

Reading Group Guide for *Approval Junkie* by Faith Salie

1. Faith begins her memoir with this epigraph by Samuel Beckett: "Fail again. Fail better." How does it reflect the theme of the book?
2. When it comes to seeking approval, are you more of a Kanye West or a Sally Field? Do you think it's "a hunger" that we should try to "transcend"?
3. In "Howler Monkey," Faith writes about the "exhausting psychic noogies" of her wasband's nicknames for her. What did they reveal about their relationship, and why do you think she endured his hazing for so long? Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation? When did you realize it was time to move on?
4. What are some of the *hypocorisms* you've been called, and what do they say about those relationships?
5. In "Miss Aphrodite," Faith writes about the year she won her high school pageant, which was also the year she didn't become valedictorian, didn't get asked to prom, and didn't eat a satisfying meal. In high school, what goals did you prioritize? Have your values changed since then? How?
6. Faith lists a few questions she'd ask her mother—if she could—in "Extra Vanilla." What are the top three questions you'd like to ask your mother? If she's alive, what keeps you from asking? Faith suggests, "You may not really consider how much you're like your mom if she's still around." Is this true for you? How are you like your mother, and do you embrace the similarities?
7. In "The Best Hand Job Ever," Faith writes, "Seems to me there are a couple ways to win approval when it comes to sex: one is through having it lots of different ways and the other is by not having it at all." Do you agree, and do you think most women feel constrained by this notion?
8. Faith defines intimacy as "being naked with your eyes open." Who are the people with whom you've been "unblinking"? Is one of them a sibling?
9. Have you ever had a cathartic experience akin to an exorcism? What did you release? Did it surprise you? How is your life different in its wake?
10. In "Face for Radio," Faith shares the listening skills she's learned as a radio host. What does she think makes a good listener? What are your own best and worst tendencies as a listener?

11. Faith explores her relationship to anger in “Shrink Rapt.” How do you express anger? How were you taught to get “bull tinky”? Have you ever been in therapy? What’s the most useful wisdom you’ve gleaned from a therapist?
12. “What I Wore to My Divorce” details how Faith chose her “divorce dress.” What did you wear on the most meaningful days of your life? Why? (And what color were your unmentionables?)
13. At the end of “What I Wore to My Divorce,” Faith imagines talking to her former, sadder self and comforting her about how her life will turn out. If you could sit on the bed beside a younger you, what would you tell her?
14. In “JSAP,” Faith writes about her experience dating after marriage, when she often thought, “I didn’t want to go out with you again, but why don’t you want to go out with ME again?” Did you find this sentiment relatable?
15. When you’re in a relationship, do you care who says I love you first? What did you make of Faith’s hurling of a “love boomerang”? Have you ever done the same?
16. Have you ever “peed on a storybook moment”?
17. Faith prays a lot. She notes that her prayers have trended from “Please?” to “Thank you.” How do you pray? Do you spend as much money on candles as Faith has?
18. As a panelist on *Wait Wait ... Don’t Tell Me!*, Faith learned that spontaneity trumps preparation. Do you think this holds true in other arenas? Which approach do you favor in your own life?
19. Faith confesses her addiction to eyelash extensions in “On the Fringe: A Cautionary Tale.” What lengths have you gone to in order to feel pretty? Do you regret anything, or do you agree with Oscar Wilde that “It is only the shallow people who do not judge by appearances”?
20. In “Book Marked,” Faith explains how and why certain books moved her at different times in her life. What are the books that have “marked” you?
21. “My Husband’s Dog Is Not My Kids’ Brother” addresses the perils of expressing one’s opinion, especially if you’re a woman, and especially online. Have you ever dealt with personal attacks in social media? How do you deal with them—do you attack back with CAPS LOCK or ignore them?
22. Why do you believe Faith is so intent on breastfeeding her second child? Why does she call the process “both miraculous and brutal”? Do you agree that it’s a good metaphor for parenthood?

23. In what ways does Faith seek the approval of others? In what ways does she seek her own approval? Are both pursuits of value?
24. Faith dedicates the book's last essay to her daughter and not her son because, she writes, there are "a million more ways for a woman to gain or lose approval than a man." What are some examples?
25. Are you a scrapper or a floater? Do you want to be a *scroater*, or is that too disgusting to ponder?
26. Which essay did you relate to the most? Why?
27. The subtitle of the book is "Adventures in Caring Too Much." Do you think Faith has cared too much? How do you decide how much to care about your goals, your loves, your eyelashes?
28. In your opinion, has Faith's lifelong need for approval been a help or a hindrance?