

# ***Identity Theft: Rediscovering Ourselves After Stroke*** by Debra Meyerson and Danny Zuckerman

## **Book Club Session Suggestions**

[Note to Facilitators](#)

[Access Considerations Especially for First Time Book Club Members](#)

[First Day Considerations and Activity Ideas](#)

[Potential First Day Schedule \(90 minute groups\)](#)

[Typical Book Club Session Covering 2 Chapters](#)

[Discussion Considerations](#)

[Last session Considerations](#)

### **Note to Facilitators**

- **Overview:** This guide offers some options and considerations for structuring the first session for your book club and a description of what the flow of a typical session might look like. It refers to a sample Introduction PowerPoint (PPT) to help explain the logistics of your group and some key themes of the book. It also references additional resources, including a sample identity Word Cloud activity. These are some ideas that have worked for us at Cal State East Bay and Boston University, but are not meant to be prescriptive. You are encouraged to modify these suggestions and other resources offered as Community Resources to meet your needs.
  - All supplemental resources may be accessed directly from the Stroke Onward website, via Community Resources.
  - Quick caveat: While we share an Introduction PowerPoint to help set the stage and offer visual supports for the first session, as mentioned in the Facilitator Overview, there are drawbacks to PowerPoint use. For those meeting via video, it may make it harder for the facilitator to monitor the whole gallery, unless you are using two monitors. Book Club members may also have a

harder time seeing their peers during the discussion. If you use a PowerPoint during any of your sessions, we highly recommend that you stop screen sharing during a discussion to promote a more natural conversation exchange.

## Access Considerations Especially for First Time Book Club Members

- **Introduce options for reading supports:** It's helpful to start off by reviewing different approaches to accessing the material so that group members understand that they have choices in how to approach reading the book. For many, it may be the first time they have attempted to read a full book since their stroke and they may need assistance in figuring out which reading supports will best support their participation.
  - This can be part of the first session or handled during a pre-first session phone call or meeting.
  - As described in the Facilitator Overview provided by Stroke Onward, aphasia friendly chapter reading support materials specific to the book include both a Summary in paragraph form and more detailed bulleted Highlights.
    - i. Sample visuals of these formats are shared in the Introduction PowerPoint (slides 12-13).
    - ii. Note that an [audio version](#) of each chapter Summary is also now available from Stroke Onward.
  
- **Potential formats for book content:** There are numerous and varied options to access book content as shared in the Facilitator Overview. Choices include:
  - Listening to the audiobook;
  - Reading the e-book with or without text to speech options;
  - Reading the book in print form;

- Reviewing the chapter's aphasia-friendly Summary and/or Highlights;
  - Listening to the chapter Summary via audio file;
  - Having a carepartner, reading partner, student, or other volunteer read the book or summary materials aloud;
  - Or any combination of the above.
- **Supporting connection to the book:** While for some members, the goal may be improved reading skills, for everyone ***the goal should be connecting with the story***. It's important to focus on what they will need to do to understand the weekly chapters so they can participate in the discussions.
    - Emphasize that they may start with one method but over time, they may find that other options will suit them better.
    - It is perfectly fine if someone opts to only use the weekly Highlights or Summary to help follow the storyline. For some members, trying to read or listen directly from the book may be too hard.
    - Try to confirm what each member's personal plan will be as they start the book club in terms of accessing the weekly reading assignment.
    - Check in with your members at week two and ask what worked for them. Emphasize that it is very helpful to commit to reviewing the material in whatever way works for them---which means practice and time outside of the book club.
    - The amount of time needed to review the material each week will vary depending on their reading skills, whether you cover 1 or 2 chapters a week, and the way they access the book, but suggest allotting at least 1-2 hours a week outside the group.

## First Day Considerations and Activity Ideas

- **Introduce the facilitators:** See sample PPT slides if you want to include visuals.
- **Establish the ground rules:** See PPT example (slides 5-7), but encourage members to add or modify and at the very least, come to consensus that these rules work for the group. Ground rules are used by many organizations and groups to help manage group dynamics.
- **Group Ice Breaker #1-- “Getting to Know You” Question(s):** The approach you take to introducing the members may depend on how familiar the members are with each other already. Consider offering one or more questions as an ice breaker, as your group size and meeting time allow. See samples in PPT(slide 9).
  - Please note, some of these questions may benefit from supportive visuals to support response options.
  - Some sample ice breaker questions might include:
    - What motivated them to join this group?
    - Have they read other books since their stroke? If yes, can they share their last book?
    - Have they ever read non-fiction or self-help books before?
    - Have they ever been in a book club before?
    - If they are aphasia book club “veterans” what advice would they give a new member?
    - If you are a new member, what question(s) do you have?
    - What do they hope to get out of this experience?
    - What do they think will be a challenge?
    - How do they plan on reviewing the weekly material?
    - Before their stroke, would they be most likely to read a mystery, nonfiction, romance novel, self-help, fiction, action/adventure, or other...

- Before their stroke, would they rather see the movie first or read the book first?
  - If life was like a TV remote, would you want to rewind your life, pause it, or fast forward to see your future?
- **Group Ice Breaker #2—Identity Word Cloud:** This is an alternative ice breaker activity that will also help start to unpack the main theme of the book---*identity*. Have members share some key words or short phrases (not sentences) that describe who they are. Have one facilitator enter the words onto a word cloud graphic while the group members are sharing their key words or short phrases.
  - See PPT (slide 24) for a potential list of identity categories and some example words;
  - For a more complete Identity Word Cloud activity, we've developed a sample available on the Stroke Onward website in Community Resources
  - **NOTE:** It's likely you'll only have time to do either the Identity Word Cloud or the Getting to Know You question(s) during the first session; You can opt to do the Identity Word Cloud activity later in this session if time allows, or at another session.
- **Overview of book club format:** Describe how you plan to review and discuss the chapter material each week.
  - See section below describing a typical session
- **Introduce the author and Stroke Onward:** Consider showing one or more videos to introduce group members to the author. Options include:
  - The [Stroke Onward introduction video](#) from the Stroke Onward website;
  - A brief [book group introduction from Debra Meyerson](#);
  - There are other videos of the author speaking about her book and stroke recovery that you might want to share during your sessions. Here is a [link for samples](#).

- **Explore overview of the book:** Review the main themes. See PPT example that goes through some of the ideas about the book and rebuilding identity.
- **Wrap up:** Clarify reading schedule for first week. Explain how they will receive the materials. Check-in for questions.

## Potential First Day Schedule (90 minute groups)

*Note timing below depends also on size of group. These numbers are roughly based on a 6 person group.*

- 00-05: Initial greetings and introduction of facilitators
- 05-15: Establish/review ground rules (PPT slides 5-7)
- 15-40: Introduce members via icebreaker(s) (PPT slides 9 or 24)
- 40-45: Review Book Club Logistics (PPT slides 11-13)
- 45-55: Introduce author and Stroke Onward (PPT slides 14-16)
- 55-85: Review main themes behind book (PPT slides 17-28)
  - Timeline varies person to person on when they are “ready” to think about issues of identity;
  - Acceptance vs. Recovery;
  - Stroke impacts identity in many ways;
  - Every stroke, every person, every recovery is different;
  - The book shares stories from many different stroke survivors;
  - Many factors influence how stroke survivors cope, recover, and adjust;
  - Recovery, acceptance, and rebuilding identity is an ongoing process;
  - Living with a stroke can “suck” at times, BUT you can still build a meaningful life;
  - Writing the book was a long process for the author;
  - Book divided into three parts.
- 85-90: Wrap up

## Typical Book Club Session covering 2 Chapters

- **Quick check-in:** First few weeks, make sure everyone is doing okay in terms of accessing the book in whatever method they have chosen.
- **Review key points of the first assigned chapter:** Each group needs to decide how to review the salient parts of the chapter so that the members are prepared to have a meaningful group discussion. What do you think needs to be covered in order to convey the “gist” of the chapter? There are multiple approaches to handling the chapter review and this may take around 10-15 minutes. Here are a few possibilities, and you can combine them--but your group will find their “style”:
  - If everyone has been able to read the book before the session, you may only need to mention the chapter title (i.e. “So this is the chapter about Speech Therapy.”) and ask the members to share a few key or favorite parts, but you can dive into the discussion questions quickly.
  - If your members read the book ahead of time, you can ask someone to prepare a chapter summary to share with the group. One member takes lead in describing the chapter.
  - If most everyone has read the book, but a few still need the content review, consider trying an “ask and tell” approach. You describe the key parts by asking members some questions, using the Summary or Highlights to help guide the content: “Where did Debra and her family head for the weekend?” “What was one of the first signs that something wasn’t right?” “What did the first hospital decide was wrong?” ***Try to avoid making it sound like a test or drill---rather it’s more a collaborative story retell. Keep a conversational tone.***
  - You can have members take turns reading 1-2 sentences from the Chapter Summary. This method is helpful if members are strong readers or if many people need a full review of the chapter to help prepare for the discussion.

- Many of our members really enjoy the opportunity to practice reading aloud.
    - Just monitor the time as you review the chapter to make sure that the discussion is not short changed.
    - If you screen share the PDF chapter material, try using “Show Part of Screen” in the Zoom Advanced Screen Share settings to reduce the visual complexity from showing the whole page at once.
    - Or you can divide the chapter summaries onto several slides to allow for multiple readers to take turns.
  - You can ask members to read some key bullets from the Highlight section. Most times it would take too long to read them all aloud, so you have to pick and choose.
  - In the second section of the book, each chapter ends with “Key Points”; You can have members read those few items.
- **Discuss the chapter:** Just like the review, there are multiple ways to approach the discussion and this is really where the time should be focused. The Points for Reflection are meant to help stimulate discussion, but you may not have time to cover all of the questions. You will find that some questions will spark a discussion and others may not. It depends on how the topic connects with your group members. The questions on the sheet are just suggestions. Feel free to introduce or encourage other topics. You will find out what works for your group, but here are a few options:
    - The facilitator can select and read some of the questions and branch off to other questions as the discussion progresses. The members don’t actually see the sheet.
    - You can let group members select and read a question or come up with one of their own. Members may come in with their own ideas they want to discuss. The group member who “leads” the question can solicit opinions from the other group members. It’s really nice to share the facilitation leadership role with the group members.

- You can select 2-3 of the closed set questions to help provide a response output for your members with more limited verbal expression. Share your screen, highlight the target question by using advanced settings “show part of screen”. If members know how to annotate, they can enter their answer on the screen. Remember that even the closed set questions can be a jumping off point for additional and deeper discussion.
  - Some groups like to complete the Points for Reflection at home and then share their answers during the group. Give each member a chance to share their response. Some members may only be able to complete the closed set questions due to writing limitations.
- **Repeat review and discussion with next assigned chapter**
  - **Wrap up session:** Check in with the members. What was their biggest take-away of the day? Remind members of the next assignment.
  - **Optional post-session email:** If you are sending out the materials via email each week, your members may enjoy a short email that summarizes the session and includes any relevant information or resources that were discussed during the session. Here’s a sample:

Hello ATP Book Club,

It was great to see you all for our ninth session!

Here is your **summary** of **Monday's session**:

- We watched a [video](#) of **Debra** and her husband, **Steve**.
- We discussed **Chapter 15--Financial impact** and **Chapter 16--Advocacy**.
- Most members expressed that their **financial situation** did not change a lot post-stroke. This was because most were already **retired**.
- Members shared their **experiences with healthcare professionals** post-stroke, and **advocacy**.

- One member shared that they had to **advocate** for themselves when given **medication** with negative **side effects**.
- It was **Carmen's birthday** this past weekend! Happy belated birthday, **Carmen!**

### Takeaways:

- Debra talks about the **financial impact** of stroke:
  1. Cost of **medical services**
  2. Loss of **wages**
- Debra talks about her experiences with **medical professionals** and **insurance**.
- She addresses the importance of **advocacy** to make sure survivors get the support they need.

### Plan for next week:

- We will **discuss Chapters 17, 18, and 19**.

### Reminders:

- Next Monday is our **last** book club meeting!
- All ATP groups will meet using the **same Zoom link and password for every session**.

Looking forward to our next meeting!

## Discussion Considerations

- Try to keep the main points of the chapter in mind so the members keep their focus on the overarching concept of identity rebuilding.
- To help highlight the diversity in the book, check out the biographies in the back of the book or check for their photos and stories on the [Identity Theft](#) website. Audio [recordings of biographies](#) are also available for group member use.
- As you introduce some of the other stories shared in the book, you may find some great YouTube videos or a presence on FaceBook.

There are multiple videos for Julia Fox Garrison. Here is one by Tricia Harbridge: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3ueXWAC-P0>

- Depending on the makeup of your group members, some chapters may be more relevant than others. If most of your members were retired when they had their stroke, they may not find the chapters on work or fiscal impact as engaging. Flex the focus of your discussion as needed to suit your members.
- Be prepared for the chapter on intimacy and relationships. Group members may be uncomfortable talking about intimacy, especially in a mixed group. Be sensitive and inclusive in terms of sexual orientation diversity. Student clinicians may need additional guidance on how to facilitate these discussions. We have included additional resources for both the facilitator and for the book club members in a References and Resource List available on the Stroke Onward website, via Community Resources. Consider including the materials for the members in a post session email.

## Last session Considerations

- Be sure to balance the review of any remaining chapters and a discussion of their overall experience reading the book. The Points for Reflection offer some “wrap-up” questions in the final chapter, but leave time for folks to share their thoughts about the book and its impact and/or value.
- Decide what you want your last session to look like to celebrate the end of the book!
- Consider having a Q&A session with the author Debra Meyerson. You can reach out to [Jodi@strokeonward.org](mailto:Jodi@strokeonward.org) to explore this option.
- Consider repeating the Identity Word Cloud activity from the first session. Or do it for the first time if you didn't do it at the beginning.

- Be sure to explain the post-book club survey available via [programs@strokeonward.org](mailto:programs@strokeonward.org). For anyone who needs support to complete the survey, please find a way to assist.

*“We lose ourselves in books. We find ourselves there too.” Author unknown*