

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When Agents Jon Colbert and Leah Riesel are asked to team up in a high-pressure situation, Leah wonders how well their partnership will work. What preconceptions does she have about him? What does he know about her? When you meet someone new, what might color your impression of that person? What can you do to overcome negative preconceptions?
2. As an FBI sniper, Leah often finds herself in deadly situations: taking the lives of other people before they can do more harm. What makes her pause before she pulls the trigger? Is this approach to law enforcement the best, even only, option at times? Why or why not?
3. Silvia Ortega remains adamant that her son, Dylan, is not responsible for the recent murders in Galveston. Which side did you land on at the beginning of *Fatal Strike*: Dylan's guilt or innocence? What factors do you consider when you hear an eyewitness account like Edgar Whitson's? How much weight do you give possible motives and past behavior?

4. Father Gabriel tells Jon and Leah that he believes in “second, third, and as many chances as it takes to help a person find the way to righteousness.” Is he being too naive, as Jon fears? Where do you fall on the spectrum between the priest’s and the FBI agents’ approaches to handling crime? When is it appropriate to show mercy and grace and when should justice be meted out?
5. Why is Jon reluctant to share certain details of his past with his colleagues at the FBI? How is he coping with the deaths of his friends? What counsel would you give someone dealing with survivor’s guilt?
6. Like Jon, Leah is carrying a heavy burden from her past and has cut off communication with her family and, recently, even one of her good friends. What led to Leah’s decision to sever these ties? What might cause a person to dissociate from their family? What prompts Leah to reach out? What advice or support could you give to help bring about reconciliation (if appropriate)?
7. Police Chief Zachary Everson has a major stake in solving the recent Galveston murders, but Jon fears some of his methods may be problematic. Which of Everson’s actions seem to be motivated by revenge or anger and not a search for truth? How do you respond when you’ve been hurt or wronged?
8. Silvia tries to justify her quest to aid Dylan as just part of what mothers do for their children. But what do the physical clues reveal about how she might really feel? How does a body’s response indicate truth, even when we try to deny it?

9. Leah's fear of snakes reaches a tipping point when one is delivered to her apartment. What are you afraid of? Describe a time when you've faced your fear head-on.
10. Several people in *Fatal Strike* withhold critical information from the FBI, but two who stand out are Rachel Mendez and Ross Kempler. Why do you think they were reluctant to share certain details about Dylan and the judge with Jon and Leah?