

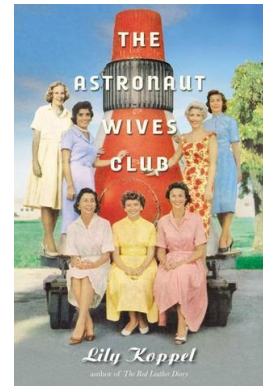


Discussion Questions for The Astronaut Wives Club By Lily Koppel

These discussion questions were prepared by the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) for the Reader with a Cause book club group on Goodreads.com.

If you like our questions please feel free to use them – and don't forget to join the conversation online at:

https://www.goodreads.com/topic/group_folder/255137



1. Thoughts & Opinions

What did you think of *The Astronaut Wives Club* by Lily Koppel?? Overall thoughts about the book, the author, the topic, the writing style, etc. welcome here!

2. Network of Support

The wives' network of support - both official and unofficial - demonstrates the importance of non-intimate relationships.

"Ultimately the wives' story is about female friendships & American identity. While their husbands were launched into space, they were being launched as modern American women. If not for the wives, the strong women in the background who provided essential support to their husbands, man might never have walked on the moon." (xvi)

Why do you think this network of support played such a large role for the AWC?

What are some important friendships and relationships in your life? How have they impacted you?

3. Book vs. Show

[The Astronaut Wives Club](#) is being made into a TV show! (Allegedly premiering sometime this year on ABC...)

Will you watch the show? Who would you cast for these roles & why?

4. Myth vs. Reality of the "Perfect Family"

[The Astronaut Wives Club](#) clearly portrays the discrepancy between the hypothetical-perfect-family of yore and the actual reality that each wife lived. The myth of the "Perfect Family" was thrust upon each Astro-family and each wife had to deal with this myth in her own way.

"The seven wives hosted their ghostwriters at their homes and let them tag along as they went about their daily routines. The girls found their real selves disappearing behind Life's depiction of what it meant to be not only the perfect 50s housewife, but the perfect astronaut's wife, molded like the popular Barbie doll that had first appeared on store shelves that spring. The wives felt keenly the pressure to do everything just so, now that the whole country was watching them." (30)



"Whatever eccentricities the wives displayed, Life was complicit with NASA in erasing quirks, such as 31-year-old Betty referring to herself, because of all she'd been through, as 'Ole Betty.'" (36)

What effect do you think this pressure had on each family?

Do you think that we are continuing to grapple with a myth of the "Perfect Family" today, or have we moved beyond these expectations? Why do you think so? In what ways do you see this in your own life?

How does this myth affect survivors and victims of domestic violence and sexual assault?

5. Code of Silence

The wives talked a lot about how they were expected to keep their family troubles private, even while *Life* photographers & journalists documented their each & every move. They all believed that "airing their dirty laundry" could cost their husbands his job.

"They all knew fear was contagious. Even though most of the ladies harbored the exact same dark thoughts, they couldn't risk sharing them." (206)

How did NASA help perpetuate this climate of silence?

Do you think this mentality continues today for couples in and out of NASA? Do you think this applies in your community, workplace, etc.?

How can this code of silence be harmful for victims of domestic violence & sexual assault in particular? What can we do to mitigate this social norm?