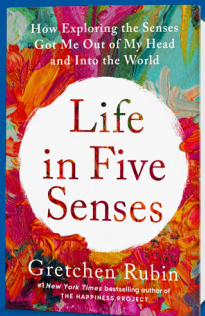


Life in Five Senses

Gretchen Rubin

DISCUSSION GUIDE

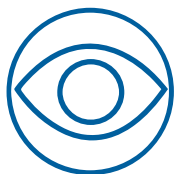
1. Gretchen Rubin begins *Life in Five Senses* by admitting, “I felt stuck in my head—disconnected from the world and other people, and also from myself.” Have you ever experienced this feeling of disconnection?
2. Have you ever experienced a “lightning bolt” moment like Gretchen Rubin’s visit to the eye doctor? Did you make any changes in your life as a result?
3. Did *Life in Five Senses* make you more aware of your own foreground and background senses? Did it inspire you to do more to cultivate your senses? To engage more deeply with the neglected ones?
4. In your family, what senses are discussed or emphasized most? How did your upbringing shape your current relationship to the senses?
5. *Life in Five Senses* is packed with quotations. Which ones resonated with you?
6. Gretchen Rubin describes many ways that she uses her five senses to connect more deeply with the people she loves. How do you connect with others through the senses?
7. What changes might you make in your home or office to make the space more energizing, comforting, or pleasing to your senses? How might you make it easier to focus, create, relax, or stay productive? Do you prefer to focus on adding more pleasant sensations, removing unpleasant sensations—or both?
8. The author repeatedly emphasizes that each of us lives in our own sensory world, with our own complement of senses, and that it’s very important to recognize that people experience sensations in different ways. How might you bring this principle into action in your own life?
9. Gretchen Rubin notes that, “Just as we can minister to the body through the spirit, sometimes we can minister to the spirit through the body.” Do you agree? How might our senses aid us on a spiritual or soulful level?
10. *Life in Five Senses* can be read as an antidote to the pressures and temptations of modern technology. Do you think that technology helps or hinders our engagement with our five senses?
11. Through her senses, Gretchen found more delight, more love, more energy, more imagination, more memories, and more self-knowledge. Which of these aims appeals most to you?
12. Gretchen Rubin writes, “The more we know, the more we notice.” Do you agree?



Life in Five Senses

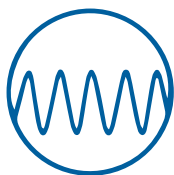
Gretchen Rubin

SENSE-SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



SEEING

- What decorated the walls of your childhood bedroom?
- If you chose a place to visit every day, what place might you choose?
- Do you have a signature color?



HEARING

- What song would you choose to be your “walk-up” song?
- Is there any ordinary noise that you particularly enjoy or don’t enjoy? Thunder, cicadas, ocean waves, ceiling fan, wind chimes, whistling, a cat lapping up water?
- Is it important to you to have silence at certain times, or do you usually prefer to be listening to something, like music, TV, podcasts, or white noise?



SMELLING

- Is there a smell that most people don’t like, but that you enjoy, or vice versa? Gasoline, pine needles, new car, old paperbacks, incense, bananas, or basements, for example.
- Are there any smells that instantly evoke strong memories for you?
- Do you prefer to use unscented or scented products—or a mix?



TASTING

- Some tastes are particularly polarizing. How do you feel about black licorice, candy corn, cilantro, fennel, blue cheese, oysters, beets, Pringles?
- As a child, did you have a favorite junk food that your parents refused to buy?
- Is there any food that you eat only when you’re by yourself?



TOUCHING

- Are there any textures that you particularly like or don’t like, such as plushy, velvety, silky, stiff cotton, sisal? Do you like the feeling of being surrounded by water, or do you avoid it?
- With the people close to you, do you prefer a lot or a little physical contact?
- Do you have an item you hold to help feel grounded or comforted?