

## Book Club Discussion Guide



*White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo, Page 1 (May 2021)*

# White Fragility: Why it's so Hard for White People to Talk About Racism

By Robin DiAngelo

## About the author:

Dr. Robin DiAngelo is an affiliate associate professor of education at the University of Washington. She has been a consultant, educator, and facilitator on issues of racial and social justice for more than 25 years. She is the author or coauthor of several books, including the number-one New York Times bestseller *White Fragility*.

Source: Publisher website (<http://www.beacon.org>)

## About this book:

The New York Times best-selling book exploring the counterproductive reactions white people have when their assumptions about race are challenged that serve to maintain racial inequality

In this “vital, necessary, and beautiful book” (Michael Eric Dyson), antiracist educator Robin DiAngelo deftly illuminates the phenomenon of white fragility and “allows us to understand racism as a practice not restricted to ‘bad people’” (Claudia Rankine).

## Book Club Discussion Guide



*White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo, Page 2 (May 2021)*

Referring to the defensive moves that white people make when challenged racially, white fragility is characterized by emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and by behaviors including argumentation and silence. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium and prevent any meaningful cross-racial dialogue. In this in-depth exploration, DiAngelo examines how white fragility develops, how it protects racial inequality, and what we can do to engage more constructively.

Source: Publisher website (<http://www.beacon.org>)

### Discussion Questions:

1. What are some constructive ways to use your emotional reactions when your opinions on racism are challenged?
2. What does it mean to say that race is “socially constructed”?
3. What is the impact of white people not knowing [their] racial history?
4. What does the author mean when she says that white people are not, in fact, racially innocent? How can we know much about race if we have lived separately?
5. What does it mean to say that racism is “a structure, not an event”?
6. The author claims that in the white mind, Black people are the ultimate racial other. What does this mean?
7. What are some of the misunderstandings about affirmative action and what do these misunderstandings reveal about anti-Blackness?
8. How does the author challenge the idea that our intentions are “what count”?

## Book Club Discussion Guide



*White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo, Page 3 (May 2021)*

9. Share a time that you experienced your own white fragility or witnessed another white person's.
10. What are the opportunities and dilemmas of white people educating each other on racism?
11. The author presents a set of eleven “cardinal rules” (pp. 123-24) when giving feedback to white people regarding racist assumptions and patterns. For each rule of engagement, provide an example of the rule in action.
12. The author argues that emotions are political. How are emotions political?
13. Discuss the suggestions for continuing the work of anti-racism. Which are the most challenging? How can you meet those challenges?

Source: (<https://www.bookbub.com>)

Please note: A more in depth reader's guide is available at the following link:  
(<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/566247/white-fragility-by-robin-diangelo/9780807047408/readers-guide/>)