

# Discussion Guide

## Depression Hates a Moving Target by Nita Sweeney



1. Prior to reading the book, what, if any, assumptions about mental illness and mentally ill people did you have? Where do you think these assumptions came from?
2. Also, prior to reading the book, what, if any, assumptions did you have about running and especially about running long distances? What brought you to form those opinions?
3. The book opens near the end of the story then flashes back to an earlier time. Why do you think the author began the book this way? Was it effective? Where else might she have begun the story and how would that have impacted the way you read the book?
4. What writing style did the author use? Did you find that effective? How would the book be different if the author chose a different tone, voice, or other mode of writing?
5. Much of the book is set in central Ohio and covers all the seasons of that area. What, if any, role does nature, landscape, and weather play in the story?
6. The author talks a lot about her relationship with her husband. How did that contribute to the story and in her ability to achieve her goals? How might a person who does not have such a supportive partner succeed?
7. When the book starts, grief exacerbated the author's depression. In part, she turned to running to cope. Has grief affected you? If so, how have you dealt with it?
8. At first, the author thought of herself as a "private runner." What prompted her to join a group and run her first race? Is there an area of your life you keep private? Has reading the book changed the way you think about that?
9. The author's dog Morgan served as a "coach" of sorts. Have you had a similar relationship with

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10. The author expresses her gratitude for having insurance and access to good mental health care. Today she would call herself privileged. How might her story be different if she had not had those resources? Is lack of resources an issue for you or anyone you know?
11. What is the book's premise? Did the author prove her point? If so, what did she use as "evidence?" If not, what else might she have included. And, does her premise impact you or people you know and love in anyway?
12. The author mentions how the physical and emotional stamina she built while running helped her find the courage and energy to show up at her desk and write. Is there a place in your life where two seemingly unrelated things intersected? If so, what are they? Do you seek out this type of "cross-pollination?"
13. While it is not a primary thread in the story, the author mentions meditation as part of her journey. Have you tried meditation? If so, what type and what was your experience with it?
14. The author is careful not to say that running cured her depression. What other "tools" did she use to manage her mental health? How did they fit together to allow her to achieve her goals? Do you have a "tool kit" for your life? If so, what's in it?
15. Did you find any specific passage of the book significant, interesting, profound, amusing, illuminating, disturbing, or sad? Is there a particular passage that stuck with you? If so, why?
16. At the beginning of the book, Nita's goals seemed impossible to her. Do you have an "impossible" dream? Did reading the book make you consider attempting it?
17. Looking at the "Conclusion and Resources" section of the book, did the author offer any takeaways that resonated with you? If so, which ones?
18. Think back to any assumptions you may have had about mental illness (or running) before beginning to read the book. After finishing, did you find that your assumptions were correct or did the book challenge those assumptions? What did you learn from reading the book?