

BOOKCLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

FOR SCARS WITH SHARP EDGES BY VANESSA EVETTS

1. *Scars with Sharp Edges* explores the psychological, emotional and spiritual consequences of making decisions that go against our personal value systems. Is this something you can relate to personally?
2. One of the main challenges Bex had to overcome was the shame and guilt associated with having a late-term abortion. How did reading her story impact your own beliefs or thoughts around abortion or the support women need before, during and after that decision?
3. Abortion has become a contentious political issue globally. How has this impacted the availability and access to safe emotional, practical and medical support for women when they face an unexpected pregnancy – in your region or country?
4. Discuss the moral dilemma that existed for Rebecca when it came to the decision she was faced with. How did this impact her ultimate decision?
5. Renee and Rebecca had very different views around abortion and women's health. Why do you think Renee became so adamant that Rebecca continue with her pregnancy? Discuss Renee's role in Rebecca's story.
6. What was your first impression of Rebecca? How did this change throughout the novel?
7. Rebecca got to the point where she was willing to end it all to avoid the aftermath of the decision she'd made. What reasons lead people to consider suicide?
8. Have you ever felt desperate enough to end it all? (If you feel safe to answer this question, do so at your own discretion, and share only what is comfortable for you.)
9. Rebecca is officially listed as a missing person. Discuss the fallout when family members simply disappear.
10. Do you relate to Bex's desire to spare someone else the consequences of your mistakes or trauma? Do you think Bex's decision to run away was ultimately selfish ... or kind?
11. When Bex held Jacob in her arms, it triggered feelings of guilt, unworthiness and fear. What triggers do you find most confronting? How do triggers help us identify and deal with our underlying pain?

12. Discuss the breakdown which occurred within Rebecca's own family. How did it go so wrong? Why was she so afraid to be honest about her situation?
13. Discuss Bex's family and how their story may have played for each of them out while Rebecca was on her journey.
14. Is the debilitating fear of imperfection or letting people down, or of being shamed and disowned still an issue in modern cultural or faith communities? Discuss how this is perpetuated and how we might better reconcile our beliefs and our love for others.
15. Do you think it would have been better for Rebecca in the long-term if she'd chosen not to run away from her family? If faced with the same circumstances as a teen, how do you think you would have reacted?
16. Based on your own life experience, how would you have coped with Bex's situation if you had been her mother? How would the same 'problem' have looked and potentially been solved?
17. Was there a scene, moment or conversation in the book that particularly impacted you?
18. What was your first impression of Blake? How did this change throughout the novel?
19. How did you feel about Blake's interactions with the women in his life, including Jessica, when it came to his own beliefs around abortion?
20. How did you feel about the scene when Blake confronts Bex about her abortion and forces her to acknowledge the reason for her pain? Despite his methods, did he do the right thing?
21. Discuss the main turning points in Bex's journey. What can we learn from that about how to be a positive influence in the lives of others?
22. Bex describes not wanting to set foot in church again. What has been your experience with church? How do you think church culture has changed over the years?
23. How important was it for Bex to separate her personal faith from the religious behaviour and expectations associated with that faith? Discuss the difference between faith and religion.
24. Which character did you connect with the most?
25. This novel saw the return of a few favourite characters from the authors second novel *Beautiful Fragments*. If you have read *Beautiful Fragments*, discuss the inclusion of Sophie, Lacie, Caleb and Hannah in *Scars with Sharp Edges*, and their impact on Bex's journey.

26. Discuss your thoughts about the IDENTIT-Y centre which Sophie and Blake established and how those who have experienced trauma are or are not catered for in our communities.
27. Those who have read *Out of the Ashes*, would have recognised Grace. How did you feel about the conclusion of her story being integrated into *Scars with Sharp Edges* and the links to Blake's own history?
28. Discuss the experience Bex had at the marae and bush chapel, and the inclusion of Māori culture and spirituality in this novel. How important was this to Bex's inner healing?
29. Mila's Kuia told Bex she had to acknowledge the weight of something before she could release it. Is there a 'weight' in your own life you've found difficult to lay down?
30. How does the author's literary style contribute to the message or the story?
31. Discuss the key statement. **Invisible scars have the sharpest edges. They are the secrets that won't stay silent.** Consider how we as friends, family, communities, organisations and governments can create safe spaces for honest dialogue about life and trauma. How much does this impact the mental health and rates of suicide in our society?

If *Scars with Sharp Edges* was to be made into a film and you were the casting director, who would you cast?