

5 Easy Steps for Leading Book Discussions

Excerpted from Reading Group Choices
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1 Acknowledge your role as “facilitator”—not expert.

If it's your turn to lead the discussion, know that you are not expected to be an authority or expert on the chosen book. Your primary tasks are to open the discussion, keep it going, maintain a lively dialogue, and end the discussion on time. A great book discussion is the result of the thoughts and perceptions of a variety of different people.

2 Note your own response as you read.

Make notes as you read the book, highlighting or marking passages. What are your reactions, questions or insights? Add the personal touch to your discussion. Share your thoughts during your discussion and invite others to comment.

3 Lay some ground rules.

After you've introduced yourself to the group, remind members of the ways they can contribute to the discussion:

- Avoid “crosstalk” or talking over others.
- Be respectful. Keep an open mind.
- Try not to repeat what others have said. Speak up with something new or add to the previous comment.
- Acknowledge that there is no right or wrong, just differences of opinion.
- Be open to learn from others.
- If you are outgoing, be careful to allow space for others to share their thoughts.

4 Call the question.

If you feel the group has begun to repeat itself, acknowledge your observation, ask for agreement if necessary, and pose a new topic.

5 Balance the discussion.

Invite quiet members to share their thoughts. Watch for introverts who have something to say but are having a hard time getting in a word.

Praise for *Choose Hope*

“Our survival requires that we turn from war and bloodshed to conciliation and discussion. This inspiring book shows that dialogue is good not only between opponents but is also creatively stimulating among advocates of peace.” —*The Dalai Lama*

“In this nuclear age, when the future of humankind is imperiled by irrational strategies, it is imperative to restore sanity to our policies and hope to our destiny. Only a rational analysis of our problems can lead to their solution. This book is an example par excellence of a rational approach.”

—*Joseph Rotblat, Nobel Peace Prize laureate*

“This book gives us all hope because it reminds us that in addition to the gift of life, we are each also given the gift of choice. We each can choose to reject the bomb, the bullet, and all the techniques of violence. We can, above all, as Daisaku Ikeda and David Krieger remind us in this inspirational book, choose hope.”

—*Mairead Corrigan Maguire, Nobel Peace Prize laureate*

Host a Reading Group

Reading group discussions—in your home, at a bookstore or in a library—are great opportunities to learn something new, see things in a new way, examine deeply held beliefs or simply enjoy the company of other book lovers. Middleway Press is happy to provide this discussion guide, which gives you everything you need to host a successful meeting: a descriptive summary, topics to consider, endorsements and hosting tips.

For more copies of this guide, or guides for other great Middleway Press books, contact us at:

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

DAVID KRIEGER & DAISAKU IKEDA



CHOOSE HOPE

YOUR ROLE IN WAGING PEACE
IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

Choose Hope: Your Role in Waging Peace in the Nuclear Age

By David Krieger and Daisaku Ikeda



About the Book

When our common future is at stake, can we afford to be indifferent? Can we reasonably expect our political and military leaders to have the wisdom and will to solve our most serious and dangerous problems? Now is the time for transformation, where we can look beyond individual and national interests and shift our thoughts to being world citizens, if all of humanity is to survive and flourish.

Choose Hope puts forth the profound proposition that ordinary people not only can lead their leaders to a globally secure future, they *must* do so. Balancing Western and Eastern perspectives, peace advocates Krieger and Ikeda show that we can end the threat of nuclear devastation if we choose to do so. With hope, it is possible to change the world. But we must consciously choose hope, and then choose to act upon it.

This book opens the dialogue about what's not working — and why — and can be your inspiration to take part in a growing movement by ordinary people to create a world where all are at least able to enjoy the basics of life: international peace and security.

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About the Authors

David Krieger is a founder of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, and has served as President of the Foundation since 1982. Under his leadership the Foundation has initiated many innovative and important projects for building peace, strengthening international law and abolishing nuclear weapons. He has lectured throughout the United States, Europe and Asia on issues of peace, security, international law, and the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Krieger serves on the boards and advisory councils of numerous peace and justice organizations the world over and is a founder of Abolition 2000, a global network of over 2000 organizations and municipalities committed to the elimination of nuclear weapons. He has written and edited numerous studies and books about peace and nuclear weapons, including *Nuclear Weapons and the World Court* and *Waging Peace in the Nuclear Age*.

Daisaku Ikeda is president of the Soka Gakkai International, a lay Buddhist association pursuing the values of peace, culture and education and committed to fostering within individuals a sense of responsibility for the shared global community. He is also the founder of a number of educational, cultural and research institutions.

Prolific writer, poet and peace activist, he is recognized as one of the leading interpreters of Buddhism, bringing its timeless wisdom to bear on the many contemporary issues confronting humanity. He has written dozens of books, including *The Way of Youth* and the award-winning *For the Sake of Peace*. He has traveled to more than 50 countries to speak with leading thinkers, applying his strong belief that dialogue is the most basic starting point for peace. Among the hundreds of honors and commendations around the world, he received the United Nations Peace Award in 1983.

TOPICS TO CONSIDER

- 1 Ikeda comments, “Confronted with day-to-day reality, sensitive people lose hope and shut themselves within their own small worlds” (p. 11). How do you see people around you reacting to local violence? To world violence? Discuss your observations.
- 2 If former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali is correct in saying that “in the twenty-first century, no individual nation will be capable of solving international problems,” (p. 12) is the U.S. government’s current approach to terrorism adequate? What else might the United States do to find more effective long-lasting solutions?
- 3 Krieger suggests, “Most people are still conditioned to give their loyalty to a nation in a time when such loyalty often impedes action for the good of humanity as a whole” (p. 13). Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of nationalism and patriotic fervor. What motivates nationalism?
- 4 Chapter Three introduces the differences between realists and idealists. How would you describe yourself? Are most people one or the other—or a little of both? Are each represented equally in the media? Why or why not?
- 5 How would the bumper sticker “Question Authority” be perceived today? Compare this to sentiments during the Vietnam War (p. 39). Is enough being done to encourage young people to question authority?
- 6 Discuss the role of those who question authority in a country’s transformation (p. 38-40). What are the characteristics of the kind of person who assumes this responsibility? How does the media portray these people?
- 7 Krieger writes, “If enough youth were educated to think for themselves about participating in wars, older people would be forced to find more creative ways to resolve their disputes” (p. 58). How important is education in building a peaceful world?
- 8 Imagine a world that has evolved to a place where all people consider themselves world citizens. What problems would be solved? Would new challenges be introduced?
- 9 Chapter Seven reminds us of the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, both attacks against civilian populations. Krieger notes that most Americans were taught that the bombings were necessary to end the war (p. 74). What have we learned from history about the role of violence as an approach to resolve conflicts?
- 10 Krieger suggests that an “Apology clears the air” (p. 88). Why does it seem so difficult for politicians to apologize? Do apology and forgiveness go hand in hand? What is their relationship?
- 11 Why do you think that some people resort to violence rather than dialogue? Is it because it’s just an easier way out? Are there other reasons?
- 12 Discuss the role of patience in moving toward peace. Is there much in our culture that promotes or encourages patience? How do you become more patient and teach this virtue to young people in today’s world?
- 13 Discuss the role of fear as it relates to nations giving up their stockpiles of nuclear weapons. What circumstances would make it more comfortable for nuclear nations to comply with their treaty obligations?
- 14 Ikeda urges the United Nations to call fully on the “wisdom of the masses” to help address problems like poverty and human rights (p. 138). Discuss how a shift in thinking among the masses would influence politics.
- 15 Chapter 13 addresses the social role of literature. Which books have been most valuable in your personal growth and awareness of the greater good?
- 16 Has this book inspired you to take action to help create a better world? If so, what steps will you take to bring about change?