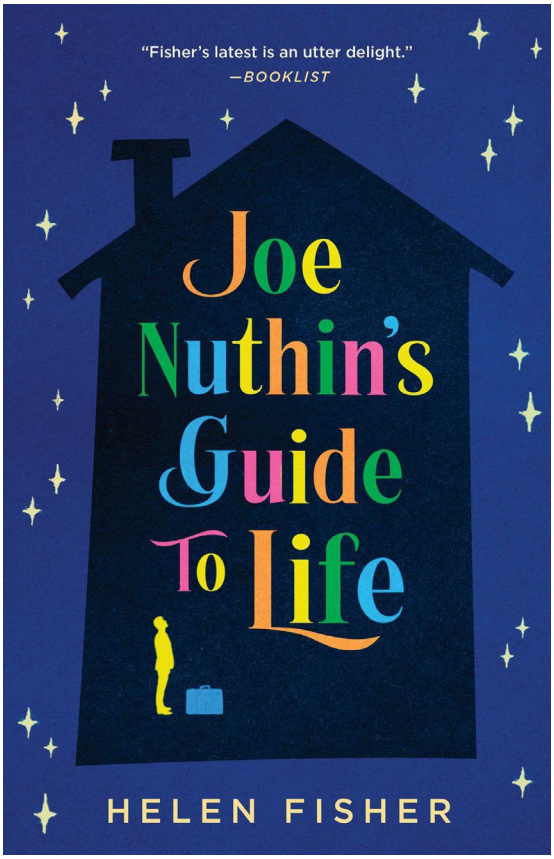
Martin County Library System Book Discussion Guide:

Joe Nuthin's Guide to Life by Helen Fisher

Included in the Kit:

- Book summary
- Author biography
- Discussion questions
- Recipe suggestions



Book summary

A thoroughly uplifting novel about a neurodivergent young man who unexpectedly builds a community and saves a friend in need by following—in a way only he can—his mother's words of wisdom.

Joe-Nathan likes the two parts of his name separate, just like dinner and dessert. Mean Charlie at work sometimes calls him Joe-Nuthin. But Joe is far from nothing. Joe is a good friend, good at his job, good at making things and at following rules, and he is learning how to do lots of things by himself. Joe's mother knows there are a million things he isn't yet prepared for. While she helps to guide him every day, she is also writing notebooks of advice for Joe, of all the things she hasn't yet told him about life and things he might forget. By following her advice, Joe's life is about to be more of a surprise than he expects. Because he's about to learn that remarkable things can happen when you leave your comfort zone, and that you can do even the hardest things with a little help from your friends.

Joe Nuthin's Guide to Life

by Helen Fisher

Meet the Author



Helen Fisher spent her early life in America but grew up mainly in Suffolk, England, where she now lives with her two children. She studied psychology at the University of Westminster and ergonomics at University College London and worked as a senior evaluator in research at the Royal National Institute of Blind People. She is the author of *Faye, Faraway*.

Discussion Questions

1. The novel opens with Janet's entry about fear from the yellow book of advice before we are introduced to Joe-Nathan and the other characters. How does this set up the story thematically? How does it set up Joe's character?
2. Time is a guiding force in Joe's life. Joe depends on routine, and he likes how time moves at the same pace and pushes things along. How does time operate in this novel? Does the novel move at a steady pace? At what points does the pace of the novel slow down? What is the purpose of those slow-motion moments, and how do they make you feel?
3. Joe is a neurodivergent character with OCD. How does the author make Joe a relatable character even when the reader may not be familiar with neurodivergent thought processes? Are there specific passages, descriptions, or scenes in which you felt you could really understand Joe's thought process and how he sees the world? How does the author put you in Joe's shoes?
4. This novel deals a lot with death and grief. How do the characters represent different ways of handling grief? Consider thinking about other characters in addition to Joe, like Angus and Hazel.
5. Reflect on the friendships present in the novel. Consider what Janet writes about friends, how Chloe is a good friend but can be wrong at times, and how Charlie appears mean but does try to be a friend to Joe. What does the novel teach you about friendship? How does friendship relate to family?

6. Assumptions play a large role in this story. People make assumptions about Joe nearly every day of his life, and in the yellow book of advice, Janet warns Joe to be careful before he assumes anything. What assumptions did you have about the story or certain characters when you started reading? Were you proven wrong?
7. Joe sees and understands the world differently than neurotypical people. When Pip tries to explain why he does not need to be nice to bullies with a story about her cat, Joe asks questions until Pip has to reconsider her own perspective. Chloe says that “He does this . . . He makes you think” (pg. 141). Was there a moment in the book when Joe made you think or reconsider a view you had?
8. In the epilogue, Charlie makes Joe an epitaph plaque, and Joe requests that he write Joe-Nuthin instead of Joe-Nathan. Why do you think Joe chooses to keep this nickname?
9. Return to the prologue and the first question in this guide. What did this novel teach you about fear? What did Joe learn about fear?

Source: https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Joe-Nuthins-Guide-to-Life/Helen-Fisher/9781982142704

Recipes

The BEST Turkey Chili Recipe



Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 cup chopped yellow onion
- 1 pound ground turkey
- 4 cloves garlic minced
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons chili powder use 1 tablespoon for less spice
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 ¾ cups low sodium chicken broth or one 14.5 ounce can
- 28 ounce can fire roasted crushed tomatoes or fire roasted diced tomatoes
- 15 ounce can kidney beans rinsed and drained
- 15 ounce can black beans drained and rinsed
- 15 ounce can pinto beans drained and rinsed
- For topping: shredded cheese, sour cream or plain Greek yogurt, cilantro, chopped onions, etc. as desired

Instructions:

Heat oil in large pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook 2 minutes, until onion starts to soften. Add the ground turkey and cook, stirring to crumble the meat, until turkey is browned, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, for 30 seconds. Add the brown sugar, chili powder, cumin, oregano, salt, pepper, and tomato paste. Stir to combine. Add the broth and stir, scraping up any bits from the bottom of the pot. Stir in the crushed tomatoes and beans. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low and simmer for 1-2 hours, stirring occasionally. Cover the chili during the first part of the cook time, and then uncover during the last 30 minutes to thicken.

Source: https://kristineskitchenblog.com/wprm_print/the-best-turkey-chili-recipe

Recipes Continuation

Joe Nuthin's Guide to Life

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Peanut Butter Chocolate Chip Cookies



Ingredients:

- ½ cup butter softened
- 1 cup peanut butter
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup brown sugar packed
- 1 Tablespoon milk
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 egg
- 1 ¼ cups flour
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 cup chocolate chips

Instructions:

In the bowl of a standing mixer, or in a large bowl with a hand-held mixer, cream together butter and peanut butter until smooth. Add sugars and beat until combined. Add eggs, vanilla and milk and beat for 30-60 seconds on medium-high speed until the mixture is light in color and sugar is dissolved. Add the flour, baking soda, sea salt, baking powder and cinnamon, then beat until incorporated. Add the chocolate chips and stir until combined.

Transfer the dough to an airtight glass container with a lid and chill in the refrigerator for at least 60 minutes, and up to overnight.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Line two large baking sheets with silicone baking mats or parchment paper and set aside. Use a cookie scoop to measure 1 ½ to 2 TBS dough and roll it into a ball. Use a fork to gently press a crisscross pattern into the top of each cookie. Bake in preheated oven for approximately 9-10 minutes. Take them out when they are just barely starting to turn brown, puffed and just start to crackle.

Source: https://joyfoodsunshine.com/peanut-butter-chocolate-chip-cookies/