

BOOK CLUB STUDY QUESTIONS

*We all have a personal narrative that we offer up to the world and even to ourselves. This ‘story’ does not necessarily reflect our truest nature. Our truest selves are often hidden beneath disguises - psychological masks – that we wear to conceal our vulnerabilities and make ourselves appear more acceptable to others. In **Unmasked: Discover the Hidden Power of Your True Self**, Catherine Duca offers readers specific ways to look beneath these emotional cover-ups to reveal our real selves. It is by embracing our deepest selves that we live a more authentic, empowered life and in so doing, invite others to do the same.*

1. In her *Note to the Reader*, Catherine Duca sets the tone for the book by telling readers that while it is never a good time to not know ourselves deeply, not knowing now is especially perilous. **How do you understand the significance of knowing who you are at this particular time in our nation’s history?**
2. In Chapter 1, *You Can’t Love Anyone Until You Respect Yourself*, the author illustrates one of the most significant psychological problems that underlies all the others. It is the widely shared phenomenon of not feeling *good enough*. **What are some of the ways in which the internal experience of *not feeling good enough* shows up in many peoples’ outward behavior? Can you identify the ways it may show up in your life?**
3. The book describes three of the biggest obstacles to living authentically: the fear of being vulnerable, the fear of feeling exposed, and the fear of being judged. According to the author, these elements are intertwined.
 - **What does vulnerability feel like?**
 - **What do you do when you stumble into a vulnerability puddle and feel exposed?**
 - **How do you handle critical, judgmental thoughts, the ones in your own head and the ones you expect from others?**
4. In chapter 4, *Another Year*, the point is made that many people get stuck in life because they search for the root of their problems where it doesn’t exist. “Looking to your conscious mind for why you sabotage your happiness is like traveling west looking for sunrise.” (Page 40) **According to the author, what are**

some of the reasons people avoid looking inside themselves for the causes of their unhappiness?

5. In chapter 5, *Who Needs Enemies When We've Got Ourselves?*, we learned about the Shadow, that part of our psyche that denies qualities that we deem unacceptable. To carry out this denial, we project these so-called "bad" qualities onto others. This is how we maintain a false belief "that we are not that. " (Page 51-55) **After reading this chapter, can you identify the kind of qualities that are difficult for you to admit and therefore cover-up? In what ways do your cover-ups help you protect yourself?**

6. In *Unmasked*, the author describes the various walls, shields, and cover-ups that we commonly use to protect ourselves against feeling vulnerable. (Page 71) These psychological masks, or facades, serve to hide those aspects of ourselves that we feel would surely get us judged if they were to be revealed. After reading the chapter on Masks, chapter 9,
 - **Which masks were you able to identify?**
 - **When do you think you first adopted this mask(s)?**
 - **How has it impacted your life? For the better? How has it worked against you?**
 - **Can you recognize those worn by people you know?**
 - **Can you think of any other masks that were not included in the book?**

7. In this same chapter, Catherine talks about her relationship with her father and her own mask of Perfectionism. She openly describes what her mask looks like and what it is concealing.
 - **Do you use perfectionism as a shield?**
 - **If so, where do you think you fall on the Perfectionism continuum?**
 - **What do you imagine would happen if you let this shield down?**

8. In chapter 10, *The Bridge*, Catherine asserts that the goal of healing is not to "get over" our childhood wounds, hurts, and traumas, but rather to acknowledge and integrate them into the totality of who we are.
 - **Does this ring true for you? Why or why not?**
 - **If true, what might be one challenge that comes to mind when it comes to acknowledging past hurts, disappointments?**

9. In the chapters on EFT Tapping, 11 - 13, a methodology is outlined for looking beneath the masks we wear to access our deeper selves. **How might you customize the technique of EFT to suit your particular mask?**
10. In the final chapter, *Getting Unstuck: A New Identity*, the author coins the term "Compassionate Recognition," to capture the difference between self-blame and a more insightful and empathic way of looking at our past and our mistakes. She emphasizes the importance of apologizing to ourselves for our misguided attempts at being loved and accepted, and then invites us to accept our own apology. (Page 205)
- **If you were to call to mind your younger self right now, what would it be like to let him/her know that you see everything that he/she felt, went through, and survived?**
 - **Can you allow yourself to feel a softening toward your young self, a compassionate recognition of his/her effort and bravery?**
 - **Can you see yourself making a silent and sacred commitment to honor and respect all that you have been through and hold dear your innocent self? If yes, how would you express this to your younger self?**
 - **Do you sense a shifting dialogue in your mind, from a critical one to a more forgiving one?**
11. **What do you imagine it will feel like to live a more integrated, empowered life?**
12. **Are you ready? If yes, that's wonderful! If not, what do you think might be holding you back?**