

WHERE THE RIVER RUNS

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This Conversation Guide is intended to enrich the individual reading experience, as well as encourage us to explore these topics together—because books, and life, are meant for sharing.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are the three events that cause Meridy to return to Seaboro? How does her emotional state make her more open to taking action? Have you ever felt a desperate need for something, and then noticed that events in your life seem to support your desire to act upon that need?
2. You include an epigraph quoting St. Augustine: "Do you want to be great? Then begin by being." What do you think this statement means for Meridy? What is the difference for Meridy between being and doing? For you?
3. Meridy reconnects easily and deeply with Tim Oliver, yet seems disconnected and false with her friends in Atlanta. Why? What do you believe contributes to an honest/connected friendship? Which friends do you feel more connected with --- old or new?
4. Meridy comes to a new understanding of her mother during the novel. What is that new understanding and how is it able to improve their relationship? Do you feel you have a better or worse understanding of your mother's life now, compared to when you were younger?
5. Meridy's best friend Cate has recently divorced Beau's boss, Harland. How is Meridy's

social circle both ignoring and acknowledging this change? Do you have friends or family members whose divorce has affected your relationship with them?

6. Throughout the novel, Meridy begins to remember small pieces of "who I was" and even asks her mother, "Aren't we part of who we were?" Tulu consistently urges Meridy to "remember." Do you believe we can discard or forget the child or youth we once were? How do you believe your past affects who you are today?

7. Have you ever tried to be perfect for a man or earn his love with a false self? If so, what motivated your desire and how did you alter your behavior? What was the result? Is the desire to be perfect still ingrained in young girls from an early age, or has the pressure let up in recent years?

8. Meridy --- and her mother --- blamed the tragedy that befell Danny partly on Meridy's own youthful exuberance and irresponsibility. Do you agree that it was partly her fault? If you're a mother, what challenges do you face in guiding your teenaged children through this difficult period? What do you think your parents did right or wrong when you were a teen?

9. Tulu implores Meridy to allow the river of life to reach her heart, saying that the place where the river meets the sea is the most turbulent. Do you believe this is true for Meridy? For you? Can one stop life from reaching the heart?

10. Is there a part of your past that you've largely put aside, or buried, because it seems too painful or fruitless to examine? After reading this novel, are you inspired to take a new look at that event?