



# Book Club Kit



## Dear readers,

Thank you for considering *How to Fail at Flirting* for your book club read. One of my favorite things about writing this book has been talking to readers and hearing the different ways it connects to their own experiences.

*How to Fail at Flirting* is about Dr. Naya Turner, a professor who threw herself into work following an abusive relationship. Years later, she's still healing and her job is in trouble; she decides to reclaim some spontaneity in her life. As a good type A person, she does this by making a to-do list that includes flirting with a stranger. After several cocktails, and despite some serious flirting fails, the stranger ends up being someone she can't get enough of. Jake is in town on business and seems perfect until a few of his secrets come out and Naya has to decide between love and her career. Their relationship is filled with passion and heated moments, dad jokes, swoony moments, and two people figuring out how to trust again. I hope you fall in love with them as I have.

I wrote this novel wanting to explore how exes impact how we see ourselves, but I finished it feeling empowered to make my own to-do lists and to ask for what I want. I hope you finish with the same feeling.

This book will provide your group an opportunity to discuss not only a love story, but also issues facing so many real people in our lives—workplace harassment, healing and moving past toxic relationships, rediscovering what we love in life, and learning to trust someone with our hearts. I hope readers will take away how the messy, hurtful things in life don't keep us from finding love, pleasure, and ourselves.

I hope you love the book, love the conversation it inspires for your group, and love the custom *How to Fail at Flirting* cocktail, recipes included—they're perfect for rereading the steamy scenes or discussing deep social issues.

I hope you have love, laughter, and a stack of great books.

Sincerely,  
Denise

1.

Naya begins the book feeling she's in a rut after closing herself off for so many years. Did Naya's list make you think of what you could add to your own to-do list?

2.

Naya shares with Jake that she's had lack-luster sexual experiences with other men and has not felt comfortable asking for what she wanted. Do you think that's a common experience for women? Why?

3.

Jake goes with Naya on TILT and the Ferris wheel despite his fear of heights. Is there a fear you'd be willing to confront to be near someone?

4.

Naya finds it hard to disclose her past trauma to Jake. Why do you think this is, and what makes her ultimately feel she can trust him?

5.

As a professor, Naya discusses some of the challenges of her work. Do any parts of Naya's story challenge commonly held beliefs about universities and professors?

6.

While Aaron and Felicia are somewhat meddling and Tyson and Eric tease, what role do Jake's and Naya's friends play in encouraging healthy relationships?

7.

Naya appreciates that Jake is a "hot nerd" who lacks the arrogance and posturing of her ex. What about a cinnamon roll or non-alpha hero is appealing or off-putting to you?

8.

Naya checks off many items on her list throughout the book. Was there one item or moment of growth that stood out to you as the most meaningful? Did it speak to your own experiences?

9.

Jake and Naya's relationship begins with the botched one-night stand and remains physical. What is Naya able to communicate through physical intimacy that she wasn't able or willing to verbalize?

Discussion  
Questions



# Pear-Vanilla Flirtini

## INGREDIENTS

2 oz pear vodka  
.75 vanilla simple syrup (recipe follows)  
.75 oz triple sec  
2 dashes orange bitters  
.75 oz lemon juice  
1 egg white (optional; adds a velvety texture. Take care using raw egg.)  
pear slice, for garnish (optional)

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Combine pear vodka, vanilla simple syrup, triple sec, orange bitters, lemon juice, and egg white (if using) in a cocktail shaker over ice.
2. Shake for 15–20 seconds until outside of the shaker is frosty.
3. Strain into a martini glass.
4. If using, float a thin slice of pear on the cloud of egg white.
5. Serve immediately.

## VANILLA SIMPLE SYRUP

*Yields 1 cup of syrup*

## INGREDIENTS

.5 cup water  
.5 cup granulated sugar  
.5 tsp vanilla extract

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Mix water and sugar in a saucepan.
2. Bring to a boil until sugar is dissolved.
3. Stir in the vanilla extract and allow to cool. This will keep up to 2 weeks in a sealed container in the refrigerator. Use any leftovers in your coffee or tea!

## MOCKTAIL VERSION

Replace the pear vodka with 1 ounce of pear juice, and the triple sec with  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoon of orange juice. Omit bitters. Shake the juices and simple syrup together, strain into a glass and add 2 ounces of seltzer water or more to taste.

Recipes by  
Allison Jessing,  
Howard County  
Library System





# Rosemary-(Gin)ger Fizz

## INGREDIENTS

2 oz cranberry juice (unsweetened)  
1 oz rosemary-ginger simple syrup  
(recipe follows)  
.75 oz triple sec  
2 oz gin  
2 oz ginger beer (or to taste)  
Sprig of candied rosemary, for garnish  
(optional; recipe follows)

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. If using, make your candied rosemary garnish and place it in the freezer about 15-20 minutes before you start building your drink.
2. Combine the cranberry juice, rosemary-ginger simple syrup, triple sec, and gin in a shaker over ice.
3. Shake well, then strain into a tall glass over ice.
4. Add ginger beer to taste.
5. Garnish with a sprig of candied rosemary, if using

## ROSEMARY-GINGER SIMPLE SYRUP

*Yields 1 cup of syrup*

## INGREDIENTS

.5 cup water  
.5 cup granulated sugar  
1 3-4" sprig of fresh rosemary,  
washed, leaves still on the stem  
1" chunk of fresh ginger,  
roughly chopped

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Mix water and sugar in a small saucepan and bring to a boil until sugar is dissolved.
2. Reduce heat to medium-low and add rosemary and ginger.
3. Simmer for 10 minutes.
4. Remove from heat and allow to cool totally before straining out the ginger and rosemary. Will keep in the fridge for up to two weeks. If you have leftovers, try adding a tablespoon of syrup to 12 oz of seltzer water for a refreshing homemade soda!

## CANDIED ROSEMARY GARNISH

Dip a 2" sprig of fresh rosemary in rosemary-ginger simple syrup. Sprinkle with granulated sugar. Rest sprig on a small plate and immediately place in the freezer. Allow to freeze for at least 15 minutes.

## MOCKTAIL VERSION

Omit gin and triple sec. Add .75 oz of lemon juice and additional ginger beer to taste.

