

Getting to 50/50
Book Club Discussion Questions

1. *Getting to 50/50* makes the case for changing the way men and women share roles in life. Do you think there needs to be a primary breadwinner or primary parent in a family? Or can husbands and wives share these roles in a way that is relatively equal? What makes more it easier or more difficult for couples to give equal respect to a woman's career and equal respect for a man's view of parenting?
2. The authors discuss research showing this is not just an "upper-middle class" issue and that about 1/3 of mothers with young kids "afford" staying home across every income quartile. Are you surprised by this? Would it be easier for working parents to advocate for better family support if we started seeing the common needs – like for affordable childcare and workplace flexibility – as shared by every socio-economic group?
3. The book is called *Getting to 50/50*? Why is the "getting to" in the title significant? Do any couples you know actually "get there"?
4. People come to a marriage with many pre-conceived notions about how they are going to live. Many people make these decisions based on their parents' roles and marriage. How do the roles that you observed your parents playing when you were young impact how you feel about *Getting to 50/50*? Do you ever talk to your partner about this? How do those conversations go?
5. The book argues that men need to better understand their importance to children – that research says that, even in two-parent families, engaged fathers make a big difference. And that once men understand how much their kids will benefit from their involvement, dads are more willing to make the compromises necessary to support their wives' careers. Do you think that this understanding is enough? What else would make men more likely to spend time with their kids and come home earlier from work?
6. Money is a big issue in the book. Do you think the wife needs to make equal amounts of money to her husband before they can start *Getting to 50/50*? The authors argue that it doesn't matter if one spouse makes much less money – that work is important regardless of the size of your paycheck because it supports good mental health and maintaining your marketable skills. Do you agree or disagree?
7. *Getting to 50/50* says it's doesn't make long-term economic sense to look only at a wife's income to see how much you can afford to pay for child care. That, over the course of two, 30+ year careers (with even modest annual raises) you get big payback on the investment in childcare for the small number of years you need a lot of it. And that childcare feels more affordable in the short term if you look at it as a fraction of a couple's joint income. Do you think the authors are correct? Why do people have this belief?
8. The book ends with the concept that nothing will change for men or women at work until all Fortune 500 CEOs have a working spouse. Do you think everyone at work needs to have a working spouse before things will change? What else would encourage change in a work environment?
9. Where do you get your ideas about the benefits of daycare, nanny-care, homecare? Do you think these are rational or emotional? Does reading the data persuade you, or do you think these beliefs are too ingrained to change?
10. The authors say "don't call it guilt" – "it" being the unease working parents have about leaving their kids to go to work. Yet the authors also ask parents to consider "how much is too much" time at work. How do you think about these issues in your own life? Do you agree or disagree with the authors?