

5  
coffees  
and a  
BOOK

for the short story  
"the darkness rolled over her"  
by paul andrew skidmore





# from the author

it's been difficult to talk about low points in my life, even with close friends and family, people who certainly care about me. if you're like me, not having the words, the courage, or the opportunity to talk can be the worst part, making the chasm of darkness grow deeper and deeper. that's why the conversation i had with a friend recently was so surprising.

she had just read my short story, "the darkness rolled over her". as we talked about the book, i noticed she and i both were casually and freely discussing a bit of our own history with depression or anxiety or doubt... all in a public hallway, just within a few minutes' time. it was so easy.

this conversation showed me that discussing the book could be a great way to get others talking with people who will genuinely listen to them in a safe environment. having a bit of training with small groups, i've applied what i've learned there, and put it (with the help of some very caring and talented professionals) into this discussion guide you hold in your hand.

it is just a guide. the real point here is to get you and your friends talking. but i think if you'll use the prompts as a launching point for five great conversations, you'll end up with a lifetime of best friends.

and you'll still deal with some darkness in life. but now, you won't be alone.

i hope this helps you keep movin.

Godspeed,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read "Rose", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

paul andrew skidmore

# instructions

one5 is here to show you how to help. we got you.  
one5 storyclubs are an easy way to talk about hard things.

it's hard to talk about depression, loneliness, thoughts of suicide or self-harm, and other mental health issues. when we don't talk about them, we feel more isolated. which often makes our issues worse.

which makes them harder to talk about. you get it.

we've worked to make storyclubs:

- » simple
- » safe
- » shareable

process:

- » hang out and chat one hour a week for five weeks (one5)

**that's it.**

be a starter and get things movin

all starters do is get everyone together.

participation within the group takes care of the rest. no prep. no homework. you don't even have to vacuum. we won't judge. just be the point of contact and get people together one hour a week for five weeks. this discussion guide will get everyone participating.

**that's it.**

# starting

## reach out to a few friends

*"i read a new book, and i want to talk about it with you! tell me all your thoughts!"*

*"i came across this book, and i think we can help some of our friends. your input is super important to me. would you be willing to meet one hour a week for five weeks to talk about it?"*

*"yo. tuesday. my place. 6. bring donuts."*

not everyone will agree to something for 5 weeks. that's okay! give them the link below to download the FREE ebook anyway, and they might read it on their own. they may be more willing to talk about it after they've read it.

<http://keepmov.in>

you can also invite a larger group to week one, and give people the option of returning for weeks 2-5. how you do it all is up to you. we're just here to get a conversation started. all you gotta do is keep it movin.

## set a time

- » best practice is to establish a time/place and invite people. if they can't make it, maybe include them in your next storyclub.
- » do your best to start on time and finish on time. even if people are late getting there, starting late says to everyone else the real start time is 7:15, instead of 7:00, say. then everyone will start being late. if you tell people it's going to take an hour, then it should be done in an hour. if everyone stays after for 7 hours talking and laughing or dancing, great! but be done with the guided part within an hour of the start time. and people are always pleasantly surprised when you get done early!

group etiquette will be covered in the section on week one. (i know we said no homework, but might be good to read that beforehand.)

that's it.

# week 1

## opening questions 15m

- » first name, school/work, and one thing you're thankful for
- » tell us about one of the following:
  - ◇ best party
  - ◇ best vacation
  - ◇ best meal with someone
- » three words friends or family would use to describe you
- » a favorite book

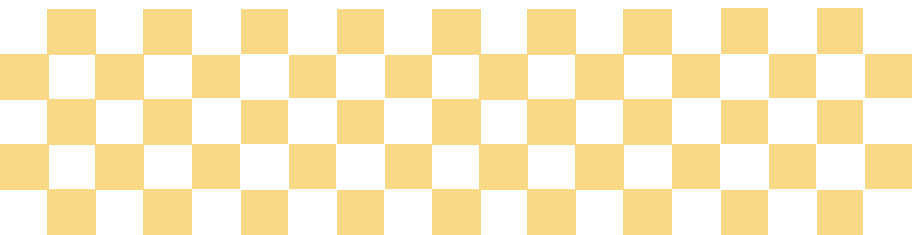
## let's talk about life 30m

- » what did you want to be when you "grew up"?
- » how do you see life 10 years from now?
- » what's something you want to make happen this year?

## one5 guidelines 10m

as a starter encouraging the three "be"s

- » always be listening
- » always be kind
- » always be trustworthy




## always be listening. 3

- » don't be afraid of silence.
- » don't interrupt. no crosstalk while someone else is talking.
- » don't listen to reply; listen to understand.
- » this also means no rescuing. rescuing is when we do something helpful to make someone feel better (like offering a tissue or putting a hand on their shoulder or saying "it's okay"); unfortunately, during group share times, it usually stops something from happening that is very important to the person experiencing it. let them talk. let them finish. after group is over, there's plenty of time for tissues, hugs, encouraging words, high fives, etc. the best thing you can do in the moment, is listen. then tell them "thank you." you'd want them to do it for you.

## always be kind.

- » frame things in the positive rather than as a negative.
- » don't shame or judge others for the way they feel. even if what they feel isn't true, it's real to them.
- » you can't change the past, but you can choose your future. the group isn't here to fix, just provide a way forward.

## always be trustworthy.

- » be honest.
- » follow through with "i will" statements (more on that later)
- » what's said in the group stays in the group.  4

pass out or download the books 5m  
get the ebook for FREE - <http://keepmov.in>

if you want to feel the texture of the paper, the smell of a freshly-printed book, the weight of a paperback in your hand as you curl up at the coffee shop or on the couch, you can purchase them from amazon here -- <http://amazon.com/author/skidmore>

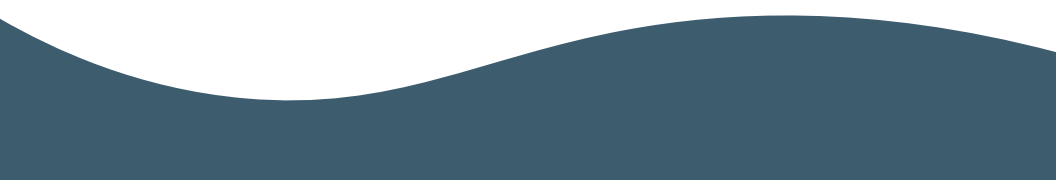
that's it!

# week 2

opening question 5m

- » what's something you're thankful for?

let's talk about life! 10m

- » what was your favorite toy as a child?
  
  - » what are your top 3 go-to apps on your phone?
- 




let's talk about the book! 40m 

» what did you like?

» what did you not like?

» who did you identify with the most?

» what was Guin's problem? **(guided)** 

» did she overcome it? how? **(guided)** 

» what was the story she was telling herself going into the trip? leaving the trip?

» what made the change? **(guided)** 

**that's it!**

# week 3

opening questions 10m

- » what are you thankful for?
- » what's a challenge you have going on this week?

let's talk about life! 15m 

answer one of the following:

- » who's the most encouraging person you know?
- » who's the best teacher you've ever had? (any context: school, church, Scouts, sports, etc.)

## let's talk about Roy! 20m

- » what did Roy do for Guin?

2

### he shared.

- he was bold.
- he was honest.
- he didn't preach.

### he listened to her.

- he stayed silent.
- he believed her.
- he responded.

### he committed to being there.

- he was intentional.
- he was planning.
- he was inviting.

## let's talk about you! 20m

### so who are your Roys?

- » everyone makes a list (set a time for 2 minutes!)
- » everyone shares one (or more, depending on time?)
- » everyone commits to **"i will"s**: writing, texting, emailing a Roy to thank them.

3

that's it!

# week 4

## opening question 5m

- » what's something you're thankful for?
- » did you do your "i will" from last week? how did it go?

## let's talk about life! 15m

- » what songs instantly affect your mood?
- » what lifts you up when you're down?

## optional questions

(you don't have to answer these if you don't want to)


- » what's the strongest you've ever been?
- » what's something you've always wanted to accomplish?

**Guin's journey started to change direction when she shared her story with Sam.**

*why might that be?*

let's talk about us: 5m  1

starter shares  2

- » act one: my life was like this
- » act two: this happened, and i changed
- » act three: now, here's how i keep movin  3

anyone else can share

no one else is obligated to share, but anyone may (using the same act I, II, III structure — was, is, will be). try to keep to 5 minutes or less to give everyone time.

**that's it.**

# week 5

## opening questions 15m

- » what are you thankful for?
- » what's something challenging you have going on this week?

## let's talk about life! 15m

- » what's the most important quality in a friend?
- » what's something you've always wanted to do for someone?

## let's talk about Sam! 20m

how did Guin change by meeting Sam?



1

she found value.  
she found purpose.  
she found connection/relationship.

## let's talk about you 10m

so who are your Sams?

- » everyone makes a list
- » everyone shares a name (just a name, not the story)
- » everyone commits to "i will"s, reaching out to one: coffee, lunch, walk

2

help others #keepmovin

you've seen how easy it is. now find some new buddies and start five coffees with them! the smallest gestures can have the biggest impact! keep movin!

**that's it!**





# Week 1

1

about starter's guiding notes: don't read to the group. this is where the conversation should end up. the idea is to ask questions that will help people realize these ideas, if they don't already. i could have made them more obvious or direct in the book, but then what would you have to talk about?

2

this first hang-out is super casual. just get to know each other a little better. the guide below will help you do that in an hour. watch your time.

3

it's up to you to make sure each person has the opportunity to speak. no one should be forced to speak, but quiet, introverted, or shy folks may need an invitation.

4

this is a MUST if people are going to be open and feel safe. the only time confidentiality may be trumped is if someone is planning to hurt themselves or someone else; if that's the case see appropriate help immediately or help the person get to the help they need.

# Week 2

1

in talking about the book, people will probably talk about some of their own stuff. great! keep bringing it back to the book this week, but don't discourage people from talking about their own journey. that's the whole point of the groups.

2

the book never reveals the specific origin of Guin's darkness. but how we move forward is not necessarily tied into how we got here. everyone has different reasons for their darkness – sometimes it's something that's happened to them, sometimes it's choices they've made, sometimes it's little things, sometimes it's big things, sometimes it's chemical or genetic; usually it's some of all of these. but no matter how we got here, the way forward involves some similar steps for everyone.

3

the way forward involves some similar steps for everyone. some people will need to change habits, some people will need professional help to heal, some people will need medication, but everyone will need to talk, and everyone will need to help someone else keep movin. you only keep what you give away.

4

Roy doesn't directly change Guin's thinking. she leaves the weekend still intending to give up. but when Guin does for Sam what Roy modeled for her, Guin's life suddenly had perceived value. before, Guin perceived no value. but now – even if that value was completely wrapped up in someone else for the time being – it's infinitely more value than zero value, and enough to keep her movin. as she shares with Sam, she will see the value in helping others, and this will help re-write her story and give her a hope and future.

# Week 3

- 1 offer both questions, but have people only answer one (for time's sake)
- 2 start with open discussion, letting anyone answer and respond (dialogue). then offer these to discuss (one at a time)
- 3 have each person actually say out loud: **"i will call Susan"** or **"i will email Mr. Robertson"**. saying it out loud makes clear what the simple goal is for the person doing the "i will".

# Week 4

1

this is a time for sharing, not fixing or rescuing. might be a good thing to mention before you share, so people are on board from the get-go.

use the three-act structure presented to shape your story.

2

it's a good idea to practice it beforehand to make sure it is under 5 minutes (that's not very much time). you may write it down if you need, but it will help others in the group (who are likely not prepared with something written) if you can just speak from your heart. but modeling brevity will set everyone else up for doing the same.

3

if you're nervous, just remember that everyone there is your fan, is on your side, and wants to hear your story. also remember that by opening up (just like Roy does in the book), it models that openness and bravery for the others in the group (just like it did for Guin). if you're nervous, they are too (maybe more so). your sharing breaks down that wall, and will help people to share freely.

you don't have to share anything extremely personal, and avoid sharing things (like names or circumstances) that might violate someone else's confidentiality.

the goal is not to place blame or talk about the causes of your issues. the goal is to be open about the difficulties you have, how you cope with them, and ways you've found to get through those times. it's not about irradicating the source of the darkness. it's about helping those in your group find a path through the darkness into the light.

you're sharing your story, not preaching. so always speak in the first person ("i try to get rest and eat healthy") rather than second person ("you have to get rest and be healthy").

if faith is a part of your story, it's fine and natural to share about your experiences. not everyone in your group will share your worldview, so always make sure you talk about your faith with gentleness and respect.

# Week 5



start with open discussion, letting anyone answer and respond (dialogue). then offer these to discuss (one at a time):



again, have each person clearly state out loud: "i will invite Julie" or "i will ask Greg". then follow up with them in a couple of days to see if they've done it and if they need any help.



# beyond

social media

<http://instagram.com/fivecoffeesandabook>

<http://facebook.com/fivecoffeesandabook>

quicklink to FREE ebook

<http://keepmov.in>

amazon link

<http://amazon.com/author/skidmore>

zazzle link

<https://zazzle.com/store/parabolos/products>



# other stories

**[skidmorep.com/books](http://skidmorep.com/books)**

paul andrew skidmore is a believer, follower, and filmmaker in Tennessee.

he is the author of "kindling", "the darkness rolled over her", "ciao bella", "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen", and other stories.





# skidmorep.com/books

five coffees and a book

handbook design by Emma Jane Goodwyn  
and paul andrew skidmore

Lucy artwork and book cover  
by Jeremie Benzinger

© 2019 parabolos books