

1. *This Close to Okay* alternates between Tallie and Emmett's points of view. How does this narrative choice affect your reading of the story and your understanding of the characters?
2. "She knew healing—*if* and *when* it happened—happened in increments, the same sneaky way the days got longer and shorter. Barely noticeable at times, slow" (page 137). What are some of the pivotal moments in this gradual healing process, for both Tallie and Emmett?
3. After her divorce, Tallie gets into an obsessive cycle of following her ex-husband Joel's new wife on social media: "Tallie learned generic things about her life by snooping around. And obsessing over those things was something that made her feel crazy. Crazier. When it got going, it was a loop she kept looping, a hoop she kept swirling around and around, never stopping" (16). At what other moments do characters get stuck in unhealthy mental loops, and how do they escape them?
4. What are Tallie and Emmett's coping mechanisms for stress, anxiety, and grief? What kind of support systems do they each have in their lives, both before and after the events of the novel? Where do these support systems fall short of their needs?
5. When Tallie says Emmett seems like a kitten, Emmett reflects that, "Remarks like that felt like criticisms coming from women" (29). How do gender norms in our society intersect with mental health? In what ways might this story be different if Emmett were a cisgender woman?
6. The first night Emmett stays with Tallie, he decides he won't return to the bridge right away if the Giants win the World Series. Why do you think he leaves that decision to

chance? Do you ever look for signs from the universe to help you make important choices in your life? Why?

7. One of Tallie's potential new therapy clients is "a black woman who was struggling with the stress of living in America and the long-lasting damaging effects of racism" (111). How does systemic racism play a part in both Emmett and Tallie's lives? What moments can you think of where the threat of racism causes or compounds their stress or anxiety?
8. What are some of the secrets that Tallie and Emmett keep from each other, and why do they do so? Do you think they ever cross a line in keeping these secrets?
9. In his email to Tallie/Emmett, Joel says about his affair: "You may feel like there are parts of me you don't know, yes, but you do know the heart of me. I separated myself...in order to deceive you" (77). In what ways do different characters compartmentalize themselves, and why?
10. Both Tallie and Emmett share intimate personal details with each other that are sometimes considered taboo topics in society; Emmett talks about his depression and suicidal ideation, and Tallie shares her struggles with infertility and her husband's affair. Can you think of any other common struggles that may feel forbidden to discuss openly? Why do you think this is, and how does it affect us both as individuals and as a society?
11. Tallie frequently logs into Joel's Facebook account to get a glimpse into his new life without her, but she tells Emmett that no one should be on Facebook. In what ways can social media both enhance and detract from our mental well-being?
12. Art plays an important role in both Tallie and Emmett's lives, and there are references to specific works in the novel. For instance, Tallie has hung pictures of Courbet's *L'Origine du monde* and Klimt's *Frau bei der Selbstbefriedigung* by her bed, and Emmett

references Francisco Goya's *Saturn Devouring His Son*, Hieronymus Bosch's *Last Judgement*, and Francis Bacon's *Three Studies for a Crucifixion*. What do you think is the significance of including these pieces?

13. When describing Joel, Tallie says he is “the kind of person who thought the Grand Canyon was overrated. (‘I just thought it would be bigger, that's all’)” (81). Can you think of any other instances where a short line conveys a great deal about someone’s character?
14. Although Emmett is innocent of his wife and daughter’s deaths, he is convicted and sent to a maximum-security prison. What factors lead to his wrongful conviction? Why does Emmett have a harder time emotionally after his release?
15. What role does religion play in Tallie and Emmett’s lives?
16. Do you think it’s easier to confide in strangers or friends?
17. In what ways do Emmett and Tallie each find closure over the course of the novel?