

# IN GOOD HANDS — DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Written for young women interested in running for office, this book is unlike any other, complete with inspiring stories of nineteen women role models and all the tools and resources needed to get a campaign off the ground.

Stephanie MacKendrick, a former journalist now dedicated to women's career advancement, believes the time for women in political leadership is now. Judging by the recent wave of activism that developed into a flood of women seeking elected office, she's not alone.

MacKendrick has created a one-of-kind insider's guide for young women interested in joining this movement and becoming part of the political system. It explores everything from what to expect in a campaign, to how to deal with the inevitable challenges, to why it's worth it to run. It combines uplifting stories of women who have run for office with practical strategies for doing so.

Perfect as both a cover-to-cover read and a reference tool, the text is divided into three parts. First, nineteen engaging profiles that include the personal advice and encouragement of women who have run for office across the political spectrum, around the world and at all levels of politics. Women such as Michelle Wu (past president of the Boston City Council) and Jacinda Ardern (prime minister of New Zealand). Second, a detailed twelve-step campaign plan with advice on developing the qualities needed to run. Third, a collection of articles, books and organizations to help eager readers learn more. Also included is a foreword by Anne Moses, founder and president of IGNITE.

Offering equal parts inspiration and information, this unique guidebook is just the thing to help young women transform "I'll think about it" into "I'll do it!"



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**STEPHANIE MACKENDRICK** is a former journalist dedicated to women's career advancement and non-profit leadership. She served as board vice chair for The Samara Centre for Democracy, engaging Canadians in politics, and played a key role in establishing the Canadian chapter of the 30% Club, which aims to increase the representation of women on corporate boards. Stephanie was president of the board of The International Alliance for Women (TIAW) and co-founded the TIAW World of Difference 100 Awards. She has twice been recognized by the Women's Executive Network as one of Canada's Most Powerful Women: Top 100, and in 2010 she was admitted to the Freedom of the City of London (UK).

# IN GOOD HANDS — DISCUSSION GUIDE

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

This guide will help you host a discussion about *In Good Hands: Remarkable Female Politicians from Around the World Who Showed Up, Spoke Out and Made Change*, by Stephanie MacKendrick.

“Invest more in the sisterhood,” says Shaharзад Akbar (p.137). Take the Afghan presidential advisor’s advice and view your discussion as part of this process.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Use these questions as a starting point for group or panel discussions.

- Ask for a show of hands to get things started:

You see a job posting or a call for volunteers that includes a list of qualifications. You have just over half. How many of you would apply?

Now look at the study MacKendrick quotes on p.164. Did the response from your group echo this? What reasons do people give for their answer? Self-doubt? Perfectionism? Some of these ideas will likely come up again throughout your discussion.

## ON DECIDING TO RUN

“Make a decision not based on whether you yourself think you’re as ready as you should be; make it based on whether you’re going to be the best candidate out of everyone else who will step up if you don’t.”

(Michelle Wu, p.50)

“What I most want to tell people, especially women, is that you don’t have to feel ready to do things. You don’t have to have everything perfect ... not being perfect adds value to what you bring if you know how to apply it.”

(Beth Fukumoto, p.127)

- Of the 19 women profiled in Part 1: The Journey, whose story resonated with you the most? Why? What do you see of yourself in that person’s story? How did their personal experience inspire or energize you? Ask this of the whole group.

“As often happens with people who run for political office, especially women,” MacKendrick writes (p.158), “other people recognized [Cori Bush’s] political potential before [she] did.” Self-doubt is a recurring theme among the women profiled in Part 1. What potential do you and your friends see in each other that you might not recognize in yourselves?

Can you, as MacKendrick writes on p.173, “reframe each one of [your] fears so that [you] are realistic without being self-limiting”? What strategies can you develop to overcome your perceived weaknesses?

## BE THE CHANGE

“If you’re not happy with the way things are, think about how to get someone else in there — and maybe that person is you.”

(Kim Campbell, p.63)

“Having women in leadership leads to a different style of governance, but has a society changing effect.”

(Jenny Durkan, p.111)

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- Ahead of your discussion, find some recent news articles you'd like to discuss (and suggest invitees do the same). Perhaps your local teachers are on strike, or perhaps all levels of government are dealing with a global pandemic. Follow MacKendrick's advice on p. 186 and try to find something that represents different levels of government: local, national, international. Now look at the message box on p.219. As a group, talk about some of the opposing perspectives on these issues and how individual politicians have handled the situations.
- Politics is about people as well as issues. In your group, talk about one or two of the incumbents in your school, district or national government. What do you like or dislike about their priorities? What do you like or dislike about their public speaking or campaign style? How would you take inspiration from them, or how might you do things differently? As discussion leader, it's your job to keep this conversation on track and useful. If the group veers into discussion of a shared outrage, do you bring the discussion back to focus on leadership and campaign style? Or is the side-discussion becoming a useful example of a shared group passion or opportunity for community involvement? You decide.
- Several of the women profiled in Part 1 talk about their experiences with online abuse or other negative attention. Juliana Lunguzi (p.35) tries to think about the intentions of the commenters rather than the impact of the comments. Catherine McKenna (p.38) calmly called out a media organization during a press conference. Rona Ambrose (p.100) suggests having somebody else use social media for you to keep you at arm's length from any negativity.

Brainstorm with your group some strategies for dealing with online abuse or other negative attention.

- Fundraising: Look at the story of Kirsten Gillibrand's "small miracle" of fundraising on p.78. How might you be able to raise funds to support your campaign? What would you do when you got that close to the wire?
- Getting involved: volunteering and joining groups for young women in politics are among the advice offered by many of the women profiled in Part 1. Who in your group is already doing this? What advice can you collectively share about ways to get involved?
- *In Good Hands* is geared to young women, and is meant to encourage them to "show up, speak out and make change." Ask your group if any of them aspire to be politicians, and if this discussion has encouraged or discouraged them. Discuss if anyone knows a young woman who would be a great politician and whether they told this young woman this. Set an intention for your group to approach young women who should run and encourage them to do so!

## ON DEALING WITH NEGATIVITY

"Take the time to drive negative into positive, to move ignorance into knowledge."

(Hala Lattouf, p.54)

## BE TRUE TO YOURSELF

"Remember who you are before you make that leap. Know your weaknesses and get support or work on them. With your strengths, know what you can tap into."

(Cori Bush, p.160)

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- At the end of your discussion, try asking the first question again. Has anybody changed their mind?
- Read out a few of the quotes from politicians featured in the book that are highlighted throughout this discussion guide. Ask your group which quotes resonate with them the most.
- Ask if anyone would like to share what they got out of the discussion.

## PRAISE FOR IN GOOD HANDS

“A must-read for any young woman who is curious about running for office but doesn’t know how to make it happen.”

— Anne Moses, President & Founder, IGNITE

“An inspiring resource. From the stories of elected women who have already walked the path, to the how-to guide at the end, I highly recommend this book to women looking to change the world through politics.”

— Eleanor Fast, Executive Director, Equal Voice

“A comprehensive guide for young women interested in running for public office.”

— *Kirkus Reviews*

“An inspirational toolbox to equip and empower future female leaders.”

— *Booklist*

## WINNING MEANS ENGAGING IN THE PROCESS, EVEN IF YOU DON'T ACTUALLY WIN

“Without exception, women who have both succeeded and failed in their bids for election have told me that just going through the process itself was worth the whole effort because they gained so much.”

(Stephanie MacKendrick, p.178)

“You learn so much about yourself; it builds so much confidence. Running in itself is a fantastic experience.”

(Rona Ambrose, p.97)