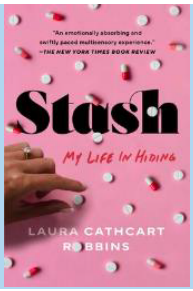
Discussion Guide



Stash
Laura Cathcar Robbins

Atria Books
2023
288 pages
ISBN: 978-1668005354

Alcohol Use Disorder

Summary

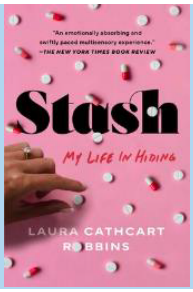
A voice-driven, gripping, and propulsive addiction memoir about a wealthy Black woman on a journey to becoming whole while grappling with issues of substance abuse, race, class, self-sabotage, and love, by the host of the popular podcast, *The Only One in the Room*.

Questions

1. If it weren't for a lot of the notes Laura kept throughout her addiction and her life, she wouldn't have been able to write such vivid and expressive renderings of some of her most difficult memories. What role does memory play in the book? How does her time and space away from the events play into the storytelling in her memoir? Has there ever been an experience in your own life that you needed space from before you were able to write about it or share your experience with others?
2. Laura doesn't hold anything back from the reader. The raw emotion is clear from the get- go and you feel closer to her unfiltered thoughts as the memoir unfolds. Was there ever a time you couldn't explain what you were going through or feeling, but writing it down on paper helped you alleviate the pain and come to peace with your experiences?
3. Where are some places in the book that made you pause, look inward, and ask yourself if you could be more honest with yourself? What truly grounds you? Read the section out loud.
4. Throughout the book, Laura struggles to show the people around her what is really going on in her life behind the scenes. How does this affect the relationships in her life? Have you ever kept something from the people you loved most to protect them from hurt or disappointment? How did she begin to show up for herself authentically after having hidden who she was and numbed her true self for so long?
5. The elements outside of Laura's control are constantly dictating people's perception of Laura and what society expects of her. What roles do race, gender, class, and individuality play in this book? What role do they play in the pressures you feel in your own life, at home, work, etc.?
6. We see Laura pushed to her absolute limit, doing things she never could have imagined herself doing. How does Laura's own self-perception control her actions throughout the book?
7. If you were writing a memoir about your life and the struggles you've overcome, what would be the hardest part for you to write? Who would be the most difficult person to share the writing with and why?

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8. Of all the people/characters Laura meets and befriends during her time in treatment, whose story did you most connect with, and what impact did their journey have on Laura's healing process? How can the people we surround ourselves with impact and shape our daily lives and habits?
9. Laura finds herself in survival mode, forced to make decisions based on pre-existing
10. standards, fear, and obligation. Why does the introduction of new love, even despite the insurmountable struggles she faces, transcend the suffering and help her on the road towards healing in the end?
11. What emotions did you feel after finishing the book? Did the ending feel like a true ending to you? Are there any overarching themes or questions you would ask Laura if you were with her now?
12. It is easy to look at someone suffering and think oh, that could never be me. How did this memoir shift your perspective or opinion on people going through the recovery process, or someone still struggling with addiction?
13. What is the stigma like in your community surrounding addiction? Discuss any initial bias you may have had about recovering addicts and how implicit biases play a role in our everyday lives.
14. What kind of support group do you lean on in your life? Like twelve-step recovery, are there any spaces where you are free to share your deepest, darkest parts without judgment? What did you learn about the recovery process through this book? And what questions do you still have about people who struggle with addiction?
15. Can you describe the power of the characters in Laura's book remaining anonymous (for the most part)? What effect did this have on your reading, and how does the element of staying anonymous lend itself to the recovery process? Are there any other elements of life or culture that would benefit from people remaining anonymous? Describe and explain why.
16. How did you feel about the relationship between Laura and her divorce lawyer? What was your take on the balance between being understanding vs. harsh? How did the relationship affect Laura throughout her recovery process?

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