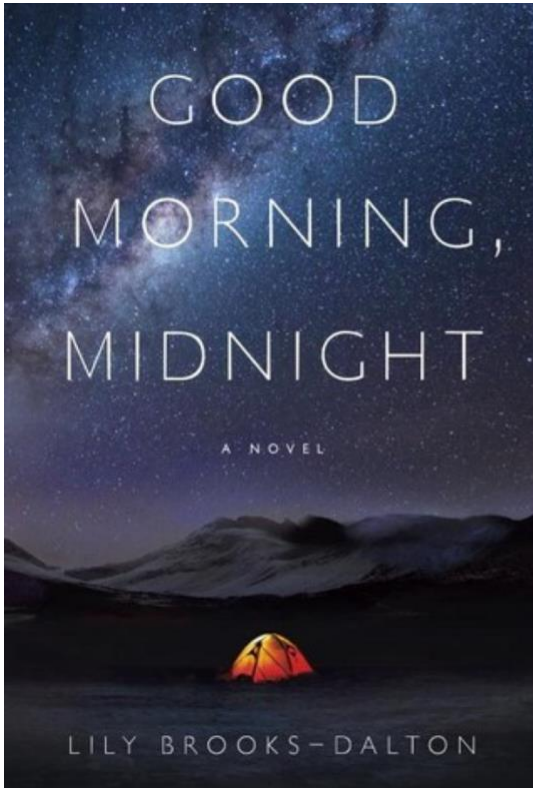# WE² Book Club and Movie Night Discussion Notes – MIDNIGHT

BOOK: "Good Morning, Midnight" by Lily Brooks-Dalton
MOVIE: "The Midnight Sky" on Netflix
VIRTUAL VIEWING PARTY: Wednesday **May 19, 2021 at 7:00pm EDT**
DISCUSSION DATE: **Tuesday May 25, 2021 at 7:00 pm EDT**
https://caes.rutgers.edu/blog-post/midnight-we2-book-club-and-movie-night-discussion-may-2021/

Major Themes and Takeaways from the discussion:

- Embracing the combination and influence of different fields on technology
- Isolation and mental health
- Uncertainty of the Future
- Women in Leadership
- Team Management Strategies when future of project in uncertain
- Work-life balance
- Dealing with things outside of your control

How did the movie and book differ?

- The book had this strong feeling of melancholy, isolation, stagnation and unease in that there was nothing for them to do but wait – harder to deal with depression and these other feelings when they have no clear goal/purpose with the uncertainty of Earth's survival
- The movie did not show this internal plot of the characters as well
- The movie also turned this melancholy book into a story about hope
  - The pregnancy of Sully really had a strong influence on this shift in the overall feel to the story
- To some of us the plot twist seemed a little more obvious in the movie (possibly the nature of the medium) and more artful in the book
- Sully also came off as more of leader in the book and she did things intentionally to try to lift the spirits of her team, trying to keep tabs of their headspace (feeling responsible when her attempts to do so did not prevent tragedy)
- The way one of the main characters dies is quite solemn in the book whereas in the movie there was more drama and exaggeration on the idea that there was nothing she could have done to save herself
  - The book the death was about her depression whereas in the movie it was a fluke accident outside of anyone's control
- Didn't like that she was pregnant in the movie
  - made her and the team felt less professional
  - Also made their message of hope at end kind of depressing
  - Just felt technically wrong
- In the movie we got to see the technology design more – very interesting and fun to watch sci-fi for this reason
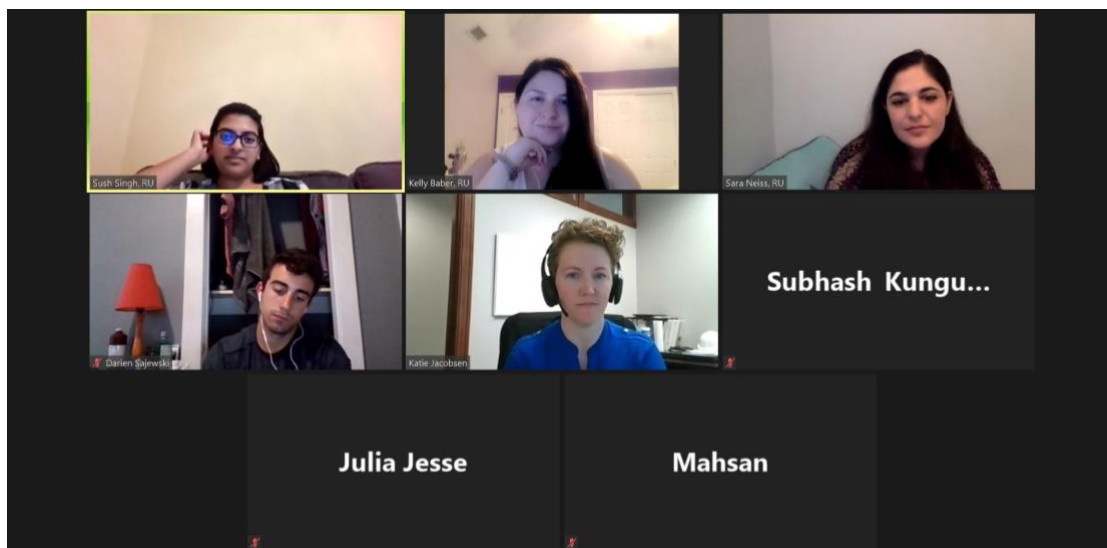
How can you handle your team when there is no clear goal ahead or the future/relevance of the project has become uncertain?

- Asking questions frequently until the goal becomes clearer and more defined
- Setting small short-term goals can be an effective approach to help the larger unclear goal become more digestible and maintain the motivation of the workers

- As the leader you can go to your own boss and work with them to set firmer/clearer team project goals and purposes – in middle management positions sometimes it is part of your job to fight for your team and their needs
- Much more dangerous in higher risk work environments, especially with heavy machinery or close living quarters with co-workers

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH!

"A study of women in engineering at the University of Waterloo has shown that female students tend to have lower overall mental health. Women in STEM fields are more likely to report higher levels of stress and anxiety and higher incidences of depression."

https://theconversation.com/what-fewer-women-in-stem-means-for-their-mental-health-47446#:~:text=A%20study%20of%20women%20in,and%20higher%20incidences%20of%20depression

How do you relate to the feelings in this books as it relates to this last year of COVID, isolation, and uncertainty?

How should leaders approach mental health in the workplace? Should they?
How much is it part of a team leader's job to be keyed into their workers' emotional headspace?
- Although it may not be in their job description, both leader and their workers should check up on each other from time to time to make sure both are in the right headspace
    - Mental wellbeing and a clear headspaces are important for individual productivity and team communication
    - Knowing the needs and energy levels of your team members can be important for how you delegate tasks or decide how often to check in with them so that they can be working at their best
- Self-care is important so reaching out to fellow workers as well as checking in with yourself which is something not only leaders enforce
- In a way it's not their "job" but it is a useful tool in certain more inclusive and modern approaches to leadership
- In many workplaces the boss is responsible for their worker's physical safety but we don't talk enough about how that is tied to mental health and headspace
    - Sometimes in lab safety talks we talk about making sure you are well rested but maybe in more dangerous work environments the conversation should go beyond that
    - In the book Devi's depression may have led to the cause of her death (it is hinted at that the faulty carbon scrubber which caused her death was something she should have caught and either she didn't intentionally or was just not in the right headspace to be at her best)
    - This is something that we should really think about in industrial facilities both as a team leader and just as a fellow teammate

- Common theme here with past WE2 Book Club selections: During the discussions for "Lean In" and "Parable of the Sower" we talked a lot about the concept of **"authentic leadership."**
    - How do leadership styles such as this relate to approaches leadership should take to mental health of their team members and overall social health of the work place?
    - Making sure that the work environment is a safe space so that workers feel as though they can open up their struggles without it negatively impacting anyone
    - Having the leader be open with their workers to enforce that bond so that workers feel comfortable talking to the leader about their mental health

What are some of the extra strains on minorities in the workplace that contribute to greater toll on their mental well-being? Do you as a minority in your field ever feel like it is taxing to change your workplace to become more diverse/inclusive?

Challenge Yourself to Stay Healthy!

Challenge: Make specific plans for self care in the coming weeks.

1. Set aside a few hours for yourself to spend some time on a hobby you love but have been neglecting.
2. Make plans (virtual or in person) with a friend you haven't spent as much time with this past year because of COVID.

Looking for Mental Health Resource?

https://alltogether.swe.org/2020/06/mental-health-women-in-stem/
https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/women-and-mental-health/
https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/
https://www.sfu.ca/wwest/WWEST_blog/the-pressure-of-being-a-woman-in-stem-and-what-it-means-for-ment.html

Universities usually have both online and in person resources for their students and alumni on the subject of mental health. Sometimes companies also have resources for their workers. Make sure you know what resources are already being made available to you.