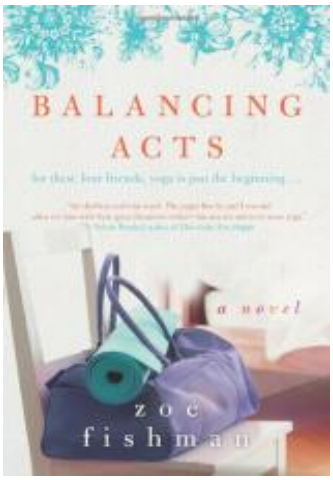
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

Balancing Acts

by Zoe Fishman



About the Book

With beauty, brains, and a high-paying Wall Street position, Charlie was a woman who seemed to have it all --- until she turned thirty and took stock of her life, or lack thereof. She left it all behind to pursue yoga, and now, two years later, she's looking to drum up business for her fledgling studio in Brooklyn. Attending her college's alumni night with fliers in tow, she reconnects with three former classmates whose post-graduation lives, like hers, haven't turned out like they'd hoped.

Romance book editor Sabine still longs to write the novel that's bottled up inside her. Once an up-and-coming photographer and Upper East Side social darling, Naomi is now a single mom who hasn't picked up her camera in years. And Bess, who dreamed of being a serious investigative journalist a la Christiane Amanpour, is stuck in a rut, writing snarky captions for a gossip mag. But at a weekly yoga class at Charlie's studio, the four friends, reunited ten years after college, will forge new bonds and take new chances --- as they start over, fall in love, change their lives...and come face-to-face with haunting realities.

Discussion Guide

1. Charlie, Bess, Sabine and Naomi are all struggling to stay true to their passions, despite self doubt and adult responsibilities. Do you think that this is a noble struggle or a selfish one? Does that kind of "me focus" really pay off in the long run (for the women themselves, but also for their loved ones present and future), or is it just an excuse to brood?

2. In **Balancing Acts**, we see snippets of each woman's college experience --- Charlie as a would-be banker with her Type A eyes on the prize; Bess as a California girl with an East Coast dog-eat-dog mentality; Sabine as a funny, fledgling writer impressed by the superficial sophistication of her peers; and Naomi as an impossibly cool, beautiful and bohemian photographer. Would you say that, despite how easy it is to romanticize one's past, that the self-awareness of 30-something is actually more liberating than the self-consciousness of youth?

3. Charlie has a hard time giving herself the credit she deserves for making a career 180 because of the fact that she discovered yoga through Neil. Why is it so difficult for her to separate these two entities? Is there a special passion of yours that you may have found unexpectedly or that you've had trouble admitting you love?

4. When we meet Bess, she has an over-arching need to expose the other women's unhappiness in order to justify her own. What changes her outlook? How do you think this illustrates some female relationships?

5. Yoga is a way to reconnect with yourself, both spiritually and physically. By slowing down and being mindful of your body's reaction to the poses, yoga becomes quality "me time." Yoga is really the only time in Naomi's day that she is able to have that "me time." Do you think it's a coincidence that she first starts taking her health issues seriously in class?

6. Sabine and her mother have a unique relationship. How do you think her mother's outrageousness affected Sabine as she grew up? How do you think their generation gap informs the way they look at love and relationships?

7. What do you think Bess's wall is all about? We see it crumble a bit as she falls further in love with Dan and becomes more at ease in class, but why is it seemingly so much thicker than that of the other women?

8. As soon as Charlie (finally!) lets go of her relationship with Neil --- there he is. Has this happened to you? Do you agree that it's some unwritten law of the universe, or do you think it's just chance?

9. Sabine says in the novel that she is famous for dating guys "on a break" from their girlfriends. Why do you think that is? 10. Why is Naomi so afraid of picking up her camera? What is it about that part of her life that scares her? Has this kind of emotional paralysis ever happened to you?

10. We leave Charlie, Bess, Sabine, and Naomi lounging and picnicking in Prospect Park. What do you think happens to all of them?

Author Bio

Zoe Fishman is the author of DRIVING LESSONS, SAVING RUTH and BALANCING ACTS. Her books have been translated into German, Italian, Dutch and Polish. She?s the recipient of many awards, including Target?s Breakout and Emerging Author Picks, a New York Post Pick, and has been featured on NBC?s ?Atlanta & Co.? as well as in *Publishers Weekly* and *The Huffington Post*. She is currently at work on her next novel, as well as teaching writing at the Callanwolde Fine Arts Center. Zoe lives in Atlanta with her husband and two sons.

Balancing Acts

by Zoe Fishman

Publication Date: March 16, 2010
Paperback: 384 pages
Publisher: Harper Perennial
ISBN-10: 0061711802
ISBN-13: 9780061711800