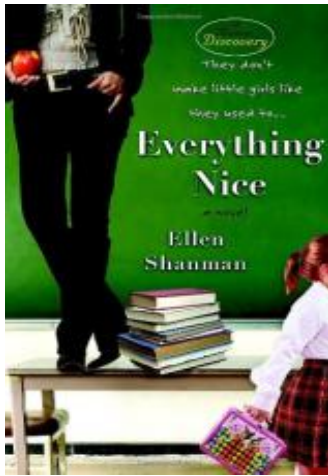


# Everything Nice

by Ellen Shanman

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## About the Book

She's lost her job, her apartment, and her boyfriend (who turned their breakup into a stand-up comedy routine). But Michaela "Mike" Edwards is about to stage a comeback, thanks to a class of wide-eyed young girls who have become her biggest fans. A fresh take, **Everything Nice** is the story of a tough-as-nails woman whose father taught her to steer clear of sugar and spice. Mike thought she was at the top of her game, sprinting up the career ladder at an ad agency without employing a single feminine wile. But guts and savvy weren't enough to save her from office politics. Unemployed and running low on stamina, she finds herself coerced into taking on a daunting new job: teaching Life Skills at a Manhattan charter school. Before long, Mike and the students are giving each other real-world lessons that will change their lives?while Mike's best guy friend, an Aussie journalist, is about to give her a crash course in love.

The questions and discussion topics that follow are intended to enhance your reading of Ellen Shanman's **Everything Nice**. We hope they will enrich your experience of this sexy, wickedly funny novel.

## Discussion Guide

1. What does Mike demonstrate about strong women? Do you think an interest in fashion and grooming makes a woman less strong? Or does female strength mean something else entirely?
2. What healthy traits did Gerry encourage in his daughter? What lessons could only a mother provide? What role models does she eventually have for learning about womanhood?
3. Would Mike's headstrong style have been acceptable in a male employee, or in a boyfriend? Was she subjected to a double standard, or does society expect men to also avoid being too blunt or too assertive?

4. How did your opinion of Jay and his comedy routine shift throughout the novel? Did you sympathize with him?
5. Why does Cheryl take an interest in Mike, challenging her to try yoga and encouraging her to follow the example of runway models? Would you rather have had Cheryl or Gunther as a best friend?
6. What is the effect of the chapter titles, echoing famous slogans? What draws Mike to the advertising world? Why was it easy for her to sell products but difficult to sell herself?
7. What do Mike's students tell us about parenting in the twenty-first century? What is reflected in their varied households, their need for permission slips to prevent lawsuits, and their beliefs about the adult world? How is being a child today different from when you were growing up?
8. Mike is shocked by a course that teaches girls how to crochet and make granola. What is the best way to really empower girls? What did you think of Mike's curriculum? What life skills would you have added to the list? Are certain skills more important for girls than for boys, and vice versa?
9. What is Brian's role in Mike's life? What is the essential problem in his relationship with Mike? What do you predict for the future of Brian's marriage?
10. What traits do Grace and Mike share? Was Grace correct in her assessment of Mike's skills as a teacher? Is there much difference between the skills required to be a teacher and the skills required for marketing?
11. How does Deja change Mike's life? What does she bring out in Gerry that Mike had not noticed before? What is it like for Mike to watch sisters Kimmy and Kristen become part of her family?
12. How was Mike affected by finally visiting Caroline's grave? What missing piece of her life, and her sense of self, was completed in that moment?
13. In the closing scene, Gunther says, "I guess you can only give a guy the flick so many times." What kept Mike and Gunther from becoming more than friends sooner?
14. What hallmarks of Ellen Shanman's storytelling appear in both this novel and in **Right Before Your Eyes**? What would Liza Weiler and Mike Edwards think of each other?

## Author Bio

Ellen Shanman is a graduate of Northwestern University. She lives and writes in Brooklyn, New York.

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