

Book Club Discussion Questions
for
*Optics: A Novel About
Women and Work and Midlife Muddles*
by **Gail Reitenbach**

1. Each of the female characters struggles to gain or regain control over some aspect of her life. In the novel, which seems harder: feeling in control of one's midlife body, career, or family relationships? How would you answer that question for your life?
2. If you've been unemployed in midlife, which job-search experiences shared by the characters resonated most for you?
3. One early reader commented that Mike is extraordinarily patient with the lower level of attention he gets in the months during which Kris launches her business. Though Kris is grateful for a supportive partner, this reader felt Mike was "doing all the giving." Do you agree? How would you assess the spousal dynamics during that startup period if gender roles were reversed—if Mike were starting a business and Kris were in the supportive role?
4. Kris struggles to readjust her relationship with her employees, most of whom used to be peers. How would you describe her attempts to become a responsible yet personable leader? How successful did you think she was in making that transition? If you've ever been in a similar position, how did you handle the change in roles, and how hard was it?
5. This novel was intended to be grounded in reality yet inspirational and empowering. Is that how it seemed to you? How would you have liked the book if it had been even more realistic, with a darker ending?
6. Sharon's decision is a major turning point. What was your immediate reaction to her choice? Has your opinion changed over time?
7. Sharon's gesture is intended to give her friends courage to take risks. If you were part of this circle of friends, what risk would you take?
8. What food or beverage mentioned in the book do you most want to consume right now?