

**NO  
CURE  
FOR  
BEING  
HUMAN**

Virtual Gathering Guide

# *Well, hello there!*

When I was first diagnosed with Stage IV cancer, all I could imagine was survival. But as I kept living, I had to start imagining a different, impossible question—but how do I live now? How do we move forward when there is no going back?

*No Cure for Being Human (and Other Truths I Need to Hear)* is a memoir for all of us who understand that we are more limited than we have realized. Those of us who are trapped by fragile bodies, commitments, dependents, geography, money, and circumstances (also, perhaps, a global pandemic). *Everything* is no longer possible.

This is a guide to gathering for virtual conversation around the book, complete with invite template, group guidelines, and discussion questions. Use what works. Adapt what doesn't. However you choose to use this guide, the invitation is this: let's be human together.

Because, together, we can learn how to build a beautiful life inside new limitations. Together, we can learn how to find hope and courage and beauty by setting aside the promises of self-help gurus and making peace with our beautiful, terrible finitude.

**There is no cure for  
being human, but we  
are all good medicine.**

Love,

*Kate*

# SAMPLE HOST INVITE

*This virtual guide and discussion questions were written by author, editor, and facilitator Erin S. Lane (erinslane.com).*

SUBJECT:

## No Cure for Being Human (Virtual Book Club)

**Hello** [insert names of recipients]

\* GROUPS OF 3-12  
RECOMMENDED

For many of us during this pandemic, life has shrunk to the size of the room we're in. We have to learn how to build a beautiful life inside new limitations. We have to learn how to find hope and courage and beauty by setting aside the promises of self-help gurus and Instagram influencers and making peace with our beautiful, terrible finitude. I have an idea for how we might do that together.

Kate Bowler has a new book called *No Cure for Being Human (and Other Truths I Need to Hear)* that asks the question, How do we move forward when there is no going back? It's a memoir for all of us who understand we are more limited than we may have realized. Those of us who are trapped by fragile bodies, commitments, dependents, geography, money, and circumstances.

So, I'm writing to propose we start a No Cure for Being Human Club, in which we'll meet [INSERT DETAILS FOR GATHERING PLATFORM, DATE/TIME, DURATION / \*Gatherings between 60-120min recommended] and discuss Kate's book. The gathering will start with a brief time of checking-in and be followed by a gently facilitated conversation. All you need to do is buy the book from your favorite bookseller and let me know that you're coming. I sincerely hope you'll consider.

As Kate says, "*There is no cure for being human, but we are all good medicine.*"

**In this together,**

[insert your name/name of host(s)]

# SAMPLE HOST AGENDA

15  
MINS

## Welcome, Introductions, Group Guidelines

Welcome the group as a whole, by inviting them to do whatever they need to do to fully arrive, becoming present in this space.

Invite participants to introduce themselves by answering the opening reflection: What's one hope you're bringing to today's conversation?

Go over group guidelines, riffing wherever you want to elaborate.

- Be as present as fully possible. Be here with your doubts, fears, and failings as well as your convictions, joys, and successes
- Choose for yourself when and how to participate. There is always invitation, never invasion; always opportunity, never demand.
- Make space for silence and reflection. After someone has spoken, slow down before immediately filling the space with words.
- Embrace differences. Speak your truth with "I statements." Listen with an open mind to others' truths.
- Observe confidentiality. Safety is created when we can trust that our words and stories remain with the people with whom we shared.

\*group guidelines adopted from the Courage + Renewal Touchstones  
<https://courage renewal.org/wpccr/touchstones/>

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30-90  
MINS

## Discussion Questions

Invite discussion, using questions from the discussion guide. Plan for about 10-20 minutes per question. You may only get through a handful of questions and may choose to have a second gathering if the conversation goes well.

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15  
MINS

## Conclusion, Next Steps, Benediction

Invite participants to answer the closing reflection: What's one insight you'll carry with you from today's conversation?

Preview next steps, if applicable.

End by reading a poem or blessing, if desired.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1

At the dawn of the 21st century, Americans began using the phrase “best life now” to describe the satisfaction of mastering our own lives. What does this phrase bring to mind for you? How are you striving for the gospel of good, better, best?

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2

Henry Ford revolutionized manufacturing by breaking complicated tasks into units of time. But the labor many of us end up doing is, by contrast, slow and inefficient. How is making progress different than making meaning?

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3

Decluttering has become a symbol of luxury. But until choice is plucked from our hands—someone dies, someone leaves, something breaks—we are only playing at surrender, Kate says. What have you learned about what you can’t live without—and what you live without anyway?

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4

Bucket lists have become a new form of experiential capital. A successful life is one that can be completed. The problem with aspirational lists is that instead of helping us grapple with our finitude, they approximate infinity. Have you ever made a bucket list? How did it help you grapple with your own finitude—or not?

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5

“The terrible gift of a terrible illness is that it has, in fact, taught me to live in the moment,” writes Kate, except it’s not the rapturous moments but the mundane ones that began to sparkle. What moments are sparkling for you these days—and how is appreciating these moments different than “seizing the day”?

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6

Kate tells a story about her father who tried in earnest to do what he loved. (And the money, the tenure, the decent office did not follow.) What stood out to you in this story? How do you understand the difference between a career and a calling?

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7

According to Kate's friend Luke, the Christian tradition has special language for our three experiences of time: tragic (when the world is not right), apocalyptic (when the world is not right but we see it more clearly), and pastoral (when the world is seasonal, ordinary.) Which of these best describes your current experience of time?

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8

The psychologist makes it clear. Kate cannot stay here, here between before and after, in this heightened present. But she is afraid to move forward. "What if I forget what I have learned? And what if I can't learn to hope again?" she asks. What are you afraid to move forward from? What fears and questions are companioning you?

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9

There is a vast wing of the wellness industry whose purpose is to stop time: Botox parties, CrossFit memberships, anti-aging drugstore creams. But, Kate asks, "should we hate the evidence that we have survived?" What is the evidence that you have survived? How are you learning to love, or even show, this evidence?

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10

When the whole world was overcome by a deadly disease, it was alluring for the American middle class to flex a bit of agency. "But no matter how carefully we schedule our days, master our emotions, and try to wring our best life now from our better selves, we cannot solve the problem of finitude." So, after reading this book, how will you live now? What's one self-help gospel you want to give up? What's one unfinished cathedral you want to celebrate?

***This virtual guide and discussion questions were written by author, editor, and facilitator Erin S. Lane ([erinslane.com](http://erinslane.com)).***



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