

Discussion Guide for "Overwhelmed: Work, Love, and Play When No One Has the Time" by Brigid Schulte

- If you kept a journal documenting your daily routine, which activities/categories would consume most of your day? Would leisure time even be included in your schedule?
- Think back to your childhood. Did you participate in mostly scheduled activities, or did you have unstructured time? Did your parents make time for leisure activities?
- Do you agree with the author's statements about society's addiction to the perception of busyness? Why or why not?
- When it comes to your job, do you feel that you are able to leave work at work? Or do you feel as though you are "on call" 24/7? What would have to happen in order for you to feel more "unplugged?"
- What contributes to your time confetti? If you were able to convert all of your confetti into leisure time, would you feel guilty for doing so?
- Discuss the concept of contaminated time. Even if your work and home responsibilities seem to accompany you 24/7, how would you begin to de-clutter your mind? What would decontaminated space look like in your world?
- Pertaining to the Menlo Innovations approach in Ann Arbor and the Alternative Work Schedule at the Pentagon, what do you feel these progressive examples express about the best way to achieve change?
- How did you react to the author's interviews with Pat Buchanan and other traditionalists?

- Do the men and women in your world seem to manage time differently? How could they more effectively seek to understand each other's way of thinking?
- "Overwhelmed" emphasizes the fact that years of history and cultural conditioning have driven women to work extremely hard, even during supposed time off. How can we, as a society, encourage women to see that it's okay to give themselves a break?
- In many instances, American families tend to resist the fact that fathers also have a natural parenting instinct. Why do you think this is? In what ways can a diverse caretaking community positively impact a child's wellbeing?
- How would you answer the central questions posed by Schulte in chapter 9: who's right, what's best, and how do we stop the insanity? What did you learn from her sojourn in Denmark, where work hours are shorter and highly focused while the economy remains robust? How could the concept of hygge help us redefine the ideal standard of living?
- What do our barometers of success suggest about our societal values? Is happiness still valued in the United States?
- Have you ever felt overwhelmed, anxious or depressed? What factors do you think contributed to these feelings? What changes would you like to see in health care to address these needs?
- Do you think there is a stigma associated with admitting that you are overwhelmed? If yes, how could we work to end the stigma?
- Having finished the book, in what ways will you seek to adjust your habits and behaviors, in concordance with Schulte's advice, in order to live a more fulfilled, less overwhelmed life?
- Make a prediction. What will the work-life balance of future generations look like?