

Sample BOOK CLUB FORMAT:

8-Week Reading Schedule

Meet weekly (or bi-weekly) for 60-90 minutes, either in-person, or by video.

Each meeting covers 1-2 chapters:

- Week 1: Chapters 1-2
- Week 2: Chapters 3-4
- Week 3: Chapters 5-6
- Week 4: Chapters 7-8
- Week 5: Chapters 9-10
- Weeks 6-8: Deeper discussion, revisit favorite chapters, wrap up

WHAT TO DO AT EACH MEETING

Opening (5 mins) -- Begin in silence or with a moment to arrive. Set the intention: "We're here to explore what friendship means—in our lives and in these pages."

Chapter Reflection (40-50 mins)

Use the two or three reflection prompts at the end of each chapter. Take them one at a time:

- Read the prompt aloud
- Sit with it silently
- Go around the circle. Each person shares their answer—uninterrupted. No fixing, no debate yet.
- Listen for what emerges. Write down what resonates.

Personal Connection (20-30 mins)

Now explore deeper: "*How does this chapter speak to your actual life right now?*"

- Share a real friendship that comes to mind—one that worked, one that failed, one you're navigating
- What did you learn from reading this chapter that you didn't know before?
- What scared you? What surprised you?
- This is where vulnerability happens. Honor it.

Closing (10 mins)

Go around once more: "*What's one thing you're taking from this conversation?*"

- Keep it brief
- Listen to how the group's wisdom shows up
- End with gratitude for the time together

Check the **Chapter Prompts** for all discussion questions at the end of the document.

Average Book Club Meeting Times:

- **In-person:** 90 minutes (At your home or office conference room, people like to linger, have snacks, experience community)
 - **Zoom:** 60 minutes (people have other commitments, Zoom fatigue is real)
 - Complete our Contact form for book club inquiries.
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TIPS FOR FACILITATING YOUR BOOK CLUB

- **Before the meeting:**
 - Read the chapters slowly. Sit with the reflection prompts as if they were asking *you* something. Notice what stirs.
 - Send the prompts to members a few days early. Invite them to live with the questions, not just answer them.
 - Create a space that feels safe enough for honesty. Quiet. Unhurried. The kind of place where people can be themselves.
- **During the meeting:**
 - Begin with a breath, a moment of silence, or a simple pause. This book asks us to slow down.
 - Read each reflection prompt aloud as an invitation, not a demand. Let silence settle after. Silence is where the real work happens.
 - Go around the circle in order. This creates a rhythm and gives everyone an equal voice.
 - If someone passes, honor that. Not everyone is ready to speak, and that's wisdom too.
 - Listen for what's true, not what's polished. This book is about real friendship—messy, vulnerable, honest.
 - If the conversation feels stuck, ask gently: "What are we not saying?" or "What do you really think?"
 - When someone shares something tender, let it be tender. Don't rush to fix it or lighten it.
 - Your role is to hold space, not to teach. You're a companion in the conversation, not the guide.
- **When things get difficult:**
 - If someone dominates: "I want to hear from others too. Who hasn't had a chance to speak?"
 - If the group wanders: "This matters—and so does the question we started with. Can we come back?"
 - If people disagree: "You're both right in your own truth. What can we learn from seeing it differently?"
 - If the energy shifts and someone gets emotional: That's the book doing its work. Sit with it.
- **After the meeting:**

- Thank people for their courage in showing up and being real.
 - Don't try to wrap it up with a neat conclusion. Let the questions linger.
 - Remind them of next week's chapters—and maybe ask them to notice something about friendship in their own lives before you meet again.
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Chapter Prompts

- 1. Introduction: To the One Who Might Become a Friend**
 - a. *Who comes to mind when you hear the word friend?*
 - b. *When in your life have you most clearly felt the presence of a true friend?*
- 2. Chapter One: What Is Friendship?**
 - a. *Do you have your own working definition of friendship? If so, what is it?*
 - b. *Who was the first person you would have called a true friend?*
 - c. *Which of Aelred's four qualities—loyalty, right intention, discretion, patience comes most naturally to you? Which is hardest?*
- 3. Chapter Two: Best Friends**
 - a. *Who in your life knows the long version of your story?*
 - b. *When did you first recognize that bond?*
- 4. Chapter Three: When Friendships Fail**
 - a. *Is there a friendship in your life now that needs honest attention?*
 - b. *Has a friendship ever ended badly, and that sting still lingers? What did—or might—it teach you?*
- 5. Chapter Four: Befriending Ourselves**
 - a. *How can you be a more supportive friend to yourself?*
 - b. *How would you talk to a friend in your situation?*
- 6. Chapter Five: Spiritual Friendship**
 - a. *Who in your life has listened to you in a way that helped you notice something meaningful that you might otherwise have overlooked?*
 - b. *When did you offer that same kind of listening to someone else?*
- 7. Interlude**
 - a. -
- 8. Chapter Six: Becoming Friends with the World**
 - a. *Where in your own life has a friendship pulled you toward something larger than you anticipated?*
 - b. *What of the world is asking for your attention?*
 - c. *Where might you focus your attention to become a better friend to the world?*
- 9. Chapter Seven: Friendship and the Paradise Already Here**
 - a. *Where in your life have you felt a moment of presence that seemed to open something larger than ordinary life?*
 - b. *Who are the people—expected or unexpected—with whom you can practice this level of friendship, where you are seen and where you are willing to see?*

- c. *Where, without meaning to, have you created distance—the distance that becomes its own small hell—and what might it mean to turn toward presence again?*

10. Chapter Eight: Loneliness and the True Self

- a. *Is there a truth about yourself you have not yet been able to say aloud to another person?*
- b. *Who in your life has the kind of presence that might make it possible to say it?*
- c. *Have you seen your own pure diamond?*

11. Chapter Nine: When a Friend Is Ill

- a. *Who in your life has stayed when illness made it easy to leave?*
- b. *What would it mean to be the loving rock for someone you love?*

12. Chapter Ten: Spiritual Companionship

- a. *What did you feel stir in you as you read—recognition, longing, resistance, grief?*
- b. *Where does that feeling lead you?*
- c. *Have you heard the sound of the genuine in another? If so, what was that experience like?*

At FriendshipInALonelyAge.com, and at our Instagram and Quora.com profile you will find ongoing reflections on friendship, presence, and the inner life—new stories, new thinkers, and responses to what readers are bringing to the conversation.

Friendship is not a subject that runs out. The blog is where the book keeps going.

Some questions that go further than these prompts:

- What does it mean to be a friend to someone who is dying?
- Can a friendship survive a serious political disagreement?
- What do we owe the friends we have lost touch with?
- Is there such a thing as too many friends?
- What does friendship look like in the second half of life?

If any of those questions are yours too, or if you have one not named here, please offer it to us and to your club. The conversation is better with more voices in it.