

CHOOSE YOUR SELF

HOW TO EMBRACE
BEING SINGLE,
HEAL CORE WOUNDS, AND
BUILD A LIFE YOU LOVE

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Introduction

“When you say ‘yes’ to others, make sure
you are not saying ‘no’ to yourself.”

—Paulo Coelho

Our never-ending quest for true love in the form of a singular soulmate leaves so many of us lost and disconnected from ourselves. Our efforts to win the affection from some hypothetical special person inevitably distract us from the real work of becoming our own first and ever-present true love. When you can decentralize dating from your life for long enough to put the spotlight on your relationship with yourself, you will be planting seeds of love that will bloom for the rest of your life, regardless of who else comes and goes.

I know, it’s easier said than done. But I’m living proof that this journey is well worth it.

The truth is, *I’m so grateful that the universe wouldn’t let me be impatient in love.*

That every time I eagerly said, “I’m ready,” the response was, “Not yet.”

And every time I said, “This is it, he’s the one,” I was met with, “Not him.”

That despite all of my protests and breakdowns and bargaining, I wasn’t allowed to settle.

Because every “not yet” and “not him” was leading me to something better all along, in a story I could never have imagined writing in my wildest dreams. And after all that time I was looking for someone else to fill the void, I found something even better, something I didn’t even know I was missing: me.

I came to realize that even though I may someday spend decades with someone I deeply love, the truth is that I am only ever forever mine.

And the same is true for you. You are your own person before you are anyone else’s. You will always be yours first.

The Plan

I always had what I thought of as “the Plan.” I was a fairly timid kid who tried to keep my head down and not be noticed too much, but I had big dreams for my life. I was going to go to the best college, start a successful business, do lots of philanthropy work, get married by twenty-four, and start having kids by twenty-five. I wanted to be a cool young mom with an amazing husband, and I also wanted to be a self-made entrepreneur. I demanded perfection of myself in everything I did, so I was going to have it all, and you couldn’t convince me otherwise.

At this point you are probably either nodding along because you can relate and you’re hoping I will tell you how all that is possible, or you are laughing and rolling your eyes because you know how this story plays out.

Here’s how it actually went down: I waded through rocky teen years with plenty of high-functioning anxiety under my belt, went to college and struggled to recover from an eating disorder, started a business that was quickly sidelined by a traumatic car accident, began to experience severe depression and panic attacks, and ended up in a string of terrible relationships

that tanked my self-worth even more. Suddenly I found myself at twenty-five single, childless, building a new career, financially struggling, emotionally overwhelmed, and realizing that I had a whole bunch of trauma to heal. So much for the Plan.

On the one hand, I was finally beginning to understand how misguided my original plan was. I'd wanted children from a young age, partly because that's the prescription we're sold and partly because I was forced to grow up really fast to get my needs met and was basically cosplaying as a little adult from the age of ten on. It made me feel in control to be the "adult," and control was my lifeline. It didn't hit me until well into my twenties that I could pretend to be an adult all I wanted, but there were very real parts of me that were stuck at wounded younger ages. I needed to work on healing my own childhood wounds before being fully responsible for another human life. I was also willing to admit to myself that there was a lot I wanted to explore and accomplish before adding kids into the equation.

On the other hand, I still felt the pressure of those prescribed time lines and was incredibly impatient in my quest to check all the right boxes at precisely the right moment. I was masking feelings of desperate inadequacy under the guise of my desire to find "the One." I became obsessed with the idea of meeting my soulmate and threw myself headfirst into an overhaul of my love life. On the eve of my twenty-fifth birthday, I decided to end an unhealthy situationship that I had been in far too long and resolved to break that cycle for good.

Spoiler alert: I didn't. While I did leave that particular relationship (and proceeded to agonize over it for an embarrassing amount of time), the cycle was certainly not broken. I went on to repeat that pattern a couple more times, because I clearly had not learned my lesson. One of my mentors calls it "doing the research." Our own life experience is the best research for discovering who

we are, what we want, what we don't want, and what our values are. But the key that many people miss is that once you collect the data, you have to actually do something with it—and be willing to pivot if the results aren't what you were looking for.

So many of us end up in a perpetual cycle of trial and error, making the same errors over and over again because we refuse to course correct along the way. And I get it. Sometimes you need to repeat the same mistake a few (dozen) times before you're finally ready to take the lesson and move on.

For ages I focused on getting the wrong guys to choose me rather than doing the inner work of choosing myself first. It took a lot of trial, error, confusion, and forced surrender to finally learn that *I* was the one I'd been looking for all along.

This book is your step-by-step guide to breaking the cycle of giving your power away and to rediscovering the gift of your own presence along the way.

Now, I don't want to kick off our time together by bumming you out. If you have a plan that hasn't been working and you were hoping for advice on how to get the things you want, all hope is not lost. I want you to have what you want. You get to have the most wonderful relationship and all of your other desires as well. But there's a really important pit stop you must make first. I'm going to invite you to be willing to believe that there is an even *better* outcome for you than you had originally planned. A life that's even more aligned and beautiful and love-filled than the best thing you've conjured up in your mind so far. And I'm going to help you get there.

The reason why most women are uncomfortable being single is because we feel like there's somewhere we need to get to. It often feels like being in a relationship is a finish line in a race that we're abruptly going to be eliminated from if we go too slow. (Have you ever seen a first-time marathoner escorted via golf cart

from the race course after ten hours of giving it their absolute best? Even though participating is a massive accomplishment in itself, most people unfortunately see not finishing as some kind of personal failure.) And because of this, so many women rush themselves and choose the next person they see, whether they're a good match or not—and they're often not.

The important truth for you to grasp is that a relationship isn't a finish line. It's not even a milestone. It's a living, breathing organism in the landscape of our lives. Healthy romantic relationships require tending, and nourishment, and fertile soil in which to grow together. It's not just a box you check. At least not if you are the type of person I think you are.

You're someone who can't settle for a basic connection that leaves you wondering if there is something more. Deep down you want someone who engages all of your senses and challenges you while simultaneously making you feel so safe and loved. And like I said, I want that for you too. But in order to get there, we've got to address some important things first. You need to learn why your relationship with yourself is the most important one you will ever have. So that's the new plan. Are you ready?

Becoming Your Own Best Friend

In this book we're going to explore what it takes to become your own best friend and why you would ever want to. When you're young, the idea of being your own best friend probably sounds incredibly lame—as if no one else likes you and so you have to spend all of your time alone. The older you get, the more you (hopefully) realize that becoming your own best friend doesn't equate to social isolation and loneliness, nor does it mean that you're uncool and no one likes you. Instead, you begin to see how cultivating this special relationship with yourself actually

provides a much more solid foundation for the rest of your relationships to flourish and for your life to improve overall.

And personally, I am an advocate for learning this lesson sooner rather than later. As I began to learn many of the principles and practices that I will share with you throughout this book, I noticed an interesting trend. When I'd open up about what I was going through with the older women in my life (moms, aunts, pseudo-big sisters, and mentors), they would all express one common sentiment: "I wish I had learned that lesson earlier on." Some would say things like, "I didn't learn to put myself first until my fifties." Or, "I didn't even know self-love was an option until I turned forty." Or the most common one: "I wish I hadn't wasted so much time caring what other people thought."

Hearing those remarks made it feel abundantly clear that no matter how difficult this path might be, it would pay off. I was determined to continue to learn what self-love was really about. I took their experiences as a cautionary tale: we can either wait until shit really hits the fan in our lives and go decades without being our most authentically expressed selves, or we can do the hard work of figuring out who we are and fully embodying that now. Given the choice, I'd rather use the time I have now to get ahead.

Besides the obvious fact that I was an overachiever and wanted to somehow be ahead of the rest of the class in learning life lessons, I've discovered many other valuable reasons for wanting to become your own best friend sooner rather than later. A few of which include:

- **You are the only one there from start to finish.** Yes, we're surrounded by people when we come into the world (or at the very least the one person who birthed you). And maybe you'll be blessed to be surrounded by people who love you when you leave it. But the reality is, we are the one and only constant throughout our

entire lives. We are the only one who is present from start to finish and every single moment in between. And that's what really matters here: all of those little in-between moments. Not just the big celebrations and heavy traumas, but the small, seemingly inconsequential moments when we're just brushing our teeth, reading a book, or sitting by ourselves. If you are the only one who is guaranteed to be there for all of it, then it stands to reason that you may want to enjoy the person you'll be spending so much time around. Which brings me to my next point . . .

- **You will never be bored.** Do you remember those moments growing up when all of your friends were busy and it felt like there was absolutely nothing to do (especially if you grew up pre-social media)? You could be sitting at home by yourself doing absolutely nothing and feeling bored out of your mind, but if you were sitting with your best friend doing absolutely nothing, you might feel completely content. So it stands to reason that if you become your own best friend, then it's literally impossible for you to be bored—you are always in the company of someone you love! Anything you do will feel meaningful, whether it's going on an exciting solo adventure or lying on your floor and contemplating life while listening to your favorite artist on vinyl. This was one of the biggest shifts that surprised me on this journey. I'd hear friends exclaim how they could never travel alone or go to a restaurant alone. They'd complain that they hated not having plans because they didn't like feeling lonely and bored. I grew amazed at how much I actually loved doing

things by myself, and any fears of loneliness quickly began to fade. I came to realize that being alone was a powerful opportunity to get to know myself on a deeper level, and I saw just as much value in that as I did in the opportunity to get to know someone else. So just know that a happy side effect of this process is the eradication of boredom from your life forever.

- **Your relationships become so much healthier.** Loving yourself often improves your ability to love others. When you have a better understanding of who you are, what you value, and what makes you tick, you can show up for your relationships (family, friends, and partners) in a healthier way. This is partly because you will have a newfound ability to communicate your feelings, needs, and desires to the people around you more effectively. (Don't underestimate how incredibly life-changing this skill is. We'll dive deeper in a later chapter.) But it's also because befriending all the parts of yourself, the good ones and the parts you may feel are bad, gives you a greater capacity for compassion. Understanding yourself helps you understand that everyone around you has a story and parts of themselves they may not feel proud of. We're just each at different points in our journey. Compassion and communication are two of the best relationship deepeners that I know of.
- **You'll stop settling for less than you deserve.** Becoming your own best friend is the shortcut to finally being able to cut unhealthy relationship patterns from your life. Because when you know that you are comfortable being alone, you're not reliant on anyone else to make you feel worthy or lovable.

And when you're not seeking that external validation, you are much less likely to settle for people who offer less than you deserve or desire. You become so much more comfortable being single and waiting for the right partner, which allows you to raise your bar as high as you want it to be. (We'll explore how to set standards, boundaries, and deal-breakers in chapters 20 and 21.) Plus the more you learn to love yourself, the more you realize what you bring to the table and how valuable your presence can be in someone's life.

- **You'll heal things you never knew you were holding onto.** You know how the longer you know someone, the more you uncover about them? Most people don't show all their cards up front. It takes time to peel back the layers of who someone is, where they hide their pain, and what makes them feel seen and loved. The same is true for you. When you really commit to showing up and getting to know yourself, it takes time to peel back your layers. You'll most likely discover things about yourself that you had no idea were impacting you. This process can certainly be emotional, but mostly it's liberating. Becoming your own best friend is like finally discovering the correct owner's manual after decades of trying to navigate life without one. Suddenly things will start to make a lot more sense. Everything will begin to feel a little easier and a lot lighter as you let go of things you no longer need.

Not to mention the fact that choosing yourself is quite possibly the most empowering feeling you will ever experience. And I really want that for you. Like, *really*. So think of this book as a

companion guide to getting to know and love yourself. Because just as in any relationship, it's going to take work. You don't just create a best friendship or amazing love story overnight. It takes time to build trust, intimacy, connection, and love. And most of us weren't given a handbook on how to do those things growing up, so they might not feel natural, innate, or intuitive at first. Give yourself the gift of showing up for yourself anyway. And know I'll be here to guide you along the way.

If I had to distill the process of becoming your own best friend down into a few bullet points, it would be these:

- When you are going through something difficult, soothe and nurture yourself as you would a really close friend who needs your help.
- When you've accomplished something, celebrate yourself as you would a really close friend whom you're so freaking proud of.
- When you're feeling big feelings, ask good questions and hold space as you would for a really close friend who needs to feel less alone.
- And when you're feeling lost and unsure of where to go next, encourage yourself as you would that really close friend.

Essentially, learn to treat yourself like someone you really love and care about. That's the basic idea. The reality is a little more complex, because we often have lots of baggage that we've been carrying in our relationship with ourselves, and we have to sort that out before that healthy and loving connection is possible. You've gotta dredge up some things from the past to clear up

misunderstandings and make way for a new way of relating to yourself. My invitation for you as you are doing this work is to be as patient and compassionate toward yourself as possible. There may very well be moments of frustration, annoyance, and big feelings. That's okay—let them be there. Trust the process of coming home to yourself.

Getting to the Good Stuff

For so many single people, life can feel like it's on hold. Celebrations and recognition often seem to be reserved for when you're engaged, getting married, or having a baby. Making big life decisions, like moving to a new location or buying a house, can feel much more difficult on a single income. It's no wonder so many single people feel less than. But I'm here to make sure you know you are more than enough right here and now and that your life isn't on hold until you meet a partner.

As a holistic therapist and coach who specializes in attachment trauma, I've heard just about every limiting belief and core wound in the book. Honestly, I pursued this line of work because I needed it so badly for myself. As you'll learn in this book, I kept finding myself in frustrating patterns that talk therapy wasn't helping me get out of. So I began to learn about alternative modalities and finally started to see some progress. Over the years I've been trained and certified in many modalities, including dialectical behavioral therapy, clinical hypnotherapy, Integrative Somatic Trauma Therapy, emotional life coaching, breath work, meditation, Reiki, energy healing, and yoga. I see the most progress when we take a whole-person approach and work with the mind, body, heart, and spirit all together.

I've been doing this work for ten years now and have witnessed so many beautiful transformations in that time. In full transparency, many of my clients are women who come to me in