

## Thank you for hosting a “Making Friendships Happen!”

### Book Circle

*You are not only inspiring more women to learn about healthy relationships by discussing this book, but by inviting a group to come together you're actually fostering meaningful connections, too! Thank you! I wish upon you many blessings for your time together.*

**–Shasta Nelson, author of *Friendships Don't Just Happen!*  
*The Guide to Creating a Meaningful Circle of Girlfriends***

### Getting Ready for the Book Circle

1. **A location:** Pick a location that is conducive to discussion: living rooms, hidden coffee shops, low-key wine bars, private dining rooms at restaurants.
2. **Attendees:** Invite women you know (or invite 2 women you know and ask them to each invite 2-3 more!) and get RSVP's. Aim for a group of 5-10.
3. **A date:** Schedule 2-3 hours for a girls night out one evening or a women's weekend brunch. Schedule it far enough out that everyone can read the book between the invitation and the event.
4. **Food:** If you're in a living room, tell everyone what they can each help bring to make sure you have snacks and drink for everyone.
5. **Reminder:** Always send out a reminder with all the event details to your attendees the week before and tell them you're looking forward to seeing them.

### Leading the Book Circle

- 1) Allow 10 to 20 minutes for mixing and mingling as everyone's arriving. (Consider name tags upon arrival if your attendees don't yet know each other.)
- 2) Gather everyone:
  - a) Welcome & thank them for coming.
  - b) Introduce yourself and tell them why you wanted to do this book discussion.



3) Group Introductions:

a) Go around the circle: "In 2 minutes, tell us your name, why you were interested in this book circle, and share with us one part of the book that really grabbed you."

- You go first to model it and give everyone else an extra minute to think about it. Remember to keep yours to 2 minutes as everyone else is likely to copy your length.
- Make sure to keep the introductions moving, don't start commenting on each other's shares.

4) In **chapter 2** Shasta described the 5 Circles of Connectedness that show the various types of friends, starting with Contact Friends on the far left and moving to the Committed Friends on the far right (pages 23-32). In what way(s) was this helpful to you? Or more specifically, what was one ah-ha you had or something you learned as you read through the descriptions?

- You can open this up for group discussion, but if a few people are doing all the talking, feel free to ask, "Does anyone else want to share?" Or, "X, we'd love to hear your observations if you want to share?"

5) Now let's split up into 2's for this next question. In **chapter 3** she highlighted 4 different imbalances or friendship needs that we can each experience at different times (pages 50-57):

a) A Low Right-Side: Need Deeper Friends

b) Either Side Low: Need More Friends

c) Middle Circle Imbalance: Need Current Friends

d) Right Side Full: Need Specific Friends

*Sharing Question: Share with your partner which one of those 4 common friendship needs do you most identify with? Which one are you currently experiencing, or which one have you experienced recently?*

6) In this book Shasta coins the word Frientimacy—Friendship Intimacy—and refers to it repeatedly. In **chapter 4**, in the section where she's defining it, she says this on page 60:

"I'm struck by how often we all say we want BFF's—Committed Friends—and yet how little we seem to understand what that means. We romanticize the stories, almost more than we do in romance...."

Then on the next page she continues with,

"We don't get there {Frientimacy} without awkwardness, hurt feelings, and pain. Those things are part of life, and if you want the quintessential friend who is "always there for you," then that means showing up for each other when you're both at your worst. Which also happens to be when you're the messiest, the most needy, and the least impressive."



She's basically saying that Frientimacy is both all the things we want, and many of the things we don't. How did you feel when you were reading that part? Do you agree? Has that been true for you?

- I'd suggest open group conversation for this part. Let everyone talk a bit, but you don't want to get stuck here. So after 5-10 minutes, go to the next question.

Depending now how much time you have left, pick from any of the following 6 questions.

- Prioritize them with your personal preference and just go through them until 20 minutes from your end time. Then jump down to the last question about forgiveness (#8).
- Feel free to break your group up into 2's, 3's, or 4's for different questions which will allow more people to share, different people to bond in different ways, and for more connections to be made.)

7) More questions:

- a) In chapter 4, Shasta shares the **Five Stages of Frientimacy**—Curiosity, Exploratory, Familiarity, Vulnerability, and Frientimacy—which of those stages do you think is hardest for most people? Or, which one is hardest for you?
- b) On pages 76-78, in the chapter about **Being Open**, Shasta shares research that it matters less about what we have in common, and more about the fact that we just need to find some commonality. Basically that quantity of commonality matters as much as the quality of how much that commonality means to us. In partners, think of one friend you've had that proves that point and tell the other person about her. Who have you been close to that surprised you, or perhaps you appeared as opposites almost? Or maybe you had a 20-year age gap, came from completely different places, or were in different life stages? The point is, think of an example of someone you've bonded to even though you didn't have some of the "obvious" things in common. (It's powerful for our brains to remember these stories!)
- c) Take a Poll: Of the **five steps to friendship**—Be open, Initiate consistently, add positivity, increase vulnerability, and practice forgiveness—which step is the most difficult one for you? Raise hands and take a vote. Then whichever step wins—spend 10 minutes talking about it as a group:
  - (1) What makes this step so hard?
  - (2) What parts of that chapter were most helpful to me?
  - (3) What can we learn from each other about this?
- d) **Frientimacy Triangle:** What did you like or dislike about this triangle on page 156? Which side—commitment/consistency or vulnerability/sharing—do you think is harder for more people? In other words, do you feel people share too much too soon, or not enough ever?
- e) **Vulnerability:** Take a poll--Do you find it harder to share the good stuff in your life (i.e. your successes, wins, achievements, good relationship stuff) or the painful stuff (i.e. your insecurities, fears, failures, bad relationship stuff)? Have everyone weigh in on which is harder and then open it up to talk about why they answered the way they did.

f) **5 Friendship Threats:** Of the five friendship threats that Shasta highlighted—Blame, Jealousy, Judgment, Non-reciprocation, and Neglect—which one bugs you the most? What was one part of that chapter about healthy ways of responding that spoke to you?

8) Last question of our time together—let's go around the circle and each take 1-2 minutes.

Shasta makes a pretty big deal about forgiveness. On the bottom of page 174 she says:

"...out of the five core emotions—sadness, fear, anger, joy, and euphoria—that... women have the hardest time identifying anger, often mislabeling it as sadness."

Her point is that if we don't acknowledge when we're frustrated, then we don't realize that we need to step into forgiveness. What is one thing from that chapter that you're taking away? What was one thing that was helpful or spoke to you?

9) Ask someone to read "I Have a Theory that Friendship Can Save the World" (Or show the 2 minute clip of Shasta reciting it on the homepage of ShastaNelson.com)

10) Wrap it up

a) Take a group photo with the girls and their books. Tweet, Facebook, and/or Instagram with #ShastasBook. (On Facebook, tag us at GirlFriendCircles.com)

b) Make sure everyone knows how to connect with each other afterward—ask if you can share everyone's emails with the group?

c) Shasta will be writing her blogs in the upcoming months based on readers questions so feel free to send any big questions that came up to Shasta@GirlFriendCircles.com.

d) Thank everyone for coming.

