

Dear Author,

Before you begin reading, I suggest you write the three most important things you want the reader to take away from the book. This will help you align what you want to achieve (*aim*) with the current draft. For instance:

‘I want people to assert their boundaries in a healthy manner.’

BEGINS

I like the way you begin with a narrative summary. There is a sense of action and a clear protagonist or character. This book is about toxic relationships and what better than to show people who are in such relationships. In fact, the chapter had *many* case studies and that can be seen as a sign of author’s credibility as a therapist. I also found myself caring for some people more than others. For instance, I thought Anoop *needed* to have someone take care of him and the conversation between the Husband and Wife was shocking but also funny. It is great to see you use dialogue as well as summary instead of just one over another. This helps avoid monotony. Well done!

BTW I had no idea there is something called Love bombed. A general web search online educated me that there is a term like that.

However, despite these strengths, I saw what I call pressing concerns in this chapter. Please see below:

- **Emotional impact:** I felt that there were many case studies but few that hit the nail. What do I mean by that? For instance, the wife and husband conversation felt relatable and Anurag’s pain also resonated but in most other case studies, the emotional impact was missing. In simple terms, emotional impact moves the reader even if she or he has not experienced what the character has. This point also connects with target audience, so read on.
- **Dialogue:** Although I said it is great to use dialogue, it would be best to check flat dialogue. In the dialogue in Power Play and Walking on Eggshells, it felt long and redundant. Is it possible to make the point without dialogue or less of it? The length of the dialogue was also a concern in the example in which you were an eyewitness. The most important thing to remember is the dialogue should feel like daily conversations and the way to do is to ensure balance between the dialogue tag and narrative summary.
- **Case study length:** Since the length of each case study varies, you can keep a tab to see the average length and chop accordingly. For instance, I found one to be longer than 1,000 words and another just a para or so. This does not mean that any point longer than the average must be chopped in its entirety. Just keep a tab to ensure that there is no

significant difference.

- **Tone/treatment:** In terms of the tone, the chapter read more like an article than a chapter in a book. I thought over it and felt it could be to do with the fact that the chapter only talks about five red flags. Also, note that readers can read about the red flags mentioned and more, online. In such a scenario, making your content exclusive is even more important and also undeniably difficult. This is why themes are important, discussed below. But do examine if the case studies have any function apart from showing what red flags are. One way to do so is closely read books on the same/similar topic to assess questions such as, how do other authors use case studies, do they have a standalone chapter on red flags, what do they say about it etc.
- **Themes:** Remember our conversation about themes when we met at the office? I felt that there was no significant theme as such. Why is that important? I had mentioned that a theme is like a sutra that brings together other parts of a book. The central takeaways you wrote in the beginning can emerge as themes. Overall, one of the things I think you are suggesting to the reader is that they should assert boundaries in relationships. However, it is too subtle or submerged when in fact, it should be said directly. Keep in mind the theme should connect with why a reader will pick up this book.
- **Interactive:** Notice this chapter had no exercise for the reader that made him act upon the analysis or advice shared. You can take a call on whether all chapters should have exercise or interactive content or only some necessary ones.
- **Intertextuality:** Simply put, it means a reference to one text within another. Notice that there is no intertextuality in the chapter at all. I had mentioned that you should consider using mythology, popular culture and of course, relevant studies on the subject of the book. Of course, this is not to say everything should be used in one chapter but say a toxic relationship from mythology or a film that was a blockbuster can replace one of the case studies.
- **Target audience:** While I still maintain that it is good to have stories of real people, it seemed that most case studies were of young people and professionals. I was waiting to see people who form a diverse set. Apart from friends and heterosexual relationships, examine what other relationships got represented. Were there senior citizens, for instance? Were there relationships that are not conventional but nevertheless toxic? Of course, this will apply through the book, not just on one chapter.

Another point regarding the TG is that I would like to imagine the TG to be a slightly more mature or advanced audience. And the good thing is that there is an evidence of

such complexity in this chapter. Natasha has to make a decision that is not acceptable to society. She knows she risks losing a significant relation from her life and may get isolated for doing so but she knows taking care of herself is more important. In a society like ours, where what others think matters more, here is a person who knows better. Is there a message here? And can that message be conveyed more directly? Example:

'Taking care of my well being does not mean I am selfish'

While this could be one, the point is whatever be the message you want to convey, the reader needs to see the author say it and loud enough. Here I felt that you could have helped the reader interpret the underlying message. Of course, this is not to encourage you to spoon feed.

Overall, the stories of the people are very interesting and it is good to have a reliable way of identifying a toxic relationship. However, I suggest you to examine what else can be done in the chapter. Second, keep a tab on case studies (length, type, representation) throughout the manuscript and try to use them to convey a theme (s). Once you try these, see if there is any difference and accordingly take a call on how you can proceed.

ENDS

