliency?
4. Make a list of five things that bring you joy. Refer to pages 190-192 in the book.
5. How is inspiration linked to humour? Why is that important in developing resiliency?
6. In your professional role, do you struggle with boundaries and finding humour? If so, why?  
How can you foster humour or find a **community** to take on this challenge?
7. In today’s technology-focused world, how can you be present, enjoy opportunities, and find laughter? How do you disconnect?
8. What have you learned in Part III about everyday resiliency? What steps are you going to take? How will these pillars help form the baseline for your resiliency?
9. What are you most curious to learn more about?
10. Do you think people are hardwired to be either open or resistant to change? Are people capable of cultivating resiliency and a growth mindset? Why?
11. Dr. Robyne says on page 101, “We learn more about ourselves in storms.” What does this mean to you after reading and learning about stress, fear, and stigma?
12. Are you sitting in discomfort after looking deeply at stress, fear, and stigma? How will you strengthen your capacity to do hard things?  
**(P.S. There are no wrong answers here.)**

**BELONGING | PERSPECTIVE  
ACCEPTANCE  
HOPE | HUMOUR**

As a group, discuss: What will you focus on to strengthen these pillars and move toward a more hope-filled life? Which pillar resonates with you most, and why?

**Ask yourself this question... Is this serving me or holding me back?**

### ROBYNE’S CHOICES

- 📖 *Bossy Pants by Tina Fey*
- 🎵 *Here Comes the Sun by The Beatles*

### LAURA’S CHOICES

- 📖 *A Very Punchable Face by Colin Jost*
- 🎵 *Jump Around by House of Pain*

## Chapter Eleven

### THE RESILIENCY TRAJECTORY MODEL



**“It is never too late to change your course. And it is not wrong to hope someone else does, either. Our past comes with us on our chosen paths as wisdom, and our supporters become the knowledge holders for how far we have come.”**

1. Why do you think that Dr. Robyne called this next part the **“heart”** work of resiliency?

This chapter is inspired by and grounded in a framework for understanding how resiliency unfolds over time.

2. As you review Dr. RHD’s Trajectory Model on page 208 (Figure 1), how clearly does it help you understand how resiliency unfolds over time? What stands out to you?

3. Try thinking of a moment in time or a plot twist that happened to you or someone you know. What changed, and how did it shape the path forward? Looking back, were you aware of your **baseline** resilience before the event occurred?

4. Why do you think adversity must strike in order to go through the four phases?

5. Do you think it’s common for people to put pressure on themselves to bounce back quickly? Why do you think that is? Or why not?

6. Why do you think the decline phase matters so much when it comes to **recovery** and **resilience**?

7. Why do you think you can get “stuck” in the reclaim phase of the trajectory model? How do you feel that you would or will get through this phase?

8. Why is the rise phase also called a rebirth? Do you agree with this terminology? Why do you think empathy is important in this phase?

9. Please view the Resiliency Trajectory Model Sample (Figure 2) on page 213. What do you notice? Do you feel you would connect with person 1 or person 2? Why?

10. Why do you think that viewing one’s life through the idea of the **hero’s journey** can be transformative?

11. With these pathways, do you think you could become a better version of yourself? How can you start this process? Why do you want to?

#### ROBYNE’S CHOICES

- The Things We Cannot Say by Kelly Rimmer
- Heroes by The Wallflowers

#### LAURA’S CHOICES

- Start with Why by Simon Sinek
- Building a Mystery by Sarah McLachlan

## Chapter Twelve

### THE FOUR PHASES

#### THE DECLINE PHASE

1. What role do you think the decline phase plays in helping us move forward through the four phases?
2. Have you ever had an adverse event occur in your life? Look at the eight symptoms of psychological trauma on page 219. Do these resonate with you? How did you feel?
3. Refer to the prompts on page 220. Do you think these would help you in a time of adversity? Have you learned from these prompts?
4. On pages 222-224, Dr. Robyne talks about Alissa, the teacher. Why do you think Alissa was able to defy all odds and do what she set out to do, just in a different way? Do you have a similar story?

#### THE ADAPT PHASE

1. Have you ever had to “see the world differently?”
2. How do you adjust in the event of adversity? Or how have you adjusted?
3. After reading Dr. Robyne’s story of her mother, was this something that made you think of a time you had to adapt or put off dealing with something? How has this story impacted you?
4. Why do you think the adapt phase happens whether we like it or not?



## Chapter Twelve

# THE FOUR PHASES

### THE RECLAIM PHASE

1. Why are all the points below important and vital in the reclaim phase? Is it possible to move forward if you don't have them all figured out? Why or why not?

- **Awaken from the difficult experiences.**
- **Seek out answers to the big questions.**
- **Reclaim what we need.**
- **Internalize the learning and the growth, and identify what we will carry forward.**
- **Find and develop the capacity to coexist with our past and future so as to become warriors who can do the hard things in life.**

2. Why is the reclaim phase terrifying and wildly exciting?

3. On pages 233-235, several reflective questions and prompts are shared. Which ones stirred something within you? Which ones resonate most with your current season of life? How might your answers help guide your next steps?

4. What are you most curious about in terms of the reclaim phase?

### THE RISE PHASE

1. Why is the rise phase important to the Resiliency Trajectory Model?

2. On pages 237-241, Dr. Robyne talks about Andrew. Have you met someone in your role like Andrew? How have you helped "Andrew" rise? Have you been "Andrew" and had someone help you in a situation?

3. Why are core values important and crucial in this phase? How do they support us in living our most resilient life?

4. What are your top 3 or 5 guiding values? You can find some examples on pages 236-237.

5. Do you think you are able to transform? Are you able to rebuild? Are you able to live your own resilient life that you have created?

#### ROBYNE'S CHOICES

-  *Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë*
-  *One Day More from Les Misérables and Rise Up by Andra Day*

#### LAURA'S CHOICES

-  *Range by David Epstein*
-  *City of Lakes by Matt Mays*

## Chapter Thirteen

# WORTH

1. What is your **intention** now after reading this book?
2. Has your **intention** changed from the introduction?
3. Why do you think worth was the last chapter of this book?  
How do you view worth?
4. How do you feel about Gabor Maté's terms "conditional self-worth" and "genuine self-worth"?
5. How do you feel about external validation in today's society?  
Does this exist in your world? Work? Personal life?  
Do you feel kids are affected by this notion?
6. Why do we as **human beings** feel the need to be validated?

### ROBYNE'S CHOICES

- 📖 The Wisdom of Sundays by Oprah Winfrey
- 🎵 This Is Me by Keala Settle (The Greatest Showman Soundtrack)

### LAURA'S CHOICES

- 📖 More Myself by Alicia Keys
- 🎵 A Woman's Worth by Alicia Keys

## Conclusion

# LIGHTHOUSES

1. Dr. Robyne's favourite type of structure is a **lighthouse**. What is yours and why?
2. Can you map out your **lighthouses**? Where or whom do you turn to for strength, direction, and focus in your life? If possible, share with the group.
3. Why are "lighthouses" important as it connects to resiliency?
4. What is your next adventure? If you are still pondering what you are going to do next after reading this book, try thinking about this (page 266):  
**"What is my job on the planet? What is it that needs doing that I know something about, that probably won't happen unless I take responsibility for it?"**
5. If you could ask Dr. Robyne one question, what would it be?

”

**"Smile and let go. It's just life after all and you are doing alright just by living."**

### ROBYNE'S CHOICES

- 📖 The Last Lecture by Randy Pausch
- 🎵 Make You Feel My Love by Bob Dylan (the Adele version)

### LAURA'S CHOICES

- 📖 The Sun Does Shine by Anthony Ray Hinton
- 🎵 Unforgettable by Nat King Cole



Thank you for embarking on this book club experience.

With all the book titles available in the whole world, you picked my wee book. This is not lost on me. I am wholeheartedly grateful. My family and I thank you for supporting this work.

I eagerly await hearing from you as we continue to learn alongside one another.

Sláinte!

*Robyne*

## What's Next?

### Read or Listen & Learn with Me

Dive into my second multi-award-winning book *Stress Wisely: How to Be Well in an Unwell World* that started the stress wisely movement.



### Join Dr. Robyne's Stress Wisely Learning Labs

A dynamic experience filled with like-minded people and practical tools, real talk, and all the research-backed strategies to help you apply and master all things stress and resiliency.

Stress Wisely virtual events are hosted 4 times a year. Life changes seasonally—your stress strategies should too. Each lab aligns with the natural psychological and physiological shifts throughout the year.



### Do you have 20 minutes for insights, encouragement, and heart?

#### Listen to *Resiliency Redefined*

Dr. Robyne's podcast is here to help you rethink stress, resiliency, and what it takes to truly be well. Add this podcast if you want real talk, science-backed strategies, and powerful stories that will shift how you navigate life's challenges. Tune in, subscribe, and let's redefine resiliency together.



### Let's Keep This Conversation Going!

I'm in your corner. Follow me on socials [@dr\\_robynehd](#) for daily insights, encouragement, and real-world ways of making better days possible! Instagram and LinkedIn are my favourites. Looking forward to seeing you there!



### Stay Connected—Because You Matter!

You are not just another name on a list—you're part of my community. Subscribe to my **newsletter** for exclusive insights, strategies, and encouragement, straight from me to you.

