



IN AWE: Rediscover your childlike wonder to unleash inspiration, meaning and joy

GROUP READING GUIDE
(with Facilitation Best Practices)

Facilitation Best Practices

I've created this facilitation guide to help you, and those you lead, get the most out of reading *IN AWE* together. If you have questions or would like additional support, please contact my team at info@JohnOLearyInspires.com.

Reading Group Best Practices:

Before announcement to employees / group:

1. **Accountability partners or pods?** (If you're a **book club**, consider having members pair up to dig deeper into the content together before sharing at your traditional group meeting.) Accountability partners (groups of 2 to 3 reading, sharing, reflecting, and growing together) or pods (groups of 20 or fewer 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 effective and powerful.

2. **Invite everyone to read *IN AWE* together as a company, group or club. During your announcement make sure to share these points:**
 1. Why you've chosen to read *IN AWE* together / what your hopeful outcome is
 2. If each person will be gifted their own copy, share information on how they'll receive it
 3. This program will last five weeks, starting [date]. You'll read one "sense" or section a week.
 4. Information on next steps to connect with their pods / partners.
 5. Let them know this is a gift, will be an amazing experience as individuals and as a whole, 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 sense 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 five 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 different person assigned/volunteer each week.)

Reference the sense discussion guide beginning on the next page. There will be questions relevant to the chapters within each sense 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:
 1. Be on time for all meetings.
 2. Meet team deadlines.
 3. Attend full duration of meeting unless emergency and avoid distraction.
 4. Be patient with alternative views.
 5. Agree that personal information will not leave the meeting.
 6. Be an active listener.
 7. Own your part on the team and actively contribute.

This reading group guide for IN AWE 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.

RAISE YOUR HAND

On page 8, John writes “As a society, we’re struggling with the pervasive sense of being overwhelmed, and overscheduled.” Does this resonate with you?

When was the last time you expressed the type of joy and excitement of the kindergarten students? What steps can you take towards this mindset?

SENSE #1: WONDER

(v.) the ability to question, get curious, explore widely and pursue doggedly answers, solutions, and opportunities leading to innovative thinking and endless possibilities.

Chapter 1: The Path of Possibility

John’s mother and Mrs. Bartello both played an important role in his development and regaining his spirit while healing. He explains that this encouragement was like releasing the brakes on his wheelchair.

- What are some brakes you have on in your life? What can you do to release them?
- How can you use this sense of wonder to create change in your work place?

Chapter 2: Why?

Focus on the DeGrasse Tyson quote on page 14 regarding valuing the inquisitive nature of our children. With radical vulnerability, have there been times in your life that you’ve “squashed” someone’s curiosity for the sake of order? How could you have handled this better?

- In your own workplace, where do you think curiosity could be better stimulated and encouraged?
- What are some concrete ways you can encourage curiosity for someone in your life? Could be a colleague, spouse, child, friend.
- When is the last time you asked *why*? And someone encouraged you to pursue that possibility? How did you feel?

Chapter 3: Says Who?

On page 22, John writes, “Although we don’t stop to think about it, each of us is influenced by the opinions of those around us. From the media, to friends and family, to our own internal dialogue, these voices coalesce to inform what we believe is possible. And what we feel certain is impossible.” In your life today, where would it serve you best to reflect on

what you believe? To tap back into what you truly believe and reshape the reality you see yourself living within?

Chapter 4: What do you see?

How did you feel when you read about the doctor who said, “If he were a horse, I’d shoot him?” How can you learn from this?

On page 30, John writes, “What do you see when you look at others? Are you someone who is going to shoot the horse, or throw a champagne party? “How can you change your perspective to look at something that seems impossible, and instead see an exciting challenge?”

Chapter 5: What if?

What feels impossible in your life? A relationship that seems too far gone, professional hurdle feels too high, social wrongs look impossible to right, dream appears too big to achieve.

Now, revisit your impossibility in this context. On page 42, John writes “everything that is possible today was once considered impossible.”

How does that feel? What is one action you could take to start moving that impossibility towards possibility?

Chapter 6: Why not?

The chapter begins with this quote from *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*: “There is no living thing that is not afraid when it faces danger. The true courage is in facing danger when you are afraid, and that kind of courage you have plenty.”

Why do you think the author chose this quote to begin this chapter? Does it resonate with you?

SENSE #2 EXPECTANCY

(n.) to look toward the future with the deep conviction that adventure awaits and amazing things are possible.

Chapter 7: Bring your glove

On page 54, John writes “But there is something powerful about moving through life, through work, through relationship, through each day, not readying ourselves for

disappointment, but expecting adventure.” How do you think your day or week might look, if you walked into Monday expecting adventure?

Chapter 8: First-time living

What resonated with you most about the comparison between Billy Crystal’s character and the retiree Pat Hyndman?

Chapter 9: Stop acting ordinary

On page 66, John shares Dr. Ali Benazir’s findings that the likeliness of *you* being here is one in 400 trillion. What was it like to read that? How does that make you feel about your life?

On page 67 John quotes the religious scholar Huston Smith, writing, “the opposite of the sense of sacred is not serenity or sobriety, it is drabness, taken-for-grantedness. Lack of interest. The humdrum and prosaic. The deadly sin of acedia. All other attributes of a realized being must be relativized against this one absolute: an acute sense of the astonishing mystery of everything.”

- Take a moment to unpack this quote as a group. Do you agree with it?
- Think about your life: your work, family, hobbies; and consider some ways you can learn to again experience this “astonishing mystery.”
- What is something you’ve been dreading—an upcoming task, or commitment? Apply this thinking to it. How does that shift in thinking shift the way you feel about the task?

Chapter 10: Light it up

On page 70 the term “learned helplessness” is defined as “the state that we find ourselves in when we have been conditioned to expect that there is nothing we can do to change our circumstances.” As a group, discuss this term and how knowing about it can empower you to live differently.

Chapter 11: Great expectations

John gives Beth a thoughtful Christmas gift in this section. Why does he decide to do this? How does her reaction make you feel?

- What are some small ways you could share your appreciation towards your partner, family, or coworkers? What are some bigger ways you could share that appreciation with those closest to you?

Chapter 12: The joyful awaiting

“Joyful awaiting” is this something you naturally do? If not, how can embracing the idea of embracing joyful awaiting bring more meaning and inspiration into your life? What is one thing you can joyful await right now?

SENSE #3 IMMERSION

(n.) the state of being fully engaged, absorbed, and present in the world so that you can savor the gifts all around

Chapter 13: Missing what matters

On page 94 John talks to the patient who says, “John, I spent a lifetime sprinting up the ladder. Only to discover after making it to the very top, I had the damn thing leaned against the wrong wall.”

- Can you relate to this at all? Have you ever chosen getting somewhere quickly over getting somewhere the right way?
- How can you make sure you prioritize climbing a ladder towards your real goals, rather than climbing for the sake of climbing?

Chapter 14: Future focus

On page 100, John writes, “What if success was not about getting someplace, but about experiencing each of the moments leading us there?” Discuss this notion.

On page 101, John writes, “Change happens when we’ve had enough of the life we’re living and long for something better?” Do you agree? If so, did you realize this truth before you read it?

Chapter 15: Work. Play. Rest. Repeat.

On page 105, After sharing about his kids’ enthusiasm as the school bell rings signaling their day’s beginning, John writes, “Wouldn’t it be awesome to once again be so completely absorbed in each moment that our days are no longer a long slog to get through, but a series of moments to savor?” Discuss what it might be like if you felt that sense of enthusiasm for the beginning of the day or series of moments.

Chapter 16: Hang it on the fridge.

John shares the story of Scott the man who worked valet at the hospital and gave him a moment of play and reprieve after his therapies were complete for the day. What did you think of this story? Have you had a Scott (or been a Scott) in your life? Is there a way you could be a Scott for someone right now?

Chapter 17: Go fly a kite.

John explains how a school district in Texas added more recess to elementary students' days, and their productivity increased. It can be easy to get wrapped up in working and focusing on productivity, but how can you create more breaks and "recess" for yourself and your work life? Name a few ways you could incorporate this habit into your daily routine.

Chapter 18: Look up at the clouds

In this chapter, John discusses the importance of making time for "Sabbath" in your life. Did this concept resonate with you? How could you apply it in your life today?

Chapter 19: It's your job

In this chapter, John shares the story of Mitch's broken promise to his "Coach" that he then rectifies – which is the impetus for the bestselling book *Tuesdays with Morrie*. Are there promises you've made that you've not kept that you could rectify today? What might that look like for you?

Chapter 20: What time is it?

This chapter concludes with the concept of modeling children by "working, playing, resting and repeating." Do you see the value in living your life this way? What is one way you might be able to live into this a bit more than you are currently?

SENSE #4 BELONGING

(n.) the sense of comfort, peace, and joy that comes from the knowledge that you are worthy, you belong, and you are an essential piece of the puzzle.

Chapter 21: All Better

Grace's friend says, "I'm glad you're all better." What can we learn from this interaction?

John explains how this childlike openness leads to more focus on "The important stuff. Connecting. Playing. Living. Loving." Take a moment and reflect on some moments in your own life where a situation would've been better if you spoke with this childlike openness.

Chapter 22: The contagion of joy.

For many early readers the story of Curtis was particularly thought provoking and emotional. What was your experience reading this story?

Chapter 23: A piece of the puzzle.

This chapter begins with this quote: “You can’t pick the pieces you like and leave the rest. Being a part of the whole thing, that’s the blessing.” – Natalie Babbitt, *Tuck Everlasting*

Apply this in the context of your life, how might your perspective, actions and thoughts change if you realize, you have to accept being “part of the whole thing”?

Chapter 24: Stop hiding in the shadows

John shares vulnerably about the courage it took to shed his suit jacket when speaking in front of a group of marines. Is there an aspect of your life that you would benefit from “removing your suit jacket?”

Chapter 25: Join the Party

This chapter, John shares the beautiful and moving story of Amy and Ben Wright. How did you feel when you read this section? How does the Wright family and the Bitty and Beau’s Coffee Shop exemplify this sense of belonging?

Chapter 26: Join the Party

John shares anecdotes of his own and others re-entering school for the first time after going through a traumatic experience. He shares that the empathy and care shown by others still impacts him today.

How can you help create a more inclusive environment around in your community, workplace, family, and friendships? So, people can show up as they are and feel accepted?

SENSE #5 FREEDOM

(n.) to own your choices, claim your power, dare boldly, and give life your all

Chapter 27: Play to win

John’s son Jack says “Dad you play to not lose. I play to win” (186). What does this mean to you? What are some examples of your own life—both professionally and personally—where you have been “playing” to not lose, instead of to win?

- As John writes, “when was the last time you risked failure, gave it your all, and stepped in to participate fully in every area of your life?”

Chapter 28: Showing up

John shares that he felt guilty that he missed the opportunity to say goodbye to his role model and friend Jack Buck. Eventually, John was able to liberate himself from the guilt by

choosing specific ways to do better in his life *now*. What guilt, stress or worries do you have in your life that block you from living fully? How can you work towards liberating yourself from those fears?

Chapter 29: Sing out loud

On page 210, John tells the story of William Borden who has three mantras, "No Reserves, No Retreats, No Regrets." To Borden, "No Reserves" meant giving away everything he had to be pure light in the world. What gifts, talents, and treasures are you holding in reserve that you could release to improve the lives of others?

- To Borden, "No Retreat" meant living your vision and dreams as opposed to following societal expectations. What dreams have you put on hold that you are meant to pursue?
- Knowing his death was near, Borden's last journal entry was, "No Regrets." What actions can you take today to pursue what matters most to you?

Chapter 30: Get in the game

On page 217, John talks about his parents being the pillars who have supported his life. Who are your pillars? What qualities have they cultivated in you?

John comes full circle, as he's able to join the Cardinals again. This time, he gets to have his family join him, and takes a moment to reflect on how special this is. How does this story reflect the fifth sense, Freedom?

Epilogue - Awestruck

John feels awe by recognizing that the "entire earth is one small pale blue dot." How can you use the visual of the blue dot to give you context that your worries may not be as BIG as they may feel? To help your worries with open hands?

John challenges us to spread wonder to others. How can you do this today?

I hope you enjoyed reading *IN AWE* with your group!

Not ready for the experience to end? Read my first book - #1 national bestseller *ON FIRE*. Email info@johnolearyinspires.com to get the *ON FIRE* group discussion guide. To order books, for more inspiration + to learn about the Live Inspired Podcast visit www.JohnOLEaryInspires.com.