

A MEMOIR  
OF MOTHERHOOD, HOPE & SERVICE

# Anchor & Flares



Author of the National Bestseller  
HERE IF YOU NEED ME

KATE BRAESTRUP

## ANCHOR AND FLARES – Questions for Discussion

1. Discuss the meaning and significance of the book's title. The Maine Warden Service's handbook for boaters reminds those heading out on the water to keep an anchor and flares aboard at all times. In an emergency, boaters need something to keep them steady and to draw help. How, according to Braestrup, does this wisdom apply in other facets of life?
2. After Zach's birth, Braestrup asked her relatives for pieces of parenting advice that she could use and compile into a parenting manual. If you were asked for a contribution, what would it be? Is there a particular piece of advice—parenting or otherwise—you received that has stuck with you? Have you ever received any truly terrible advice? On page 79, Braestrup recounts an altercation that occurred between her and a teenaged Zach that ended with her lifting him in the air by the collar of his sweatshirt. To this day, Braestrup still cringes at the episode. Do you have any memories of interactions

with your children or parents that you still revisit with horror? What, if anything, did you learn from these moments and the subsequent memories of them?

3. Throughout the book, Braestrup discusses gender and the role it played in both her childhood and those of her children. How do you think her upbringing regarding her gender informed how she decided to raise her own children? Did gender play a big role in your upbringing? Did you raise your children to think about gender the same way you were raised, or did you go about it differently?
4. Discuss Braestrup's thoughts on disciplining children. Do you have a set way you disciplined your children? Were you always able to follow that guideline? What did your style of discipline teach your child?
5. Do you think it is important for children to have both a mother figure and a father figure? Did you have this? If so, were these figures necessarily your parents?
6. How would you react if one of your children decided to join the armed services?
7. Braestrup has four children (and two step-children), and she seems to have raised them all a bit differently. If you have multiple children, did your parenting style change with each child? Were you one of multiple siblings? If so, do you think you were "parented" differently from your siblings?
8. Braestrup struggles with the issue of violence and her desire to raise her children to be nonviolent. Is this something you have thought a lot about? If so, how did you raise your children to be nonviolent?
9. How do you think Braestrup's religious belief has shaped how she views grief and how she grieves? What role does religion play for you in the face of tragedy or despair?
10. Do you think prayer works? Do you think, as Braestrup says, it is useful? What other forces or movements do we turn or use the way some people use prayer? What is the relationship between our culture's idea of prayer and these other things?