

# Discussion Questions

## *Unshakeable Confidence, The Freedom To Be Our Authentic Selves: Mindfulness For Women* by Mare Chapman



Discussion guide provided by the author.

**Please encourage every participant to practice these basic attitudes and views as you discuss the book together:**

1. *Remember you are each experts on yourself, so trust and respect whatever you notice and experience as valid and worthy of your kind, accepting attention.*
2. *Bring lots of curiosity and fresh attention (what and how? not why?) to your own and other experience and opinions.*
3. *Be honest about whatever is true for you – there is no one right way to be here. This is your authentic experience.*
4. *Agree to hold whatever is shared together as confidential. This creates emotional safety.*

**Author Invite:** I would be delighted to attend one of your group's meetings to discuss the book. I'd be happy to guide you in a meditation and answer any questions you may have. Contact info: [mare@marechapman.com](mailto:mare@marechapman.com).

### **Questions:**

1. How do you feel about Eleanor Roosevelt's confident statement? Can you relate to the habit of "othering" and losing yourself in others?
2. How do you honestly feel about yourself? Do you treat yourself kindly and respectfully? How would you ideally like to feel about yourself?
3. What messages did you get growing up as a girl in your family, and about how you're supposed to be as a woman? What experiences have you had that reflect the patriarchal messages about being female?
4. Although othering habits are normal, they create a lot of discomfort and pain. Reflect on the characteristics of othering that resonate in you: your relationship to your body, emotions, conflict, responsibility, showing yourself as you honestly are, habits of judgment and criticism, attachment to control, self-doubt and self-loathing. Notice this with lots of kindness and curiosity. No blaming, please!
5. As you reflect on your mind's conditioned habits, (with lots of curiosity) does your attention tend to be more in the past – second guessing yourself, regretting what happened, or feeling nostalgic about the past? Or does your attention tend to be more in the future – worrying, hoping, fantasizing? Or do you tend to be on autopilot – not

really aware of what's going on in your mind? Or do you tend to be pretty much here in the present?

6. If you've practiced mindful breathing in sitting meditation, what's that being like for you? Remember the mind wanders, so it's vital to spot that as soon as you can, and then gently and kindly reconnect with the breath. This is simple but not easy!
7. What is the Dropping In practice being like for you? This is a vital and powerful practice to repeat many many times throughout the day. Please share how this has been affecting you.
8. Do you experience a gap between how you show yourself to the world and how you feel about yourself on the inside? What's this like for you, and what are the situations where this gap is especially obvious?
9. How has your relationship to your body been affected by our culture's misogynistic and sexist views? How would you like to change your relationship to your body? How is the Body Sweep practice affecting this?
10. What's it being like applying mindfulness to the body's sensations, and most particularly sensations that are unpleasant – as in painful? Have you had moments of experiencing pain without suffering – the 2nd arrow strike? Realizing impermanence?
11. The judging mind is a very active part of our conditioning to other. What's your judging mind like? Does it have favorite complaints about you? Others? What's the effect of noticing the habit of judging, comparing, and self-criticism with curiosity, "Isn't that interesting?"
12. Do the "Power of Thoughts Experiment" with each other (pg. 179). Share your reactions to this. Explore and discuss some of your deeper held belief thoughts with each other (There's something wrong with me; I'm never enough; I'm too \_\_\_\_\_). You might do a short meditation together to create the inner space before you contemplate this.
13. What happens for you, habitually, when you realize there's something that you want, and getting this will somehow affect another person? Contemplate this for a few minutes and notice what's true. I find that for most women a range of unpleasant emotions arise – anxiety, guilt, sadness, anger, fear, disappointment, resentment, etc. Yet – it's vital/self-responsible, to know what we want. Explore this together.
14. What's your relationship to your emotions like? Which ones are acceptable, which ones are not, according to your conditioning? What did your family of origin teach you about emotions? Remember that every emotion is legitimate. It's our system's way of saying, "Hey, pay attention. Something important is happening."

15. How do you feel about the “Code of Goodness”? How do you get caught in being overly responsible, and how are you affected by this habit? How are you with setting boundaries? What do you believe you are truly responsible for?
16. Othering trains us to discount ourselves, and makes it truly difficult to love and accept ourselves just as we are. Share how this lives out in you – where do you spot this in your relationship with yourself. What’s your reaction to the idea that we feel shame in being female? Are you finding the Loving Kindness/METTA practice is helpful with this?
17. If you have had the opportunity to apply the “B.R.A.I.N.S.© ” method to exploring a difficult emotion, please share what you’ve noticed with each other. In your experience, what is the key to staying steady with yourself as you explore in this way? Remember, we do have all the data about our experiences and conditioned beliefs within our own mind-body-heart system. We can trust ourselves to know.
18. Is it easier to offer compassion to others than yourself? It takes courage to open our heart to pain – both our own and others – and stay steady with it. Share your experiences about being compassionate with others, and also being compassionate with yourselves.
19. Finding freedom from those conditioned ideas about how we’re supposed to be (like perfect and always pleasing!) is key to being able to relax into our authentic selves. Yet attachment to a sense of self is deeply conditioned. By learning to dis-identify with what we’re experiencing – simply observing – we create more inner spaciousness for freeing ourselves from these limited and oppressive ideas of who we think we are. Are you catching glimmers of this through the meditation practice? The experience of non-self, not-self, selfless. Explore this together.
20. What’s been the overall effect of reading this book? Do you feel like you understand your conditioning as a woman better? Do you feel like you have a better sense of your authentic self and who you truly are? Do you feel like you understand mindfulness and how to practice it better? What specific learnings or insight stand out? Will you continue to study and practice mindfulness?

Thank you so much for reading my book and taking the time to meet and discuss this with others who are also on the path of freedom. I sincerely hope you have found it deeply beneficial. I’d love to hear your feedback on how this book has affected you. Please send your comments to [mare@marechapman.com](mailto:mare@marechapman.com).

May you trust that you are always enough, just as you are.

**Mare Chapman**