

Turnaway Reading Guide

Overarching Questions

- The Turnaway Study provides scientific evidence repudiating often repeated myths about abortion from both abortion rights supporters and opponents. The book itself is written for all readers wishing to learn more about the experiences of women who receive an abortion and women who do not. In your opinion, what are key takeaways policymakers of either side should keep in mind when enacting policies or laws regarding to abortion?
- Of the ten stories shared in the book, which was most impactful, eye opening, or challenging for you and why?
- What does the author convey by combining storytelling and the presentation of relevant data? How does this impact how the statistics and findings are absorbed?
- How did you form your own views on abortion, what do you think influenced those views? Politics? Religious beliefs? Personal experience or a relationship with someone who's had or sought an abortion?
- What types of negative narratives have you heard about abortion in your life? How did the stories shared in The Turnaway Study compare to those narratives?
- After reading The Turnaway Study have your views on abortion and the people who seek abortions changed? If so in what ways?
- Before reading this book, did you think racism played into peoples' access to abortion care? Why or why not? Has your opinion changed?
- Throughout the book, Dr. Foster talks about the patronizing effect of abortion restrictions purported by their authors to help prevent women from suffering regret. She says to the "degree that regret is damaging, taking away competent adults' ability to choose is worse." Do you agree? Does the government have an obligation to protect citizens from emotional turmoil?

Chapter Primer:

- Before reading each chapter, reflect on the Chapter title and what assumptions you have about its relationship with abortion and jot them down. Did any of the author's points cause you to question your assumptions?

Intro & Chapter 1: The Turnaway Study / Amy

1. In Foster's introduction to the book, she says "Every year, thousands of people are denied abortions because they show up [to an abortion clinic] too late in pregnancy." Had you ever considered people who are unable to get the abortions they want? How were your previous notions challenged or supported?

2. Were you aware of all the obstacles people face to access abortion care in this country?
3. When she formulated the Turnaway survey questions, Foster said she “wanted to hear from women who were actually experiencing what the rest of us debate in the abstract.” Did this resonate with you? Are there areas of your life you feel are publicly debated without the input of those with lived experiences?
4. Foster notes that she “didn’t design this study thinking about politics, or even women’s rights.” (p.7) Are there findings in this book that may conflict with the over-simplified and polarized debate on abortion access?

Chapter 2: Why Do People Have Abortions? / Jessica

1. A big finding of the Turnaway Study is that women were able to predict what the difficulties and obstacles would be if they were denied wanted abortion care. Did any of your previous assumptions before reading The Turnaway Study challenge these findings? And how can we better highlight abortion seekers as experts in their own lives?

Chapter 3: Access to Abortion in the United States / Martina

1. How did findings from the study illuminate inequality? And how do our current systems, particularly the healthcare system, seem to affect how people are able to, or not able to access abortion care?
2. Foster’s study found that the leading reason women get abortions in the second trimester is that they didn’t realize they were pregnant until after the first trimester. Have you or anyone you’ve known discovered they were pregnant after the 1st trimester? If so, what was that experience like?
3. Before reading The Turnaway Study, had you heard or thought about people who are turned away from abortion clinics or hospitals? If so, what did you think about it? If not, why do you think these abortion seekers are rarely discussed or considered?

Chapter 4: Mental Health / Nicole

1. In chapter 4, Foster refers to Katie Watson’s paper on the “Dignity of Risk,” which challenges the premise of abortion regret claims on the assertion that regret is something people must be protected from by an abortion restriction. Have you ever regretted medical care, or known anyone that has? And if so, should people be protected from that risk with a denial of care?
2. The author distinguishes emotions about the pregnancy and emotions about the abortion, how do we see the differences in Nicole’s story?

3. Foster made a strong statement in the phrase, "If you think nobody you know has had an abortion, more likely, nobody you know has told you about their abortion." What can we do to make space for people to share abortion stories?

Chapter 5: Physical Health / Kiara

1. Foster notes early in Chapter 5 that "One in six women die after having an abortion - that is, if the abortion occurs *on television*." Can you think of TV episodes or movies that depicted abortion in a way that is inconsistent with the findings of the Turnaway Study?
2. Kiara talks about her social network in her story, how did they support her abortion? How did they not?

Chapter 6: Women's Lives / Melissa

1. Were you surprised by how many women in the study considered themselves anti-abortion despite needing this care at some point in their lives? How does internalized stigma and shame manifest in how abortion seekers process their own experiences?

Chapter 7: Children / Camila

1. The Turnaway study found that few women choose adoption after denial of abortion care and those who do have the highest incidences of regret and negative emotions about the pregnancy. And yet adoption is often offered by abortion oponents as a solution for unwanted pregnancy. Is this oversimplified? Why or why not?
2. What do these stories reveal about parenthood and abortion? More specifically, about motherhood?

Chapter 8: Men / Jada

1. In Chapter 8 Foster says, "Men often play a large role in [pregnancy and abortion] decision-making—sometimes being involved in the decision and sometimes *being the reason* women opt for abortion." Further the study found "widespread support among men for women's decision to end a pregnancy." Given the role men clearly play in these decisions, do you think we hear enough support from men for abortion rights?

Chapter 9: Reactions to and Reflections on the Turnaway Study / Brenda

1. Foster's personal story about her two grandmothers' highlights abortion as part of the continuum of a person's reproductive life. What was your key takeaway from Foster's sharing, and the ways abortion shaped her grandmother's lives?
2. Draw from the previous question and using a societally lens. How does abortion fit in the bigger picture of people's lives?

Chapter 10: The Turnaway Study and Abortion Policy / Sofia

1. In your opinion, do you think people who advocate against abortion have thought of people's reasons for seeking abortion or the consequences of not accessing care?
2. The book profiles people like Lana and Sofia who, due to their health statuses, learn that they are pregnant well into their pregnancy and are too far along for an abortion in their home state. After reading their health challenges, can you think of other barriers that further prevent these women from seeing abortion providers and obtaining the care they need? What do you currently see as the greatest barrier for anyone wanting to have an abortion?
3. In Chapter 10, Dr. Foster discusses the reproductive justice framework and highlights the significant amount of historically justified distrust surrounding family planning programs that currently exists among low-income women and women of color. In your opinion, what can be done to repair this mistrust or to prevent further increase of this mistrust in the future?

Chapter 11: Next Steps for Science

1. Do you think research plays a large-enough role in how people think about abortion? Was there anything about the research that surprised you? Were there any myths dispelled for you?
2. Foster says “We have studied women who have later abortions for reasons other than fetal anomaly or maternal health. These are the most stigmatized, least socially acceptable abortions. If we can see these women as people and their decisions as valid, maybe we can resist the temptation to think that the government can make their decisions for them.” (pg 308) Do you agree with this? If so, what are ways people contribute to stigma toward these cases, even in pro-choice spaces? If you do not agree, how do you think laws governing abortion help in these situations?
3. What types of negative narratives have you heard about abortion in your life? How did the stories shared in The Turnaway Study compare to those narratives? After reading The Turnaway Study have your views on abortion and the people who seek abortions changed? If so in what ways?

Support for processing post-discussion emotions

This reading guide was crafted by a small group including people who have had abortions, researchers and advocates. The intention with the questions offered is to stimulate conversation and begin to interrogate internalized stigma or misconceptions. This can be a charged, emotional place for people to go, especially those who have previously experienced related or unrelated trauma.

We wanted to offer sources of support for processing post-discussion emotions, particularly the All Options (<https://www.all-options.org>), Faith Aloud (<https://www.faithaloud.org/>) talk lines and the Exhale Pro Voice text line (<https://exhaleprovoice.org/>). And for those who may find the

discussion ignites your impulse to share your stories of abortion, denial of care or other pregnancy outcomes, we offer We Testify (<https://wetestify.org/>) and Shout Your Abortion (<https://shoutyourabortion.com/>).

Acknowledgements:

The Turnaway Study team would like to express sincere gratitude to the amazing group who helped created this thought-provoking book guide. Erika Christensen and Garin Marschall, Shireen Rose Shakouri, Rana Barar, Isabel Munoz, Zoe Reich, Meera Shah, MD, and Jasmine Powell.