

DAD'S GIRLFRIEND *and other* ANXIETIES *Kellye Crocker*



DISCUSSION GUIDE



Since Ava's mom died, Ava has relied on her consistent routines, predictable schedules, and exhaustive risk assessment to keep herself safe from uncertainty. For the most part, her life in small-town Iowa has been stable. That is, until now.

As soon as sixth grade ends, Dad is whisking Ava away to meet his girlfriend and her daughter in terrifying Colorado, where even the ground squirrels can be deadly. Managing her anxiety, avoiding altitude sickness, and surviving the mountains might take all Ava's strength.

Can she stay in control when everything around her is changing so quickly?



Grades 3-7
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"AVA IS THE PERFECT CHARACTER—SWEET AND SMART, FUNNY AND FLAWED. I LOVED THIS SO MUCH THAT I READ IT IN ONE SITTING." —ERIN ENTRADA KELLY, NEWBERY MEDALIST

"IT'S EASY TO ROOT FOR AVA IN ALL HER TRUE-TO-LIFE QUIRKS IN KELLYE CROCKER'S NOVEL ABOUT TRUST, CONNECTIONS, AND CHANGE. REAL, HILARIOUS, THOROUGHLY ENGAGING AND ULTIMATELY SATISFYING" —RITA WILLIAMS-GARCIA, NEWBERY HONOR WINNER



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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION



Dad and Ava disagree about whether he gave her enough notice before their trip. Have you experienced this, where you and someone else see something completely differently? Why does this happen?



Ava is scared to go to Colorado. What would you tell her if you were her friend?



Everyone feels anxious sometimes. It's our body's way of warning us to check on something that is happening, like a smoke detector going off in your house. What do you think is the best way to handle anxiety or worries?



Feelings are a big part of this story. Why is it hard sometimes to tell others how we feel?



Ava and Z are *really* different from each other. Ava also has older friends—Mrs. Mendez at home and her new friend, José. What are the benefits of having friends who are different from us? How can friends celebrate their differences?



Have you ever initially hated something but ended up liking it? What changed your mind?



If you were on vacation with Ava, Dad, Z and Jenn, how do you think you'd react when Ava confesses what she's done?



We all make mistakes. How can we make things right with those we've hurt? How do we forgive ourselves?



Z says being scared is a requirement for being brave. (p. 255) Do you agree or disagree? Why? What are some different ways to be brave? How are you brave?



Ava tells Kylie she's worried she's no longer a good person. (p. 167-168) Is Ava a good person? Why or why not? What about Rodrigo?



Laura Carson Photography

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kellye Crocker's novel was inspired by her surprise move from Iowa to Colorado and her own experience with an anxiety disorder. A longtime journalist, Kellye holds an MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts. She enjoys reading, making art from the recycling bin, and exploring the mountains with her husband and their rambunctious Black Lab, Daisy. Connect with her at kellyecrocker.com or on twitter @kelcrocker.