

## READING GUIDE for THE MAN IN THE DOG PARK BOOK

### Questions from Author Cathy Small

- (1) This book takes you into the nitty-gritty of life as a homeless person. You see how someone homeless negotiates things from self-image to public perception, from food and soap to shelter, showers, and money. Did anything in your own perception change for you as a result of seeing this up close?
- (2) You may have found that the narratives in this book confirmed something you believed, questioned something you believed, or did both. What happened for you?
- (3) How have you (or have you) interacted with homeless people in the past? After reading this book, do you think it will later change how you might interact with a homeless person in the future?
- (4) On page 152, after meeting a homeless woman who said she was “so embarrassed” by her situation, the author responded “there but for the grace of God...” But then she added this (as a comment to the reader): “My words were a lie really.” –Do you see why the author added “it was a lie really?” Would saying that be a “lie” for you? Have you ever felt the possibility of homelessness in your life?
- (5) What has been your own experience with “crossing into other worlds?” What kinds of borders have you traversed, and what did you learn?
- (6) Why do you think we haven’t yet solved the problem of homelessness in our society? Has the book helped you to see any part of this issue more clearly?
- (7) Everyone reading this book will have a different set of talents and skills, time constraints and tolerances, interests and inclinations that affect what they do, if anything, about homelessness. What actions or steps might you take that are realistic for you, given your constraints and commitments?

## Questions from Readers

*Readers of our book are interested citizens, book club members who chose to read on this topic, professionals in the field of health, housing or social services, individuals living in shelters, policy-makers, and faith-based reading groups, among others. We share with you here a few of the questions they have shared with us that might be useful for discussion.*

- (8) Author Small crossed the boundaries of her own world to find, not only a friendship with her co-author, but also to extend her own sense of ease and openness in the world. Ross Moore really did the same thing, finding friendship and opening doors in his life he never imagined. In your own life, have you ever been affected in a positive way by finding a connection with someone very different from your own background? Share this with your group.
  
- (9) How does this idea of “otherness” play in our NIMBY response to homelessness? How do we stretch our own boundaries to bring us greater compassion for “others” in our lives? Is there a way to make this a spiritual or personal practice? As a group or community, how can we help each other to do cross the boundaries of the familiar?
  
- (10) Sometimes, just to read a book with issues like homelessness requires a certain strength and balance to not become overwhelmed by despair for the enormity or depth of the issues here. How did you deal with the difficult feelings that may have come up in reading?