

# Why and How to Start a Family Medicine Book Club

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## Book clubs can help teams build rapport and empathize better with colleagues and patients.

**S**tarting a book club may seem trivial, but it can be an effective way to build connection and compassion among your team.

Making time to sit with our colleagues and have a conversation around a shared interest (in this case, books) strengthens relationships as we learn about each other outside of work roles and hierarchies. Groups can share wisdom and laugh in a relaxed environment, developing camaraderie that reduces loneliness, increases peer support, and fosters a more effective team. Several book clubs have emerged within our organization over the past seven years, and they have been some of our most successful team-building and morale-boosting programs.

We know time is at a premium in family medicine practices, but book clubs are very flexible. Groups can

be any size, in person or remote, and meet at whatever interval works best. Here are some tips for starting and growing a book club.

### STARTING A BOOK CLUB

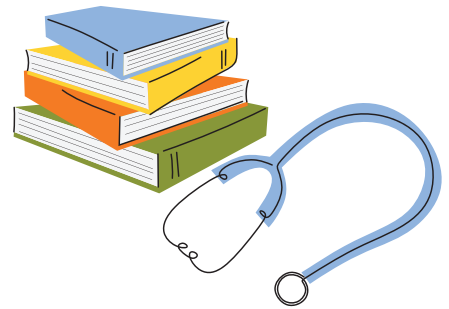
First, define your intentions: Do you want to read books relevant to medicine or business that might help improve your practice? Or is it all about building rapport, in which case any good book will do? Be upfront about the goal so participants know what to expect.

Once you've defined the goal, here are tips for getting started:

- Limit groups to 7-9 people, if possible, which allows everyone opportunities to share. Or divide into subgroups for discussion.
- Elicit book recommendations from everyone on your team. Choose books that resonate broadly, and consider alternating between fiction and non-fiction, light topics and serious topics, conceptual books and practical ones.
- Brainstorm a schedule together and be flexible. You may want to avoid holidays, summer months, and end-of-academic-year activities. Pencil in a slate of books for the whole year, or choose one at a time and schedule as you go, depending on participant preferences.

- Give a manageable lead time (1-3 months) for reading. Start with books that are short, easy to read, and easy to carry (i.e., paperbacks).

- Choose books available at the local library and in audio format. Consider buying a few extra copies to lend to group members. (Used bookstores are good places to buy copies. After your group is done



with them, you can sell them back or donate them.)

- Meet regularly, even if it's only every-other month or quarterly.
- Allow people to share thoughts about their personal lives unrelated to the book you're reading.

### INCREASING ENGAGEMENT

Once your book club is going, these tips can make it more engaging:

- Take turns facilitating discussion. Don't require anyone to do it, but ask for volunteers.
- Search for discussion questions, and share them ahead of time.
- Use a group chat (through Microsoft Teams or another program) to share book recommendations, articles, movie adaptations, etc.
- Encourage participation even if people haven't finished the book. Give a brief summary of it to help.
- Send key pearls or a short summary of the discussion to members who were unable to attend.
- Consider choosing a book that addresses — either directly or more subtly — an area that has been an issue in your practice (e.g., motivation, hierarchy, diversity, or joy).

### THE EPILOGUE

Reading can expand perspectives and foster lifelong learning. Thoughtful book club discussions can be both useful and enjoyable, and over time can transform the culture of a practice. Start a club and see what it does for you. **FPM**

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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