Books by the Stack

This Could Hurt by Jillian Medoff

Five human resources colleagues navigate the emotional complexities of their ambitions, hopes and fears as their small company is buffeted by economic forces that threaten to upend its employees.


About the Author: Jillian Medoff is the acclaimed author of four novels. She also wrote the much-lauded national bestseller I COULDN’T LOVE YOU MORE, GOOD GIRLS GONE BAD, and HUNGER POINT, which was made into an original cable movie starring Christina Hendricks and Barbara Hershey. A former fellow at MacDowell, Blue Mountain Center, VCCA and Fundacion Valparaiso in Spain, Jillian has an MFA from NYU.

Questions for Discussion

1. How Emory has been impacted by the 2008 financial meltdown? In particular, how does the crash affect the team working for Rosa?

2. Talk about Rosalita Guerrero. What kind of a manager is she, and what kind of sacrifices has she made for her career? Have you ever worked for someone as devoted to the job as she is? Do you have a similar kind of investment in your own career or job?

3. According to Rosa, “A business unit was not a family – period. Yes what fueled an employee’s success, and in turn, the company’s, were the very qualities that bound a family: loyalty, diligence, humor, grace.” Care to unpack that statement? Do you find it contradictory – a business unit is not a family, but it has to act like a family – or does it make sense to you?

4. Talk about Rosa’s staff – the various traits and quirks: Rob Hirsch, Lucy Bender, Leo Small, and Ken Verville. Of the team members, who do you admire...distrust...find fault with...or sympathize with more than the others?

5. Rosa advises her subordinates: “The key is to be the same person at home and at work.” Why does she believe that? Are you the same person in both venues? Is it truly advisable – is it even possible? Or is Rosa implying that the “you” at home is the more authentic person than the “you” in the office?

6. Talk about Lucy and Rob’s relationship. Is Lucy Rob’s “office wife”? What is an “office wife”? Are there “office husbands”? Haven you been an office spouse or had one? Does your spouse have an office spouse?

7. What kind of “gender wars”, if any, are played out in the novel?

8. The author pokes fun at the way women dressed for the office in the 2000s, calling it “the worst period of
women’s business attire.” How should women dress in the corporate world – what is appropriate attire? Same goes for men – and why is the business suit *de rigueur*?

9. What is the significance of the book’s title?

10. *Follow-up to Question 9:* Is it true that “every new job is another chance to reinvent yourself.”?

11. The primary concern of *This Could Hurt* is finding satisfaction and fulfillment in our work and relationships. How does the novel suggest we should go about that?

(Questions provided by LitLovers.com)