

BY THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING
AUTHOR OF *THE SURRENDERED WIFE*

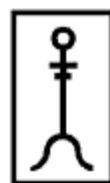
The Surrendered Single

A PRACTICAL
GUIDE TO ATTRACTING
AND MARRYING THE MAN
WHO'S RIGHT FOR YOU



"Practical ideas for strong and independent
women to find love." —JOHN GRAY, PH.D., AUTHOR OF
MEN ARE FROM MARS, WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS

Laura Doyle



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INTRODUCTION: THE WAY YOU ALWAYS WANTED THINGS TO HAPPEN



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*W*hat is a Surrendered Single? And just what is she surrendering—and to whom?

A Surrendered Single recognizes that if she wants to attract the man with whom she can develop intimacy, she cannot control relationships. She cannot determine *who* asks her out, *how* he'll do it, *when* he'll call or e-mail, or if he'll commit to her. A Surrendered Single may have unwittingly been trying to control, manipulate, and force relationships previously, but no more.

She doesn't hunt for Mr. Right—she attracts him.

She's purposely quiet on first dates so she can learn more about him and stay with her own feelings and intuition about what he reveals.

She relinquishes her checklist of qualities she thinks she re-

quires in a man. Then she acknowledges that she can be blissfully happy with an imperfect man and that she will definitely be lonely without one.

Surrendering is about following some basic principles that will help you change your habits and attitudes about dating. It is terrifying, because at times you will feel vulnerable. But the results are grand: Your fears will melt. You will discover amazing, available men. You will feel adored. You'll stop going it alone.

You will find intimacy with a good man.

SURRENDER CONTROL, FIND YOUR FAITH



There's a constant in romance: You can't control when, where, or how you fall in love. You can't even control with *whom* you fall in love. The chemistry and mystery of love are unpredictable.

Every story of how couples first met includes the element of a pleasant surprise. They didn't expect to meet their mates then or there. Not on a Wednesday. Not at the paint store. Not over nachos or during the seventh-inning stretch at a baseball game.

Marla didn't intend to fall in love with her friend's coworker, but now they're happily married with a baby. Had Jessica known she would meet her future husband at the gym one day, she probably would have put on lipstick before she left the house. Sarah didn't anticipate meeting anybody at all for a while after breaking off an engagement, but mutual friends of the man she would later marry introduced them.

These women did not expect to find their soul mates when or how they did. Whether they knew it or not, however, they did have faith that somewhere in the universe was a man who was right for

them. They simply had to be open to the possibility of encountering him.

That's all faith is—being open to the possibilities.

Maybe you think that's great for other women, but you don't believe that faith—which may seem maddeningly elusive—is going to win you a great romance.

Think again.

Having faith means you can let life surprise you. That doesn't mean that we are powerless, only that we embrace the unknown and stop being afraid of uncertainty.

It means liking the idea that the man of your dreams may look and sound nothing like the one you had imagined. Faith means that you keep your door open to dating, no matter how discouraged and frustrated you are, because you believe that ultimately the man who's right for you will walk through it.

For those of us who would like to have control over every aspect of our lives, this is hard to swallow. The unknown is disconcerting. Trekking forward willingly requires faith.

Part of what keeps you single is lack of faith. The other part is fear of the unknown.

WHO'S AFRAID OF DATING?



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Every strong single woman I know rolls her eyes when I suggest that lack of faith and fear are what keep her alone. She doesn't think of herself as scared. After all, she's built a career and a terrific circle of friends, stood up to dozens of men, and perhaps even raised a child alone. She is capable and hearty. What's more, she's through with "having faith" because it hasn't done a thing for her (or so she thinks). In fact, the very word is disconcerting to her. Truth is, her faith is as out of shape as her first little black dress and as worn as the fabulous heels she bought to go with it.

This is understandable. When we believe that something will happen but have no control over whether it does, the possibility of disappointment looms. What could be more disappointing than believing he's out there but never finding him? We'd be faced with thinking that there's something wrong with *us*.

To protect herself, the single woman does a funny little sidestep. She goes into the world with good intentions to find someone who has all the characteristics she wants in a partner. She makes a list of these characteristics by starting with what she knows will meet her parents' approval and what her friends will like. Unfortunately, her list is now both restrictive and irrelevant, since it has nothing to do with her own desires.

Each potential suitor is measured against his ability to fit into her complicated jigsaw puzzle of the perfect guy.

wives craving intimate marriages: surrender and find the romance and emotional connection. I started a Surrendered Singles workshop in my living room to help women apply the principles of surrendering to attracting the right man. (You can learn more about workshops in your area by calling 1-800-466-2028 or visiting www.surrenderedsingle.com.) Surrendering is a powerful way to foster intimacy, and I watched thousands of women heal their marriages by relinquishing control of others.

I could see that the competent professional women who came to my house on Tuesday nights were afraid. "I'd rather have two broken arms and two broken legs than have a broken heart again," one woman said. I saw that they had been trying to manage their fear by staying in control. They tried to control who approached them. They tried to control how their dates behaved. They tried to prevent heartbreak by looking for and finding some insurmountable obstacle to compatibility with perfectly good men. They even tried to deny that they wanted to be in relationships in the first place.

They did all of this because they felt vulnerable.

MY FAVORITE DEFENSE



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*B*y definition, vulnerability makes you feel exposed, and therefore afraid. I understand this particularly well because I, too, was once terrified of vulnerability. My favorite antidote to it was

control. I felt safer if I thought I could manipulate the outcome of every situation.

Women who try to protect themselves with control have suffered disappointments in the past. Maybe you've been through a tragic divorce or watched your parents split. Perhaps it was something less dramatic, but also painful, like having your first love break up with you for another girl. Such hurt prompts women to erroneously believe that we can prevent all future heartache if we manage everything properly.

Of course, it isn't so. First, the only thing that you will get from trying to manage the people around you is the guarantee that you will never find intimacy. Second, there are no guarantees against heartache. However, surrendering makes heartache much less likely. In chapter 21 I show you why this is so.

I almost ruined my marriage by "helping" my husband decide when to take a nap, how to get a bargain in Mexico, and which guitar amplifier to buy. Behind this control was fear: that he would be tired and cranky, pay too much money, or buy an amplifier that cluttered our house. The threat of almost losing a relationship that had once made me so happy propelled me to learn how to surrender—to accept that I couldn't change anyone but myself, and that trying to change my husband was not only wasting my time but also killing my marriage.

I also discovered that when I changed myself by becoming more vulnerable, my husband responded to me differently.

Vulnerability makes us approachable and attractive, because it's a gift to the person we're with. It's an unspoken compliment that says, "I trust you to be gentle when I put down my armor. I feel safe with you." When someone gives me such a gift, my instinct is to be tender so as to reassure her that I understand the honor. Vulnerability will draw me to someone in a way that appearing invincible never could. That's because I identify with the humanity and au-

thenticity. To appear perfect is to keep up your defenses, which means others can't see and love the real you.

Once you have someone's empathy, there's only one way for them to respond: with compassion.

When we surrender control of who pursues us and how he does it, we clear the way for the relationship we always wanted.

THE POWER OF A WOMAN



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*W*omen often protect themselves from disappointment and vulnerability by flaunting their independence. How many times have you thought, *I don't need anybody to take care of me* or *I can handle this*? Strength is attractive, but hard-nosed independence sends a “get away” message.

This masculine persona can be effective—and appropriate—in a work environment, where forcefulness and toughness get the job done.

But you have another side to you—the feminine side—that's soft, tender, vulnerable, and receptive. That part of you wants to be taken out to dinner, walked home, asked about, thought of, caressed, and just plain taken care of. It's the part of you that relishes feeling protected and cherished. These are undeniable feminine qualities. Since femininity is what men are fundamentally drawn to,

those are the qualities that will attract a man who's right for you. Surrendering means acknowledging that you are a woman, with a feminine mind, body, and spirit.

Taking a feminine approach to dating means that when you leave the workplace (or even when you're interacting on a social level in the workplace), you turn off your ambition and your bossiness, and you relax into your feminine grace. You have the power to magnetize men with your manner, your scent, your body, and your voice. These will serve you far better in the dating arena than a know-it-all attitude or toughness.

Revealing your feminine qualities allows a man to show his strengths, too. For instance, when you let him treat you, you give him the opportunity to demonstrate his generosity and ability to please you. This makes him feel proud and happy to be with you. If you dismiss his offers in the name of self-sufficiency, you reject *him*. If you try to one-up him or even the score, you're competing with him as if you were one of the guys, instead of luxuriating in the adoration and affection he offers because you are a woman. Now because he feels superfluous, he wonders why he should bother trying to do anything for you.

Pleasing a woman makes a man feel more masculine and good about himself. Men want to see your soft side so they can show their strength. By being feminine, we allow our man's masculinity to shine.

Men and women really are infinitely different, and you'll enjoy the foil of his masculinity to your femininity if you surrender to both.

James Thurber wrote, "I love the idea of there being two sexes, don't you?"

“SURRENDER” REALLY IS THE RIGHT WORD



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*T*he word *surrender* frightens some because it calls to mind losing a battle or spinelessness. But in interpersonal relationships, surrendering is simply acknowledging that sometimes the only thing I can change is *my* attitude, and that doing so has a profound effect on everything else. Making “surrender” your mantra is much shorter and to the point than saying to yourself, “Stop trying to dictate who comes into your life and what he’ll be like and when he will call.”

The basic principles of a Surrendered Single are that she:

- acknowledges her desire to attract and marry a man who’s right for her;
- lets go of the idea of a perfect man;
- receives compliments, gifts, help, and dates graciously whenever possible;
- takes responsibility for and focuses on her own happiness and fulfillment;
- relinquishes control of the pace of the courtship;
- strives to be vulnerable;
- honors her desire to be married by ending dead-end relationships;

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QUIZ SCORING:

ARE YOU ATTRACTING THE MAN WHO'S RIGHT FOR YOU?

TO TOTAL YOUR SCORE, GIVE YOURSELF:

- *5 points for each "rarely"*
- *3 points for each "sometimes"*
- *1 point for each "frequently"*

- *Add all three columns together for a final score (somewhere between 20 and 100).*

40 OR LESS: YOU'RE STANDING IN YOUR OWN WAY

You want to meet the man who's right for you, but you're unwittingly fending him off because you fear disappointment. You deserve to have a man who adores you and wants to make you happy, so help him get close to you by receiving graciously, making yourself available, practicing better self-care, and getting rid of the ex-boyfriends who are still cluttering up your dating space. Yes, you've had a broken heart or two, but you can leave your ivory tower and still protect yourself. You'll never get the relationship you crave any other way.

41 TO 65: ARE YOU COMFORTABLE ON THAT FENCE?

You don't like to feel vulnerable, but you're not completely zipped up in armor, either. If you're unattached, men notice you and flirt with you, and that's when you really get nervous. Either the man who's right for you will need a good pair of running shoes or you could practice standing still. Consider accepting dates liberally and think of them as practice for the dating season.

If you're in a relationship, you may be sending out mixed messages that make him wonder if you'll stick around. Make a point to receive gifts and compliments graciously, express your desires, and listen to your intuition. Relax when you're tempted to take charge, and you'll stay out of trouble. Surrendering really will help you find the relationship you always dreamed you would have.

66 OR ABOVE: IT WON'T BE LONG

You have an attractive, feminine style that men recognize and respond to immediately. Either you're already in a relationship with a great guy, or you'll meet him by the time you finish reading this paragraph. You're willing to risk your heart, but you're putting the odds in your favor by setting your limits and letting him take the lead. There's nothing to stop you from having a passionate, intimate romance.

SURRENDERING CHANGES YOU LITTLE BY LITTLE



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No trumpets sound on the day you surrender. In fact, it doesn't happen on a single day, but over time.

When Fiona first came to a Surrendered Singles group, she wasn't convinced that control was her issue. "I just haven't met the right guy yet," she said. "I think it's because Southern California is just so superficial." Still, she agreed to try a couple Surrendered techniques like smiling at everyone she saw and being open to accepting dates because, she admitted, doing things her way had left her feeling alone, tired, and defensive.

She also told us about a flirtation at work. "He's really attractive, but not a possibility because he's too young and he smokes." Yet Fiona agreed that the flirtation made her feel feminine and tingly, so she decided to continue without trying to force anything. In the meantime, she announced to friends that she was available for blind dates and joined an Internet dating service. Before long she went from not dating at all to dating once or twice a week.

"I'm surprised to find that I'm enjoying it," she remarked. "I thought it was so much work, but when I focus on receiving and don't try to control anything, it's more relaxing and enjoyable. I still get nervous and scared, but I'm also excited."

On one date, Fiona felt herself wanting to reach for the bill so he wouldn't think she was cheap, but she resisted. Her date seemed happy to pay for both of them, and for the first time Fiona realized

not only that she could receive graciously, but that she liked being treated!

She survived that experience, so she decided to experiment with surrendering control of the conversation by being quiet so she could listen to her own heart—and her date's—rather than trying to perform by thinking of something clever to say next. Instead of one lull after another, she found her dates were happy to entertain her and lead the conversation.

Meanwhile, she learned about herself and about them.

Fiona found the courage to override her cynicism and let the men who wanted to woo her have a chance. (Granted, it wasn't easy.) She reminded herself that she wanted an intimate relationship more than she wanted to assuage her fear by staying in control.

Slowly but surely, Fiona was changing. She looked softer and more attractive. She felt more feminine and more open. "I was single before because I was afraid of the alternative," she admitted, "not because I hadn't met the right guy."

Ultimately, there was no reason to complain about the lack of available men. They were everywhere.

Not coincidentally, Scott—the younger man at work—asked flirtatious Fiona out on a date. Perhaps he noticed she was less guarded or that she seemed more confident in the wake of so many men pursuing her. In any case, she was surrendering to the idea that she couldn't possibly know if she would like someone unless she went out with him, so she said yes.

By now, Fiona knew better than to suggest a place and time to meet or do the back-and-forthing that would make their schedules mesh.

She didn't try to keep him interested with sex.

She didn't try to find out if he was interested in a commitment or just a summer romance.

Fiona stayed in the moment. He pursued her with home-cooked meals, adventurous dates, and experiments in what would please

her. Scott arranged their dates and paid for them. Fiona enjoyed herself and accepted a second date, then a third.

How normal. What bliss.

Other offers for dates were still coming in, and although Fiona was mostly interested in Scott, she accepted them to keep her options open, knowing that she couldn't predict whether Scott would decide to take things to the next level. "I would fret because he didn't e-mail me for one day, but I sat on my hands and didn't try to draw out a message by sending him one first. I didn't want to cheat myself out of being pursued, so I just waited to receive what he had to offer. For me, being the aggressor was about controlling so that I wouldn't feel vulnerable, but I don't need to do that anymore."

After only three months of surrendering and a few weeks of dating, Scott told Fiona that he wanted to see only her. Thrilled, Fiona agreed that she didn't want to see anyone else either.

Each of the small steps that Fiona took eventually brought her to where she always wanted to be: with a wonderful man who adored her.

WILL READING THIS BOOK MAKE ME SEEM DESPERATE?



There's nothing more humiliating for a single woman than feeling desperate—or imagining that other people see her that way.

Reading this book is not going to make you seem anxious, needy, or quick to take the first man who comes along. When you start dating, you *will* feel transparent, as if everyone around you can see your insecurities and is judging you for them. That's simply part of the vulnerability of dating. In reality, however, people aren't really paying attention to your insecurities; they're not thinking

Think of your mentor as someone who can help you make difficult decisions, calm your fears, and reflect back to you what she hears in your own heart. Call her whenever you're feeling uncertain, obsessed, terrified, nervous, or curious about something related to dating.

KEEP YOUR EYES ON YOUR OWN PAPER



*W*hen you're craving an intimate relationship, it's tempting to focus on someone outside of yourself. Does he like me? Will he ask me out? Was he flirting? Does he love me? Will we get married? The more important questions to ask yourself, however, are: Do I like him? Would I go out with him? Do I want to flirt? Do I love him? Would I marry him?

Like children who look at their classmates' papers to see who's coloring in the lines, we sometimes look to a man expecting to find information that will help us make decisions about our own lives. When it comes to matters of the heart, though, the most valuable information will come from inside you.

SURRENDERING BRINGS OUT YOUR BEST SELF



*S*urrendering isn't about being so desperate you'll go out with just anyone. It will not make you into a Scarlett O'Hara or Barbie.

It certainly won't make you a milquetoast.

Rather, a Surrendered Single takes the focus off things outside of her and looks inward. She honors her desire to have a romantic

partner by finding the courage to risk her heart, but no more than necessary. In doing so, she builds on her best qualities and gains confidence and virtue.

She strives for balance between work and play, finding satisfaction in her career, pursuing hobbies, and enjoying friendships. Those efforts bring her contentment, which in turn makes her more attractive and inviting to the right man.

She becomes the best version of herself.

SURRENDER
TO BE

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YOUR DESIRE
MARRIED

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Dishonoring your desire to get married is a way of protecting yourself from disappointment and trying to avoid becoming dependent.

If you've been denying—on any level—that you want to get married, it's time to stop living in fear and start acknowledging your true desires, both to yourself and to others. Following your natural longings is nothing to be embarrassed about, and denying them can keep even a smart, independent woman from getting what she wants most.

Tell your friends and family. Say, "I want to get married to a great guy someday," or "I'm looking forward to sharing my life with someone." If you can't say it to anyone else yet, at least say it to yourself.

Denying what you want is a way of controlling your desires so that you can ward off the fear, disappointment, and humiliation. Ultimately, however, such denial and control will stand between you and finding the love you crave.

Surrender to your desire to be married and you give that desire the chance to become a reality.

WHO NEEDS A HUSBAND?



That was the question *Time* magazine posed on a cover a few years ago. “More women are saying no to marriage and embracing the single life,” the cover line read. “Are they happy?”

Some women are comfortable living solo and don’t want to get married. However, if you’re not one of them, pretending that you are will ultimately render you heartbroken and unhappy.

When I was dating, I told myself that I didn’t *want* to get married. The dialogue between me and myself was an elaborate way of avoiding my fear of divorce. Yet my loneliness and desire for a partner were acute. I wasn’t so much “embracing the single life” as I was trying to avoid future pain.

My situation was not unusual. Phrases like “embracing the single life” are very often shorthand for “avoiding the risk of a disappointment.” Sometimes the women in my workshops will say, “I’m pretty happy being single. I’m not lonely or anything.” But if that were true, why would they take my workshop?

Sure, it feels less vulnerable to say that you’re completely content being single. You may think the take-charge thing to do when you haven’t met the right man is to act like you’re not interested in men because you’re so fulfilled in your career or busy with ski trips and school.

Admitting there’s a hole in your heart exposes you. We all want to be perceived as independent and strong. When we admit loneliness, we fear that people will think we’re less self-sufficient—or, even worse, that they’ll feel sorry for us.

LYING TO YOURSELF IS A FORM OF CONTROL



*N*ot taking that risk is a way of trying to stay in control. Ironically, denying what you really want so you can avoid possible hurt puts you even further away from getting what you want and more in the face of the pain.

Admitting that I craved a wonderful man and surrendering to that desire put me at risk of heartbreak. It was also the critical first step of embarking on what has turned out to be a remarkable love story that has lasted more than twelve years and seems very likely to last a lifetime.

LET PEOPLE WHO LOVE YOU HELP YOU LOOK



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I'm not suggesting that you put your life on hold until you meet someone or that you announce your matrimonial ambitions on a first date. In fact, doing so is yet another form of control. What I'm adamant about is that you tell yourself the truth: You desire someone who will treasure, love, protect, admire, and adore you.

If you're nervous about telling yourself the truth, perhaps you subscribe to one of the following myths:

ROMANTIC LOVE IS YOUR BIRTHRIGHT



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Some of us were told growing up that we shouldn't wait for Prince Charming and that we should be self-sufficient. You may have seen the bumper sticker that reads A WOMAN NEEDS A MAN LIKE A FISH NEEDS A BICYCLE. Maybe you've felt pressure to "embrace the single life" when really you just wish you could be happily married.

If you've been open about your desire to find the man who's right for you, maybe people have discouraged you by saying, "It never happens when you're looking for it," or "Don't want it so much." They may have meant well, but not only are they maddening to the single woman who is honest about what she wants, they're also confusing desire with desperation.

Saying that you don't want what you want is not helpful.

Your prince may not ride up on a white horse, but it's not too much to ask to spend your life with someone attractive who makes you feel like a princess. Being loved by a man is your birthright as a woman. Mating is one of the oldest, ingrained human instincts. While self-sufficiency is admirable, it doesn't fulfill your need to be held and touched, to be intimate with a man. Acting as though you don't crave a leading man in your life doesn't make it so, but it does contribute to keeping you single.

THE LOOK OF LOVE IS CONGRUENT



Once you've acknowledged that you want to be married, you'll change inside. You'll feel more relaxed, because your thoughts and your feelings will be aligned. You'll feel the relief that comes with baring a secret that's been eating at you.

Consequently, you'll change on the outside, too. When you're in denial about wanting to be married, it shows on your face—in the way you wrinkle your forehead or shift your eyes when someone looks directly into them. It's in the way you walk and hunch your shoulders. Your defenses show like a coat of armor.

When you surrender to the desire to be married—when you embrace it—your countenance and body will change. Your eyes won't dart. Instead, you will see possibilities, and you will smile with your eyes. Your body language will be different. Instead of wearing “I don't need a man” body armor, you'll signal “I'm available to the right guy.”

If you've ever seen someone smile when they're angry, you know how strange someone looks when they're incongruent. They send mixed signals that make them hard to read and uncomfortable to be around. The only way to be congruent is to honor and to express your feelings instead of trying to dismiss them. As soon as you do, everyone else will unconsciously pick up on that. That gives potential suitors the encouragement they need to approach you or invite you to spend time with them. A man you will absolutely love is much more likely to spot you if he sees that you're available.

And once he spots you, there's a very good chance that you'll never even think of embracing the single life again.

GIVI OF TH



DEA F MAN

Do you size up every man you meet against a mental checklist? Do you have requirements regarding age, education, income, previous marital status, background?

It's time to surrender your checklist and accept an imperfect man.

You can be blissfully happy with an imperfect man. You will certainly be perpetually lonely without one.

YOUR STANDARDS MAY BE TOO HIGH TO LEAP IN A SINGLE BOUND



*M*aybe the man of your dreams has green eyes, curly dark hair, and towers over you. Perhaps he's a successful businessman with a private airplane, or a family man who wants to live on a ranch. You may meet someone who fills your bill exactly.

More likely, your beau will touch your heart and impress your mind, but in some ways he won't be quite what you expected. That means you won't necessarily recognize him when you first see him, especially if your search is limited to someone who meets all the criteria on your list.

If you approach dating with a mental checklist, you might pass up the cute guy who works at the bookstore because he doesn't seem upwardly mobile enough. You would have to turn down the friend of a friend because you've heard he's a slob. You would decline dinner with a coworker because you've sworn off office relationships. Now you and your checklist are staying home on Friday night because nobody made a high enough grade to date you.

Or maybe you'll go out with practically anybody once, then decide to stop seeing him because he slurped his soup, kept every piece of junk in his garage, or was three years younger than you.

If you find you're breaking off budding relationships, not dating at all, or just generally dissatisfied with the available pool of men, you are waiting for a perfect man.

Make a list of all the available men you know and those people whom you have dated. Why have you chosen not to go out with the single men in your circle? Have you discouraged a friend from fixing you up with someone she thinks you might like? Who decided to end the relationships you've had? Why did you decline a second date?

Write down your answers to these questions. See if you find patterns that reveal the ways in which perfectionism made you pass up good men.

A CHECKLIST IS A SUIT OF ARMOR



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*A*s we all know, no one is perfect.

There is no such thing as the perfect man. So if you're holding out for the perfect man, you're actually avoiding intimacy—probably because you're afraid—even if you don't realize it.

A checklist is a suit of armor that protects you from having to face your fears, even if you are dating and saying you want to share your life. Maybe you suffered a painful breakup or divorce, so you're afraid to go through that again. Maybe your first boyfriend died unexpectedly in a car crash, so you can't bear the thought of being left alone again. Perhaps you are tenderhearted and feel that you just aren't up for risking the potential pain of giving your soul and not getting the same in return. The sting of heartbreak leaves a stubborn imprint and tempts us to try to control our lives to protect against it ever happening again.

By holding on to the qualities you want in a man, you are setting up an unrealistic expectation. As long as it's never met—and it won't be—you don't have to risk your heart. Keeping your checklist is a way to stay invulnerable.

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When you're finding something wrong with *every* guy, there's a very good chance it's because you're afraid you'll never reach that point where your lover knows you completely and still finds you absolutely desirable. You're afraid that you're not lovable.

Each of us wonders whether there's someone in the world who will actually put up with us and commit to us for life. Diana, who knew she wanted to have a husband someday, was especially afraid of dating younger men because her last boyfriend had made it clear he would never marry someone her age. Since there was nothing she could do about that, she felt that she was destined for rejection, especially from younger men. She worried that she would get involved and attached, only to be let down again.

No matter how certain you are that no man could love you if he really knew you, you are no different than every married person who once feared the same thing. The wonderful thing about a romance is that even the most dejected parts of us begin to heal in the warmth of adoration and cherishing from someone who is absolutely crazy about us despite all our quirks. The incredible thing about falling in love is that your lover thoroughly adores you—yes, even you, especially you—exactly the way you are.

Despite the wounds from her last relationship, Diana found the courage and strength to date men who seemed interested, even if they were younger. "After all," she explained, "how do I know how old my true love will be?"

NO NEON SIGN WILL POINT TO THE ONE



Until you go out with a man a few times, you won't know if you're going to enjoy his company or be impressed by his mind. Nor can you possibly know if he's somebody you can trust. Before you commit to him, you have no idea what it's like to be in an exclusive, intimate relationship with him.

We all wish we could know instantly whether a man is going to be *the* one, break our hearts, bring out the best in us, be hopelessly unfaithful, or make us laugh well into old age. We'd like to be able to look at him and just know. Or at least be certain by the end of the first date if he's *it*.

If we could tell right away, it would take a lot of the fear (and excitement) out of dating. We could proceed only after we knew we weren't going to get dropped. The trouble is, you can't know.

No neon sign will flash when your future husband passes you on the street.

That means it's necessary to risk our hearts at least a little in order to find out if a man in front of us is someone we could love madly.

This is no small thing for those of us who are scared of being abandoned or rejected. I know this because I too was terrified when I was dating. Out of fear, I dismissed men. I looked hard for "reasons" to stop seeing the man who would later be my husband. I remember finding fault with him for sending me a thank-you note after I'd made him brunch. I said as much in front of Candace, my best friend.

"That's kind of wimpy that he sent me a thank-you note, isn't it?" I said warily. And, on some level, I also thought he must be desperate. Only a desperate, overly polite mama's boy would send a thank-you note.

“Wimpy?” she responded incredulously. “No, it’s not wimpy. It’s very sweet.”

Sweet. Right.

I wasn’t used to sweet so it made me uncomfortable.

Luckily, despite my terror and my suspicions, I knew Candace was right. I took a deep breath and reframed my perception of the card, borrowing her wise perspective. It worked. I didn’t blow him off when he asked me out again. I kept agreeing to see him. Eventually I realized that there was nothing hopeless about this man.

Finally, what I feared most came to pass. He saw me with bed-hair, endured my worst PMS, and learned that I viewed check bouncing as a normal part of cash-flow management.

I not only survived after exposing my soft underbelly to this man, I gained the sweet acceptance and adoration I’d craved. I learned that the only way to have the thing I most wanted and feared was to stay the course—to keep seeing him, despite my pounding heart and shallow breathing.

GET IN THE HABIT OF HANGING IN THERE



*I*f you’re like me, you’ll find yourself wanting to run away from promising relationships and thinking of dozens of “logical” justifications for why you should.

However, if you make yourself stay, the rewards will be great. Most important, even if you date a few men who really aren’t right for you, you will start to build the muscles that give you the strength and perspective you’ll need to keep auditioning men.

Ultimately, the training will pay off: You will attract a man who, though he isn’t perfect, will be right for you. This won’t just be

anybody who loves the real you—this will also be somebody with whom you are also impressed.

Of course, none of that will happen unless you decide to hang in there even if he talks with his mouth full, hasn't balanced his check-book in three years or—God forbid—sends you a thank-you note.

CRUMPLE UP YOUR CHECKLIST



*M*aking a commitment to stay the course in a relationship despite minor irritations is frightening. It means there's no valid excuse to stop you from committing to an imperfect man who's perfect for you.

But it can be tricky, too. How do we know which imperfections to overlook and which to run from?

Now that I've watched thousands of wives transform lonely marriages into happy, intimate relationships, it's obvious which problems are insurmountable and which are just part of life's little irritations. There are certain types of men you'll want to avoid committing to: practicing addicts, physical abusers, and men who can't be faithful. For now, crumple up that checklist and throw it away. As it turns out, what makes a man a "good guy" has absolutely nothing to do with whether he works in a law firm or drives a tractor.

Contented couples know this already. They also understand that if they had married someone else, they would have had a different set of problems. They remember vividly the moment they realized they were two of the same kind. They call it falling in love.

In other words, feelings of attraction, and the love and romance that follow, are beacons for helping us find someone we match. This person will not be perfect, of course, because no one is. He will,

however, have some fantastic, interesting qualities and characteristics that balance well with yours. You can either lament about what attributes he doesn't have or celebrate the ones he does.

Surrendering means accepting all of his qualities, and trying to improve only yourself.

Just as he may have to accept that you talk to your mother every day, exaggerate from time to time, or rarely arrive somewhere promptly, you too will have to make concessions.

Having confidence that someone who knows you inside and out loves you anyway will more than compensate for those small irritations.

There is an imperfect man who is perfect for you, too.

hands as puppets and have the sock puppets tell me to relax. Now I call his playfulness entertaining and reassuring.

See how the same qualities you might consider negative can be reframed as assets? Since you choose the lens through which you view male behavior, begin by taking off your dark glasses.

PUTTING MEN DOWN DOESN'T MAKE US FEEL BETTER



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*I*f we convince ourselves that men are inconsiderate and unfaithful, we reason that we're really not missing much. Interestingly, this line of thinking doesn't quell our desire for romance and companionship.

If it did, you wouldn't be reading this book.

If you find yourself with girlfriends in the midst of a barrage of critical anti-men humor, you might be tempted to go with the flow. But you can just as easily put a new topic on the table by throwing out questions like, "What's the best date you've ever been on?" or "When you were little, did you want to get married and have kids?" After all, if you're going to participate in the conversation, there's nothing that says you can't nudge it in a direction you prefer.

Wallowing in cynicism affects the kinds of signals you send out to men. If you habitually make critical comments and roll your eyes at their behavior, you'll give men the impression that you don't hold