

It's Better This Way

Discussion Guide

1. Initially, Julia is skeptical of entering back into the dating scene after her difficult divorce with Eddie, but she finds herself falling in love again. Discuss a time when you were surprised after your initial expectations changed?
2. Throughout the novel, Julia gathers strength from her late father's words, *It's better this way*. Has life ever thrown you unexpected curveballs? Where do you draw strength from in times of hardship?
3. Julia's unexpected romance with Heath quickly develops into a passionate love story, changing her life forever. Along the way, Julia learns how to open up again. Discuss a time when you had to be vulnerable to develop a new relationship.
4. In the heat of her divorce, Julia sends nasty text messages to Laura, an action she comes to regret when attempting to reconcile with Heath's sons. Have you ever said or done things you wish you could take back?
5. Both sets of siblings, Marie and Hillary and Matthew and Adam, continue their rivalry despite seeing how happy their parents are. Their stubbornness holds all the characters back, until the end when they put their grudges aside. Are you holding onto any old conflicts? What could be the resolution?
6. In the end, the two families make way for peace and love, forging new relationships that continue after the last page. Communication plays a big role in this resolution, but how could each character have found a resolution sooner?
7. Heath and Julia share a rare love, one of mutual trust and respect. They both make gestures that show they care, whether that's a kiss or a birthday surprise. Do you think these gestures are important in a relationship? What's a gesture you can do to show a loved one you care?
8. All the characters have deep wounds from the past, which continue to fester throughout the novel. Julia realizes that there won't be any resolution until they heal the wounds of the past. Discuss conflicts in your own life that began from past wounds. How can you work past them?
9. When Edward asks for a divorce, Julia does everything in her power to save her marriage, even after discovering Edward's affair. Why do you think it was so difficult for her to let go? Do you think Julia should have left sooner?
10. In the beginning of the novel, when Julia asks her therapist whether she should sign their divorce papers, he responds "Love that isn't faithful has little value. It really isn't love at all." Do you agree? Why or why not?
11. When Carrie and Eric first meet, they are stark opposites of each other—Carrie is extraverted and active, while Eric is a recluse workaholic. Why do you think they make such a great pair? Do opposites attract?
12. Six years after graduating college, Carrie finds herself unable to find a steady job or move out of her childhood home. When do you think children should be independent from their parents?

13. Julia is constantly being set up on horrible blind dates by her sister and friends, making the dating scene unbearable. Have you ever been set up by friends? Can you identify with Julia's sentiment?
14. Before meeting Heath, Julia is content with being single. A man is not necessary for her to be happy. Do you believe people can be satisfied without a significant other? Why or why not?
15. The first couple years following Julia's divorce had been a battle, until she wrote Eddie a good-bye letter, one she never mailed. Have you ever struggled to let go of someone or something? Take some time to write a short letter to this person.
16. Many of the characters reach out for advice and encouragement about issues in their life. Julia asks her sister for advice, while often being the person her daughters and niece turn to about their own problems. Discuss a time in which someone's advice guided you to make a decision. Did it pay off?
17. Given that both Hillary and Marie were adults at the time of the divorce, Julia assumes they would not be emotionally affected, but their conflict with their father proves otherwise. How do you think divorce affects children of different ages?
18. After Eddie's betrayal, Julia doesn't expect to fall in love again. Then she meets Heath, who was also betrayed by his former spouse. How did they bond over this shared experience? Do you think it's possible to fall in love twice?
19. Eddie's pride blinds him throughout the novel, making communication difficult and further hindering his relationship with his daughters. Do you have a similar blind spot that interferes with your relationships and what you want in life?
20. If *It's Better This Way* was made into a television show or movie, who would you cast to play Julia and Heath?