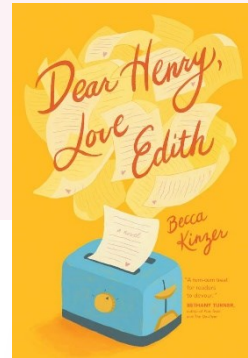




LEADER'S GUIDE

DEAR HENRY, LOVE EDITH
BY BECCA KINZER



“Adventures aren’t supposed to be easy, right? That’s why they’re called adventures.”

EDITH SHERMAN

THEMES

Adventure Miscommunication Love Secrets Belonging Family Trust Fear

HEADS UP! (TRIGGERS AND DELICATE TOPICS)

Infidelity Terminal Cancer Stalker Break and Entry

CHARACTERS

Henry dreams of a future of growing old with his sweetheart, raising a family, and making his parents proud. He loves his small hometown, Westshire, where after his brother's retirement, he has taken on the running of his family's business. Despite his best efforts, Henry feels forever in his “perfect” brother's shadow, and even while following in his parent's footsteps, he feels less like the hero and more like a bungle as he fumbles his way through keeping the business afloat. Henry would love nothing more than to be the hero of his own story... just once!

Edith is a widow in her early thirties. She has suffered many big disappointments, the worst being her failed marriage and broken relationship with her parents. Despite Edith's sunshiney heart, kindness and sacrificial habits, others have not always been kind to her, and her troubled heart struggles to trust and love. The only thing keeping Edith going is her God-given desire to live a big life, with a big story. She craves an adventure, one which will leave a legacy just as her great-great-aunt Edith's story did.

Steve is Edith's Brother in Law, who is possessive and dangerous. He attempts to manipulate Edith under the guise of a “promise to care for her” to his dead brother, but ultimately he only has selfish motives and simply desires Edith's inheritance.

Kat is Henry's niece who has arranged for Edith to lodge with Henry. She is ultimately responsible for the misunderstanding between Edith and Henry and thought that Edith was an elderly widowed retired nurse.

STORYLINE

In a small Midwestern town, Edith Sherman is killing time volunteering at the local crisis nursery centre. Having been recently widowed after a difficult marriage, Edith is experiencing a quarter-life crisis and is desperate to chase after a big adventure - something she is sure will fill the hole in her heart and give her life purpose. Edith has packed up her former life and is clumsily tripping her way forward into something new. While she impatiently awaits the arrival of her final paperwork for her humanitarian mission to South Africa, she finds herself staying at Henry's home. Henry, she believes, is a crotchety old man, while Henry thinks Edith is an elderly widow... and this is where the fun begins!

After a series of hilarious impromptu meetings with their identities still unknown, sweet letters sent back and forth, and the small town going wild with chatter, Edith and Henry finally come face to face, discovering the other is not, in fact, elderly, but young, attractive and intoxicating. As both Edith and Henry fumble to continue their friendship while being irresistibly attracted to the other, they also navigate difficult personal circumstances. Edith cannot shake off her brother-in-law, Steve, who is becoming alarmingly aggressive towards her, and Henry is trying to keep his family's business afloat with little success. As Edith and Henry become more smitten with one another, Edith must decide whether the adventure of her dreams is the right adventure for her, or whether a life built with Henry, could actually be the adventure she truly desired all along.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & TALKING POINTS

1

Q. The small town of Westshire has many odd and loveable characters. Who was your favourite? Why?

TALKING POINTS

We may connect to a character for the following reasons:

- We feel empathy or sympathy for their circumstances.
- We share similar character traits or personalities.
- We share similar desires, hopes, or dreams.
- We have made similar mistakes or poor decisions in our own lives.
- We like or dislike particular characters because of our experiences with others.

2

Q. Henry and Edith's relationship begins with a misunderstanding of who the other is. This rom-com trope is commonly known as 'mistaken identity'. Which other classic tropes did you enjoy in this story?

TALKING POINTS

Other common rom-com tropes found in 'Dear Henry, Love Edith':

- New beginnings.
- Mistaken identity.
- Love letters.
- Friends to lovers.
- Pretend relationship.
- Small-town romance.
- Hero saves the girl.

3

Q. Edith has suffered many big disappointments in her life. What is her biggest motivation to keep going?

TALKING POINTS

Edith's main motivation is her idea of an "adventure":

- She has a deep longing to leave a marvellous legacy as exciting as her great-great-aunt Edith's.
- She desires to be used to help others, and this is why she loved her job as a nurse and has continued to volunteer at a crisis nursery centre while she awaits her paperwork for South Africa.
- Edith also has a strong faith in God and wants to discern His will for her adventure.

4

Q. Henry struggles to live up to other people's expectations and feels forever in his brother's shadow. At what moment in the story did Henry find himself and truly start to thrive?

TALKING POINTS

An instrumental moment in the story for Henry was during the break-in at the crisis nursery centre where he played the role of the "hero" and saved Edith. Not only was this a catalyst for many of his dreams for the family business to come to fruition, but it also gave him confidence within himself that he was capable and the right person to follow in his father's footsteps.

5

Q. Edith is the answer to Sharon's prayer for help at the crisis nursery centre. Can you think of a time when you've been an answer to someone's prayers? Or when God has provided for you in a time of need?

TALKING POINTS

God often answers the prayers of His people by using the body of Christ. Christians are the "hands and feet" of Christ, and a representation of Him here on earth. Simple hospitality, friendship and providing comfort to a sick or grieving person, can all be an answer to prayer. We will never understand the extent of how we were used in this way until heaven, but in the meantime, we continue to love God and others by following the prompts of the Holy Spirit, and in the process, be living answers to prayer.

6

Q. Edith encounters helpful wisdom characters who guide and mentor her on her journey. How did characters such as Sharon, Phyllis, Julie and Amahle nurture and encourage Edith? Do you have someone like this in your life?

TALKING POINTS

We can have many different types of mentors in our lives, but essentially, mentors provide unique, wise and encouraging support in our circumstances. Our "wisdom characters" may be a mother, grandmother, spiritual mother, godparent, extended family member, friend, pastor, or mentor – or we may desire for someone to come alongside us and guide us in this way.

7

Q. Do you think Edith had a healthy relationship with food? Why, why not? Can you relate to her experiences with stress or comfort eating?

TALKING POINTS

It can be a fine line between maintaining fitness and healthy eating for God's glory and on the other hand, obsessing over body image due to our own vanity. How might we better navigate this area of our lives? Our main goal for healthy eating and exercise should be God-focused, not self-focused. We desire to be healthy to serve God and others well.

Edith binge eats to reduce stress, provide comfort, and regularly worries about dieting and what she's eating.

- Instead of finding comfort in food, we can try and seek our comfort and peace from God through reading our Bibles, worshipping, and praying.
- We were all made to crave God, yet sometimes our cravings go astray and lead us astray. We can realign our hearts to crave God first.
- Keeping an accountability partner can be helpful for anyone who would like to begin eating healthier or exercising.
- If anyone admits to struggling in this area, ask how you can support them. If you are concerned, speak to them about seeking professional help.

8

Q. Fear and trust are two important themes in the novel. Discuss some of the decisions Edith made out of fear. How might things have been different if she had chosen trust instead?

TALKING POINTS

Edith has experienced a lot of hardship and setbacks in life, and her life does not look like she imagined it would look – especially now that she is in her 30s. Edith has a deep longing to leave a marvellous legacy as exciting as her great-great-aunt Ediths, and holding on to her adventure seems safer than taking a risk on Henry and opening herself up to more disappointment and hurt.

After the death of her husband, feeling like a failure at love and marriage, and learning of her husband's infidelity, Edith feels unloveable and betrayed. She is often motivated by fear and makes many decisions based on pleasing others (the fear of man).

Edith used her trip to South Africa to escape committing to a relationship with Henry. Instead of trying a long-distance relationship or asking him to wait for her, she cut ties with him and lived in anxious regret and discontent. Edith could have

In her book, "It's Okay Not to be Okay", Sheila Walsh provides an acronym for tackling fear:

F - FALL on your face before Him

E - EARNESTLY seek Him

A - ASK for peace

R - REST in His presence

9

Q. Edith learns that love and building a life with someone you love can be an adventure. Has this challenged your idea of what it means to have an adventure?

TALKING POINTS

Often we believe adventures have to be grand experiences. However, life is mostly made up of thousands upon thousands of mundane daily moments, rhythms and habits. By viewing our lives, wherever we may be, as an assignment from God, and an adventure to embark on, we can find joy in the mundane and slow moments we often try to escape.

10

Q. Can you relate to Edith's longing for South Africa? If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go?

TALKING POINTS

Sometimes discerning God's calling and plan for our lives can seem complicated, especially if our hearts have a holy desire for more. Often, obedience to the small things and simply doing the next right thing is enough, and we rest where we are, trusting God will work something out. We need not get anxious about the future or where God might direct us, but living faithfully in our daily mundane moments is our calling and worthy of our wholehearted diligence. In those rare moments of grand callings and exciting trips – we do the applications, the training, and the prayer, and trust in God's perfect timing.



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