ON FIRE: The 7 Choices to Ignite a Radically Inspired Life

GROUP READING GUIDE
(with facilitation best practices)
Welcome to the *ON FIRE* Group Reading Guide!

Since *ON FIRE* was published in March 2016, we’ve received an overwhelming amount of feedback about how this book is impacting lives and businesses around the world. We’re thrilled by this impact, and inspired to do more.

More specifically, we’ve created this facilitation guide to help you, and those you lead, get the most out of reading *ON FIRE* together. If you have questions or would like additional support, please contact us at info@JohnOLEaryInspires.com.

**Reading Group Best Practices:**

**BEFORE ANNOUNCEMENT TO EMPLOYEES / GROUP**

1. **Accountability partners or pods?** Accountability partners (groups of 2 to 3 reading, sharing, reflecting, and growing together) or pods (groups of 20 or less who read, share, reflect, and grow as individuals and as a team) are critical in both keeping participants accountable to read and to truly engage with the content. The accountability partner / pod’s level of engagement will directly correlate to the personal and professional growth experienced.

   Decide whether pods or partners will work best for your company. (Example questions you may want to ask: Logistically – is it easier for two people to get together? Culturally – are you trying to grow rapport within an entire department?). Then, decide if you will assign or let people self-select. The good news is that either option is outstandingly effective and powerful.

2. **Invite everyone to read *ON FIRE* together as a company.** During your announcement make sure to share these points:

   a. Why you’ve chosen to read *ON FIRE* together / what your hopeful outcome is
   b. Each person will be gifted their own copy and information on how they’ll receive it
   c. This program will last seven weeks, starting [date]. You’ll read one chapter a week.
   d. Information on next steps to connect with their pods / partners.
   e. Let them know this is a gift, will be an amazing experience as individuals and as a company, and will be extremely enjoyable! Get ready for the ride.

**ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER / PODS SPECIFIC**

3. **Agree to go ALL-IN.** What does this mean? Going ALL-IN means investing fully into the process and belief that this is an understood priority. When accountability partners or pods are scheduled to meet, it is expected that the reading has been done and that everyone will add to the discussion. The more we invest, the greater the return.
4. **Set your individual calendar: when will you read each week?** You will be reading one chapter each week in advance of the meeting with your accountability partner or pod to discuss that week’s chapter. (An hour is the recommended amount of time; revise as needed.)

5. **Set your pod / accountability partner meeting schedule: when will you meet each week?** You will be setting one meeting each week for seven weeks. We recommend the meetings last for at least 30 minutes for accountability partners or 45 minutes for pods. (For pods, we suggest having a discussion leader to guide conversation, ask questions, and lead discussion. We also suggest having a new person assigned/volunteer each week.)

Reference the chapter discussion guide beginning on the next page. There will be questions relevant to the chapter to discuss as they relate to the book, your business and your life.

6. **Set group guidelines.** The topics covered will range from funny to deep; from sad to joyous; and from professional to personal. For colleagues to be vulnerable with sensitive topics, it is critical that a “safe space is created.” Consider establishing your own safe space guidelines, or borrowing these:

   a. Be on time for all meetings.
   b. Meet team deadlines.
   c. Attend full duration of meeting unless emergency and avoid distraction through email and other technology. [Read: turn off phones!]
   d. Be patient with alternative views.
   e. Agreed that personal information will not leave the meeting.
   f. Be an active listener.
   g. Own your part on the team and actively contribute.
This reading group guide for On Fire includes questions and ideas meant to enhance your reading group dialogue. Be sure to include questions that are on the hearts and minds of the group members, too. We hope this guide enriches your conversation and increases your enjoyment of the book.

**Ablaze & Chapter 1**

1. John says in the forward *Ablaze*, if given the choice, he would choose to do it all over again—to be burned, to go through the surgeries and rehab. Why do you think he feels that way? What has he gained from this traumatic experience? Can you think of a difficult situation you experience for which you are now grateful?

2. In chapter 1, inflection point is defined as: a moment in time that may seem insignificant or monumental; it may appear positive or negative, but it changes everything that follows afterward. How has the concept of “inflection points” shaped the way you see your work and your life?

3. Before his accident, John wasn’t sure if his brother Jim even liked him; but after the accident, John knew: Jim didn’t just like him, he loved him. How can negative – or in this case traumatic – events show the true nature of our relationships? What is one thing you can do today to have more authentic relationships?

4. Chapter 1 closes with your first choice: entitlement v. owning it. To truly own your life, we must learn to say no as much as we say yes. What is one thing, activity, person or mindset in your work or in your life that is not “live-giving?”

   - What is the first step you can take to remove it from your life?
   - What will fill your new found time with?
Chapter 2

1. Consider the epigraph from Henri J.M. Nouwen on page 25, “In our own woundedness, we can become sources of life for others.” How does John become a source of life, and inspiration, for others?

   • Who — in your life, company or in the world — serves as an example of this concept?

2. John decides upon leaving the hospital that he will pretend that everything is normal. He does not share his story with his closest friends, and then in college he uses alcohol as a “mask.” What does it take for John to accept himself, “dimples, pimples, scars and all”(page 39)?

   • How does this relate to your life? More specifically: share a scar, limiting belief or struggle of yours that you try to mask so other don’t see it.
   • How does masking it help you today? How does it hurt you?
   • How would embracing it help you? Help others?

Chapter 3

1. Dr. Ayvazian includes Lavelle, the janitor, on rounds each morning to show him that his work matters: by keeping John’s room clean, Lavelle was protecting John from life-threatening infections. Why is it important for every individual to feel purpose and motivation in their daily work?

- How is this communicated in your current company / household?
- How could it be better communicated?
- What impact might it have if it were better communicated?

2. Chapter 3 closes with your third choice: indifference v. purpose. Beginning on p. 84, John describes how having an ignition statement allows him to choose purpose every day. Now is your chance to create your ignition statement. Take a few minutes to complete the following independently. Once you’ve completed it: Share with your partner / pod.

**Ignition statement defined:** reminder that keeps you motivated every day, regardless of what you’re doing. You’re ignition statement should be the thing that gives you fuel, unlocks your passion and empowers you to live fully in every moment.

- **What brings you true joy?** What makes your heart flutter, ignites you with passion or motivates you to strive mightily to do, be, achieve and impact more? Answer this question for each of the following aspects of life: professional, relational, financial, emotional, physical, and spiritual.
- **Answer this question:** I choose to thrive each and every day because...
- Dig deeper! Answer that question again.
- Then answer that question ONE MORE TIME.

[THIS process of asking and answering this simple question provides clarity and gives life to your ignition statement.]
Chapter 4

1. On page 119, John shares the story of speaking at a federal prison. He shares how two prisoners responded to the question: “what are you grateful for?” Discuss the differences in their responses.

   - Has there been a time in your life – professionally, relationally, spiritually, physically, emotionally – that you felt “imprisoned” or struck?
   - What might have improved if you had been grateful for what you did have during this challenging time?

2. Share a few things you are grateful for both professionally and personally today.

   - Reflect and share the one thing in your life or work that is the most difficult to be grateful for right now. (A particularly challenging project, client, deadline, etc.)
   - Then, reflect and share five reasons why you are grateful for that challenge.

3. Chapter four closes with your fourth choice: victim v. victor. What “victor” characteristics will you focus on developing and sharing moving forward?
Chapter 5

1. The chapter opens with “comfort is popular but courage changes lives.” What does this mean to you?
   - What is one example of how you can (or already do) choose courage over comfort?

2. This chapter talks a lot about growing. Finish this statement: “If I could do or achieve anything in my life, and I knew I wouldn’t fail, and I was thinking REALLY big, I would:
   - Is there one thing you could do tomorrow to begin putting this into action? If so what?

3. Your fifth choice to ignite a radically inspired life is: stagnation v. growth. What is one area in your life that you have felt stagnant in – but that you commit to growing in – beginning now?
   - How could your life look six months from now if you kept growing in this area as a priority?
Chapter 6

1. John shared the impact of a man named Jack Buck in his life. In reading Jack’s story, what impressed you most about him?
   - What characteristics did Jack model?
   - Why do you think he strived to make such an impact in John’s life?

2. Who has been a Jack in your life personally? Professionally?
   - Who can you be a Jack for today?
   - What more can you do to be like Jack today?

3. John’s tone throughout On Fire is frank, honest, and even humorous. Why do you think John is able to reflect, years later, on his painful experiences with this kind of wit and good spirit?
   - Can you think of a time when humor made a difficult situation more bearable/relatable at work or at home?
   - Can you think of a current situation that might improve if you brought humor / levity to it?

4. The sixth choice to ignite your radically inspired life is: success v. significance. Compare success and significance.
   - How are you ensuring you stay focused on being significant in your life (personally and professionally)?
   - In ten years – how will you know you’ve led a significant life thus far?
Chapter 7 & Awakening

1. John says that many of us see and value ourselves through others’ eyes. How does John’s family—his wife, his children—help him to see the gift in his scars?
   - How does his value of himself change over the course of the book?
   - Who in your life helps you to truly see the strengths and value in your life? How can you help others see the value in theirs?

2. Think of all the people along the way who inspired John: his parents, siblings, Dr. Ayvazian, Glenn Cunningham, Nurse Roy, the physical therapists Brenda and Maureen, Jack Buck. Who do you think made the biggest impact on John’s life and why?

3. The final choice to live a radically inspired life is: love v. fear. Share a time or two in your life (personally, professionally, relationally, financially and / or spiritually) when you were motivated purely by love.
   - John shares the phrase “I love you and there is nothing you can do about it!” as something you can say quietly to yourself when you are in the midst of a trying situation. Share a specific situation you can use this tool to benefit you today.

4. How can you take the 7 choices and apply them in your life and in your work?
   - What might get in your way?
   - Which choice resonates the most with you/do you want to focus on the most? Why?
   - What is YOUR next step? (What more can you do?!)