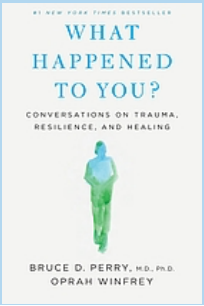
Discussion Guide



What Happened to You?
Winfrey and Bruce Perry, MD, PhD

Flatiron Books
2022
272 pages
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Adverse Childhood Experiences

Summary

Early experiences shape our lives far down the road. *What Happened to You?: Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing* by Oprah Winfrey and Bruce Perry, M.D., PhD, provides powerful scientific and emotional insights into behavioral patterns we often struggle to understand. They reframe the question "What's *wrong* with you?" to "What *happened* to you?", thus opening the door to resilience and healing in a proven, powerful way.

Questions

1. What suggestions or strategies from the book resonated with you about how people can heal from trauma? In "A Note from the Authors" at the beginning of the book, the authors invite us to pause reading when the reading becomes "too challenging." Why do you think they begin a book about trauma in this way?
2. What is powerful about the reframing of the question "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?"
3. Much of this book is written as a conversation between Oprah Winfrey and Bruce Perry. What do you think of the format of the book and its influence on the meaning of the book?
4. "For one child, eye contact means, 'I care for you; I'm interested in you.' For another it may mean, 'I'm about to yell at you.'" (p. 30) What can this passage tell us about how we are shaped by our childhood experiences?
5. Trauma is a word that is used to describe many different things in our popular culture. Why is a clear definition of trauma important when it comes to our mental or physical health?
6. "Beyond the mental health community…family physicians, health-care workers, and doctors in all fields need to consider not only what might be physically wrong with their patients but also what happened to them" (p. 136). Why do you think Oprah made this assertion in the book and what do you think she meant by it?
7. Many people feel empowered as they come to understand more about their health issues resulting from the impact of what happened to them. Why do you think this knowledge about their mental health may be empowering?

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