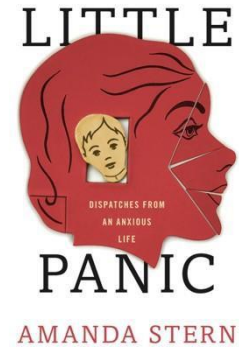


## Discussion Guide

### *Little Panic: Dispatches From an Anxious Life*

By Amanda Stern

1. *Little Panic* takes place in two narrative moments: when Amanda is a young child growing up in lower Manhattan, and when she is facing down adult relationships and larger life choices. In both cases, she seems to be craving one thing: a family. Discuss the different kinds of families she finds, or loses, over the course of the book. Do you agree with her choices?
2. In Chapter 2, Stern describes feeling as if she is “not the right kind of human.” What does she mean by this? Do you agree that there is such a thing as a “right” way to be human?
3. Amanda’s life is interwoven in unexpected ways with the famous missing child case that rocked New York City in the 1970s, the disappearance of Etan Patz. Discuss the impact that Etan’s abduction had on her Greenwich Village neighborhood, and on Amanda herself?
4. Stern’s narrative offers a vivid picture of the world through young Amanda’s child-eyes — especially about how she can trust the world, and the laws of physics, to operate. How does this narrative choice, to keep readers inside Amanda’s head, affect your experience of the book? Do you agree or disagree with these choices? How would this have been a different book if Stern chose to narrate fully from her more measured, adult perspective?
5. Amanda’s mother responds to her fears by offering constant reassurance that “bad things don’t happen to children.” Do you think this was the right approach, or is there something she and other authority figures in Amanda’s life — could have done differently? What would you do as a parent in this situation?
6. Amanda struggles with her own desire to become a parent. What important lessons does she learn from her own life that help shape her decisions by the end of the memoir?
7. One of Amanda’s greatest sources of panic is that the people she loves will disappear. Talk about how her experiences with Melissa and Baba impact her. Do you see any echoes of this worry in her adult relationships?
8. One of the later chapters in the book is titled “A Word Never Means Only One Thing.” What do you think the author means by this?
9. Did the experience of reading *Little Panic* and getting to know Amanda change your perspective on mental health treatment at all? Why or why not?



**Terms of Use:** This Discussion Guide is downloaded from Grand Central Publishing. The original may be found at <https://www.grandcentralpublishing.com/titles/amanda-stern/little-panic/9781538711910>. It has been reformatted for the Network of the National Library of Medicine for educational purposes.



**National Library of Medicine**  
*Network of the National Library of Medicine*