

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF  
MY SISTER'S KEEPER

Jodi  
Picoult

*a  
novel*

HOLLOW  
BONES

Book Club Kit

# Discussion Questions

1. Molly spends her life anticipating worst-case scenarios. Where is the line between preparedness and fear? Do you think Molly knows when she crosses it?
2. How does losing her biological mother on 9/11 when she was an infant shape Molly differently than losing someone she can remember?
3. The novel asks what risks we take to protect people we love. When does protection become control? Which characters struggle most with that distinction?
4. Can a lie be an act of love? Choose one lie or withheld truth from the novel and argue both sides.
5. Picoult moves between past and present and different understandings of family history. How did learning information at different points affect whom you trusted?
6. Discuss the mothers and daughters in the novel. What makes someone a mother here—biology, sacrifice, caregiving, choice, truth, or something else?
7. Jesse is a police polygraph expert, while Molly's world revolves around predicting danger. Why do you think Picoult paired someone professionally concerned with *truth* with someone professionally concerned with *risk*?
8. What does the novel suggest about our desire to assign blame after tragedy? Does knowing why something happened actually make grief easier?
9. How effectively did the historical backdrop of 9/11 work for you? Did it feel like history, personal memory, inherited trauma—or some combination?
10. Which character did you judge most harshly at first? Did additional information change your judgment?
11. Picoult has said she wanted the novel to examine how people try to keep loved ones safe, including by lying to themselves. Which character is most dishonest with themselves?
12. What can parents reasonably promise their children? Is "I'll keep you safe" a loving promise, an impossible one, or both?
13. If you could ask Molly one question after the final page, what would it be?
14. Jesse Fitzgerald returns from *My Sister's Keeper*, something Picoult has described as a gift for longtime readers. Does knowing Jesse's earlier story change how you interpreted him here? Does *Hollow Bones* change how you see the Fitzgerald family now?
15. What did you learn about postpartum psychosis from this book? Were you familiar with the disorder before this? In what ways does the health care system fail women—and what can be done to change that?

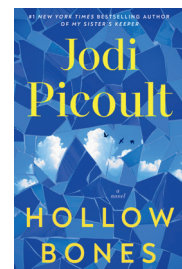
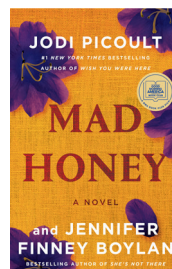
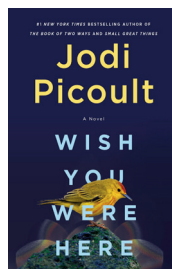
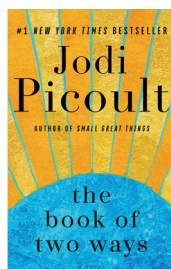
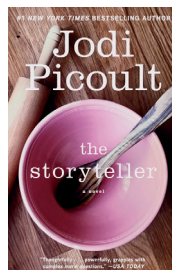
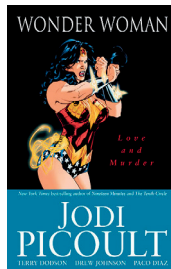
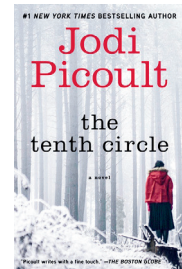
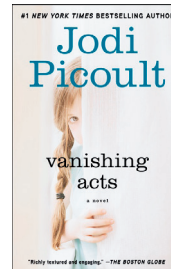
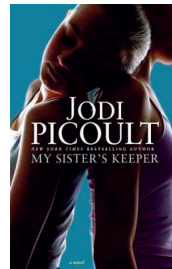
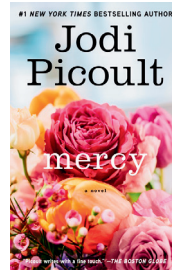
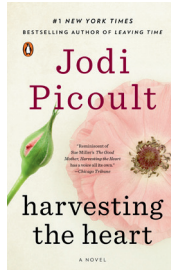
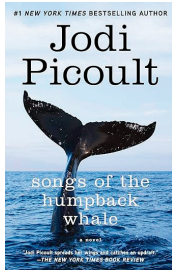
# Playlist

“Jesus, Etc.” by Wilco  
“I Don’t Want to Miss a Thing” by Aerosmith  
“Anniversary” by Suzanne Vega  
“Angel’s Doorway” by Suzanne Vega  
“Superman (It’s Not Easy)” by Five For Fighting  
“Empire State Of Mind” by JAY-Z, Alicia Keys  
“Skylines and Turnstiles” by My Chemical Romance  
“The Rising” by Bruce Springsteen  
“My Last Breath” by Evanescence  
“Illume (9-11)” by Fleetwood Mac  
“I Don’t Know Why” by Amy Grant  
“Covered in Rain - Live” by John Mayer  
“I’ll Be Here” by Audra McDonald  
“Fortnight” (feat. Post Malone) by Taylor Swift, Post Malone  
“World on Fire” by Sarah McLachlan  
“Never Grow Up” by Taylor Swift  
“Rainbow” by Kacey Musgraves  
“Die With A Smile” by Lady Gaga, Bruno Mars  
“If the World Was Ending” (feat. Julia Michaels) by JP Saxe, Julia Michaels  
“Mom” (feat. Kelli Trainor) by Meghan Trainor, Kelli Trainor  
“Slipping Through My Fingers” by ABBA  
“Landslide” by Fleetwood Mac  
“In My Life” - Remastered 2009 by The Beatles  
“Mother and Child Reunion” by Paul Simon  
“The Mother” by Brandi Carlile  
“In My Daughter’s Eyes” by Martina McBride  
“The Best Day (Taylor’s Version)” by Taylor Swift  
“On That Day” by Leonard Cohen  
“Tuesday Morning” by Melissa Etheridge  
“Politik” by Coldplay  
“America” by Imagine Dragons  
“I Can’t See New York (2023 Remaster)” by Tori Amos  
“The Only Hope for Me Is You” by My Chemical Romance

# Checklist

## READ. REFLECT. CONNECT.

How many Jodi Picoult novels have you read?



# Resources

If you need support, reach out to the national mental health hotline: 988. [www.988lifeline.org](http://www.988lifeline.org)

Further Reading: Postpartum Depression & Postpartum Psychosis. The following information comes directly from the Mayo Clinic.

## POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS

Postpartum depression may be mistaken for baby blues at first—but the symptoms are more intense and last longer. These may eventually interfere with your ability to care for your baby and handle other daily tasks. Symptoms usually develop within the first few weeks after giving birth. But they may begin earlier—during pregnancy—or later—up to a year after birth.

### Postpartum depression symptoms may include:

- Depressed mood or severe mood swings
- Crying too much
- Difficulty bonding with your baby
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Loss of appetite or eating much more than usual
- Inability to sleep, called insomnia, or sleeping too much
- Overwhelming tiredness or loss of energy
- Less interest and pleasure in activities you used to enjoy
- Intense irritability and anger
- Fear that you're not a good mother
- Hopelessness
- Feelings of worthlessness, shame, guilt, or inadequacy
- Reduced ability to think clearly, concentrate, or make decisions
- Restlessness
- Severe anxiety and panic attacks
- Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby
- Recurring thoughts of death or suicide

Untreated, postpartum depression may last for many months or longer.

### Postpartum psychosis

With postpartum psychosis—a rare condition that usually develops within the first week after delivery—the symptoms are severe. Symptoms may include:

- Feeling confused and lost
- Having obsessive thoughts about your baby
- Hallucinating and having delusions
- Having sleep problems
- Having too much energy and feeling upset
- Feeling paranoid
- Making attempts to harm yourself or your baby

Postpartum psychosis may lead to life-threatening thoughts or behaviors and requires immediate treatment.

# Resources

## **Postpartum depression in the other parent**

Studies show that new fathers can experience postpartum depression, too. They may feel sad, tired, overwhelmed, anxious, or have changes in their usual eating and sleeping patterns. These are the same symptoms that mothers with postpartum depression experience.

Fathers who are young, have a history of depression, experience relationship problems or are struggling financially are most at risk of postpartum depression. Postpartum depression in fathers – sometimes called paternal postpartum depression – can have the same negative effect on partner relationships and child development as postpartum depression in mothers can.

If you're a partner of a new mother and are having symptoms of depression or anxiety during your partner's pregnancy or after your child's birth, talk to your health care provider. Similar treatments and supports provided to mothers with postpartum depression can help treat postpartum depression in the other parent.

## **When to see a doctor**

If you're feeling depressed after your baby's birth, you may be reluctant or embarrassed to admit it. But if you experience any symptoms of postpartum baby blues or postpartum depression, call your primary health care provider or your obstetrician or gynecologist and schedule an appointment. If you have symptoms that suggest you may have postpartum psychosis, get help immediately.

It's important to call your provider as soon as possible if the symptoms of depression have any of these features:

- Don't fade after two weeks.
- Are getting worse.
- Make it hard for you to care for your baby.
- Make it hard to complete everyday tasks.
- Include thoughts of harming yourself or your baby.

## **If you have suicidal thoughts**

If at any point you have thoughts of harming yourself or your baby, immediately seek help from your partner or loved ones in taking care of your baby. Call 911 or your local emergency assistance number to get help.

## **Also consider these options if you're having suicidal thoughts:**

- Seek help from a health care provider.
- Call a mental health provider.
- Contact a suicide hotline. In the U.S., call or text **988** to reach the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Or use the Lifeline Chat. Services are free and confidential. The Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in the U.S. has a Spanish language phone line at **1-888-628-9454** (toll-free).
- Reach out to a close friend or loved one.
- Contact a minister, spiritual leader, or someone else in your faith community.

## **Helping a friend or loved one**

People with depression may not recognize or admit that they're depressed. They may not be aware of signs and symptoms of depression. If you suspect that a friend or loved one has postpartum depression or is developing postpartum psychosis, help them seek medical attention immediately. Don't wait and hope for improvement.