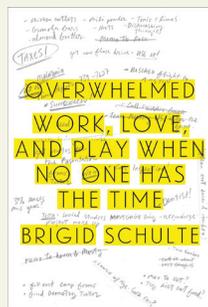


In Reading Groups

Book Discussion Guide from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

by Jacque Stouffer



Overwhelmed: How to Work, Love and Play When No One Has the Time

by Brigid Schulte

When journalist Brigid Schulte realized she was living a life of all work and no play, she decided to find out why she felt so overwhelmed. Schulte uncovers evidence that what the ancient Greeks called “the good life” is attainable after all.

“Once, my sister Claire told me that when you smile, it releases some chemical in the brain and calms anxiety. I have tried smiling. At 4 A.M. In bed. In the dark.”

I love this quote and can totally relate. If this book caught your eye, you likely can too. Good news! We’re not alone. Brigid Schulte walks us through her effort to find out why we feel The Overwhelm ... and what, if anything, we can do about it.

1. Before we discuss the book itself – what are your thoughts on the title and cover? If you would change the book title, how? If you were judging the book by its cover, what would your first impression be?
2. “To them (Greek philosophers), living a life of leisure was the highest aim of a human being.” (10) What do you think is the highest aim of a human being? If not living a life of leisure, how did we move away from that?
3. How do you define leisure? If you measured “leisure time” in your average day, how many hours of it would you have?
4. Schulte shares that Ovid said we reveal what kind of person we are in our leisure. What does your leisure reveal about you?
5. What elements do you think comprise “The Good Life”? Does anyone in your life come close to having those elements? How do you think they do it?
6. Consider President Eisenhower’s speech on page 41. In what ways does life today resemble or differ from his prediction?
7. On page 47, Schulte discusses busyness. Why does our culture display such a compulsion for busyness when no one is happy about it?
8. “Stress, she said, is no more and no less than the inability to predict and control the forces that shape our lives.” (62) How closely does this definition of stress match your own?
9. The “unprecedented flood of information” (62) Schulte refers to has only increased since this book was published in 2014. What steps do you take to control or hold back the flood?
10. Do you agree with Ben Hunnicutt’s assertion that “work now answers the religious questions of who we are and how we find meaning (86)”? Why or why not?
11. What do you think of Schulte’s description of the ideal worker, which begins on page 76?
12. How do you think childcare – or lack thereof – affects work productivity? (pages 113-114)
13. What is your ideal work/life balance? Describes your ideal work place.
14. On pages 130-138, Schulte ‘shines the light on some bright spots’. Which of these caught your attention? What bright spots in the workplace have contributed to your work/life balance?

15. Where do you think the ‘cult of intensive motherhood’ Schulte discusses in Chapter 9 comes from? How have you, or those close to you, dealt with it?
16. Do you agree with Christine Carter, that “feeling positive and happy in the first place is what fosters achievement,” (209) or do you think the reverse is true?
17. All of Chapter 11 is devoted to “Hygge in Denmark”. Which of their ideas and approaches do you find most intriguing? Which would you most like to implement in your own life?
18. With the Mice at Play group as your inspiration, what’s one new thing you’d like to try? How can you make that happen?
19. What are your earliest memories of play? What would be on your ‘playlist’? (247)
20. How do you think a ‘Worry Journal’ (265) might help you combat your Overwhelm?
21. What three focus areas are most important to you? (269) Why?
22. “But kairos is the time of the ‘right moment’, the eternal now, when time is not a number on a dial but the enormity of the experience inside it.” (277) What plans do you have, after reading this book, to work toward kairos, rather than chronos?
23. What one thing from Schulte’s Appendix will you take away from this book?

Jacque Stouffer lives with her family in Liberty, Missouri, where she works with nonprofit agencies as a specialist in organized fundraising through communication and grant writing. .

NEXT MONTH



All the Bright Places

by Jennifer Niven

(Young Adult) When Theodore Finch and Violet Markey meet on the ledge of the bell tower at school, it’s unclear who saves whom. And when they pair up on a project to discover the “natural wonders” of their state, both Finch and Violet make more important discoveries.