

# The Single Woman's™

A woman with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a pink dress and a white flower in her hair, is smiling and looking upwards. She is holding a string of balloons, including a large white one, a yellow one, and a pink one. The background is a warm, golden-brown color.

SASSY  
SURVIVAL  
GUIDE

Letting Go  
& Moving On

Mandy Hale

# **The Single Woman's Sassy Survival Guide: Letting Go and Moving On**

by

Mandy Hale





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### **The Single Woman's Sassy Survival Guide: Letting Go and Moving On by Mandy Hale**

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Published by Telemachus Press, LLC

<http://www.telemachuspress.com>

Visit the author website <http://www.TheSingleWoman.com>

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If you find this book to be meaningful in your life, please consider giving it a positive review, online, where you purchased it. This will help spread the word of The Single Woman. Thank you.

## Acknowledgements

This project has truly been a labor of love, with the combined efforts of so many people who saw the potential in The Single Woman message and graciously volunteered their time and talents to help turn a dream into a reality.

Thank you first and foremost to my business partner, David Sams, for taking a chance on me and sharing my vision for changing the lives of single women across the world. Here's to the start of a grand adventure!

Thank you to my church family at Oasis Church, especially Pastor Danny and Jill Chambers, Christian and Danielle Hage, Rebecca Smith, Chris Tallent, and my awesome photographer, Cindy Blanchard.

Thank you to Tim "Mindub" Hiber, Amber Ferguson, Devin Samuel, Michelle Bekeza, Jenae Wilson, Karen Hamill, Brian Norton, Kia Jarmon, Tim Brown and Amanda Shanks.

Thank you to Mastin Kipp, my dear friend who singlehandedly put me on the Twitter map. Mastin, you have encouraged, inspired, motivated, challenged, and changed me more than you will ever know over the past two years. Thank you.

Thank you to Kim Kardashian, Nicholas Sparks and Sherri Shepherd for allowing me to cross one off the Bucket List by agreeing to read and review this book. To say that I am humbled and honored is the understatement of the century.

To all the people along the way who hurt me, lied to me, betrayed me, disappointed me, broke my heart...you unknowingly pointed me in the direction of my own North Star. Without the messes, I wouldn't have a message. You taught me more than you could ever take from me. Thank you.

Thank you to God; my creator, my healer, my father, and the best boyfriend a girl could ever ask for.

Thank you to my beautiful family: My sister, Cher; my nieces, Emma and Livi; my brother-in-law, Kevin; and my mom and dad, who raised their little girl to be a feisty, sassy, spirited Single Woman. You guys are my foundation, my backbone, my heart. Without you, I am nothing. I love you more than words can say, and I hope I've made you proud.

And finally, to my readers and faithful followers: You all have given me the greatest gift of my life. Your belief in me and my message handed me the keys to my destiny, and helped me find my purpose in life, even as I sought to help you discover yours. Thank you for allowing me to speak into your lives, and for sharing with me your stories, your stumbles, your hearts. You inspire me a million times more than I could ever hope to inspire you. You've made me laugh, you've made me cry...you've at times, helped me remember how to fly. This book is dedicated to each and every one of you.

## Foreword

To every person holding a copy of this book, whether you're holding it in your hands or reading it on a computer screen, cell phone screen, eReader, or tablet:

Two years ago, I started a little Twitter page and column known as "The Single Woman." I looked around one day and saw so many people settling for just getting by that I wanted to create a place for people, and in particular, single women, to be able to come and celebrate shooting for the sky. Not settling. Holding out for the best in life and letting go of the rest. Being sassy and independent and spirited and fabulous...and not apologizing for it. I was speaking to myself, encouraging myself, motivating myself in my tweets and columns as much as I was other people.

I didn't know if I'd have two followers.

Yet...exactly a year to the day after I started my Twitter page...I had 200,000.

And now, nearly two years later, I have more than 400,000 followers. Precious souls from around the world who connect with the message of a woman who would rather walk fearlessly solo through life than be poorly accompanied.

What that tells me is this: Single women are looking for a voice. And that voice is demanding to be heard.

I get numerous emails a day from my readers, asking for advice, and the #1 question I get is: "How do I let go of and move on from \_\_\_\_\_?"

Though I can't respond to every email I get personally, it is a very valid and relevant question, and you deserve an answer.

This book is that answer.

Sometimes life offers us a second chance to get it right...and sometimes life just offers us a second chance to say goodbye. Sometimes even after all the hurt, and all the waiting, and all the hoping, and all the wishing...for reasons beyond our control, it still doesn't work out. Sometimes you just know the only way to be true to YOU is to let go and move on. If we're lucky, we have a best friend to reflect our hearts back to us and show us our strength when we've lost our way. To inspire us to never lose faith that someday, some way, we will find our Happily Ever After.

That best friend is who I have tried to be to my beautiful readers across the world.

And though it FLOORS me at times, and humbles me always, it is not a role I take lightly.

So now, to those women and men who have read my column, supported my message, followed me on Twitter, and shared your own stories with me...from the bottom of my heart, THANK YOU. You have inspired me more than you will ever know. You have called me to a higher standard. You make me examine myself, question myself, challenge myself daily to live my life at the standard in which I am



encouraging you to live yours. And now, you are holding in your hands the very book that YOU inspired. You have asked for it, demanded it, and cheered when you heard I was writing it. And it is my honor to now present it to you.

It is my hope that you will see a little glimmer of yourself in my heartbreaks, and in my victories, and in my defeats. It is my hope that my story will inspire you to go out and live your story a little more boldly and fearlessly. It is my hope that my lessons will become your blessings, and that my mistakes will chart a path for you to realize your miracles.

And it is my hope that my many, many falls will help you find the courage to get back up, time and time and time again.

To anyone who has ever wished upon a star...

To anyone who has believed they were meant for something more...

To anyone who, when asked to settle for less than the best, will flatly refuse...

To anyone who has ever walked a mile in a single woman's shoes...

This book is for you.

With much love.

xoxo,

Mandy  
"The Single Woman"



## **The Single Woman's Sassy Survival Guide:**

### **Letting Go and Moving On**

# Why Letting Go and Moving On is the Most TITANIC Decision You'll Ever Make

“I’ll never let go, Jack. I’ll never let go!”

In perhaps the most tear-inducing movie scene of all time, found in the mother of all chick flicks, the very film that I myself saw at the theaters six times and own not one, but TWO copies of...Kate Winslet’s Rose famously makes a promise to Leonardo DiCaprio’s Jack that she’ll never let him go. She cried...we cried...the person in the next theater over watching *Men in Black* cried, completely enraptured by the sheer beauty and epic romance of Rose refusing to let go of her beloved. The music rises to a crescendo, and the magic of the moment transports you to another time and place, until you feel as if you’re floating on the next log over from Jack and Rose, watching this beautiful moment in cinematic history take place. Tears roll down your cheeks, your vision blurs and you start to gulp and hiccup from the intense emotion...waiting for the star-crossed couple to meet their demise together, giving Romeo and Juliet the boot as most popular, most tragic, most romantic couple ever to land on the silver screen.

Then...wait a minute. Something’s happening. She’s sitting up. She’s kissing him goodbye. She’s... could it be? Letting him go?!?!?


Though my lip quivers a bit just thinking about that scene, the symbolism of what happens in the film’s climactic finale moment is not lost on me. And while you may argue that she only lets him go “figuratively”...the fact is, Rose had to physically and even emotionally untie herself from Jack, not only to just move on with her life...but to SAVE her life. Had she opted to stay there, clinging to him with the same desperation that she clung to her life raft (and believe me, if Leonardo DiCaprio was holding my hand, I’d be pretty tempted to stay behind, come hell or high water, myself), that would have been the end of her story, too.

No, Rose didn’t get the Happy Ending she had hoped for, because life had other plans for her. And though they are fictional characters, I feel certain that plenty of people throughout history have found themselves in similar predicaments: “Do I cling to a sinking dream for dear life and risk certain disaster...or let go and move on to an uncertain future without the person I thought would be standing beside me for the rest of my life?”

As we weather the choppy waters we call Life, it’s a decision we will face time and time and time again: Do we cling to a situation that’s taking us under out of fear of letting go of the familiar, or do we open our hand and let go of that friendship, that relationship, that job, that opportunity, or that grievance that we’ve been clinging to, realizing that to flail around uncertainly for a season is all a part of discovering our destiny?

Rose made the decision to let go. As painful as it might have been to release her lover in order to rescue herself, she was determined not to miss out on everything ahead of her by trying to raise the dead. And though she didn’t get her Happily Ever After with Jack, she did get it. In the closing scene of the movie, when we see the older version of Rose peacefully sleeping, the camera pans to countless

photos from her colorful and well-lived life. We see that Rose went on to take risks and have adventures and live life to the very last drop, even without Jack there beside her. Knowing him made her a better person, introduced her to a side of herself she didn't even know existed, helped her take her first unsteady, hesitant steps toward becoming the woman she was meant to be; but letting him go was the catalyst for actually realizing her destiny, and fulfilling her dreams, and living up to her true potential. The truth is: friends and lovers and opportunities will come into our lives and, in some cases, shake us to our very core along the way...however, not all are meant to stay.

 **THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *Some people pass through our lives for a season to teach us lessons that could never be learned if they stayed.*


The trick to not getting mired in the past and missing out on the future lies solely in our ability to let go and move on, yet this seems to be the most difficult thing in the world for most people (including myself) to do. The ebb and flow...the stay or go...the hold on and the let go...what does letting go and moving on actually look like? How do you know when it's time to let go and move on? More importantly, what exactly are you supposed to let go of and move on from? Hands down, the number one request for advice I get involves the process of letting go and moving on. It seems that although we know in our hearts it's time to move on from what was, we need someone to be the voice of reason, reminding us WHY we need to do it and HOW exactly to do it.

I hope this book will be that voice for you.

No matter how sexy or appealing or flashy or tall, dark, and handsome the object of your desire may be...no matter how AMAZING the job opportunity may seem...no matter the size of your impossible dream...if it is NOT meant for you, it is time to let it go and move on to what IS. Just as Rose let go of Jack, so she could bloom instead of meet her doom.


“But MY Leonardo DiCaprio WANTS to be held,” you might argue.

No, he doesn't. (If he did, you wouldn't be reading this book.)

 **THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *You don't have to cling to what is truly meant for you. You can let go. It'll stick around.*

“But MY Leonardo needs me to cling to it. If I don't, someone else will snatch it away!”

No, they won't. And if they do—it wasn't meant for you!

 **THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *No one can take what's TRULY yours...so if they took it, it wasn't yours. Something better is on its way!*

“But MY Leonardo wants to be with me, he just doesn't realize it. I just have to hang on and give him TIME to realize it!”

No, he realizes what you don't: That it's time to let go.



**THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *If they want to be in your life, they'll find a way to be in your life. Otherwise they'll find excuses.*

I say all this not to be harsh, but to be REAL...because you deserve the whole truth and not the faux truth. And here's something else that's REAL: You are FAR too fabulous to cling to someone or something that doesn't fit you, doesn't want you, or doesn't belong to you. While you're clinging to the WRONG thing, you're letting the RIGHT thing slip right through your fingers!

So what does this actually look like, this "letting go and moving on" thing? What are the steps? What does it mean? And how do you know when it's time to throw in the towel...call it a day...and walk away? In the next few chapters, we're going to cover the five major areas of life that we often find ourselves needing to let go of: Relationships, Friendships, Jobs, Opportunities, and Grievances. How are we going to do it? By examining the five benchmarks for letting go and moving on: the Who, the What, the Why, the When, and the How. At the end of each chapter, we'll review the *Five Fabulous Finds* from that section for you to take away as daily affirmations, pick-me-ups, or sassy reminders to get you off of "What Might Have Been" Highway and back on the road to letting go and moving on.

So sit down with your computer, your iPhone, your iPad, or whatever other technological device you happen to be reading from and let's have some good old-fashioned girl talk. Kick off your shoes, grab a glass of wine...and let's turn the page and leave the past behind.

Shall we?

## Letting Go & Moving On: In Real-Time

“How do you know so much about letting go and moving on?” you might ask. “What makes *you* the expert?”

Well, I’m not an expert. Let’s get that straight. I’m not a guru. I’m not a psychologist or a psychiatrist or a counselor or a fortune-teller or the Great and Powerful Oz.

I am a single woman. Just like you.

But perhaps you’re not a single woman—or even a woman. Maybe you’re just someone who needs to release someone or something that’s preventing you from being your best self and living your best life. If so, that’s perfectly fine, too. As I say on my Twitter page and on my website on a regular basis, anyone looking for inspiration and motivation is welcome here. Anyone desiring to leave the past behind and shine is welcome here. But most of all, anyone who holds out for the best and refuses to settle for less is welcome here. Married, single, female, male, old, young, gay, straight. Come one, come all!

Just like you—I am a friend. A sister. A daughter. An aunt.

I have loved and lost. I have grieved and clung. I have let go and moved on.

Sneakers or stilettos, I’ve been in your shoes...and I know every last step of the journey well. Perhaps even better than any guru or expert or counselor or fortune teller.

I am the best friend who will tell you what you NEED to hear and not what you WANT to hear. I am the big sister with the shoulder to cry on when it seems like the rest of the world has turned away. I hope to be the Cruise Director who guides you full steam ahead through the often choppy and turbulent waters of letting go and moving on directly to the white sandy beach of life AFTER letting go and moving on. Do you see me? I’m waiting for you there, fruity drink with the little umbrella in hand.

But first, I want to share a snapshot from my life with you. An era of my life that defined me as a woman. It is also one of the most poignant and REAL examples of letting go and moving on I have experienced in my life thus far.

For those of you who have been following The Single Woman faithfully and reading my column over the past year and a half, you know my “Mr. Big” story well. For those of you who haven’t—my “Mr. Big” is my real-life version of the emotionally unavailable, detached, elusive character from *Sex & the City* who broke Carrie Bradshaw’s heart more often than he stole it.

This “non-relationship” of mine went on for five years...which was about four and a half years too long...and I, for several years, truly considered this guy to be the “Love of My Life.” As cliché as it may sound, he was the ONE guy who could make my heart beat a million miles a minute simply by showing up on my caller ID. He was my kryptonite. My Achilles’ Heel. My Mr. Big.

You know what I mean. We all have that ONE guy. The one that no matter how much time has passed...how much distance spans between you...how many guys you've dated in between...the mere mention of his name makes your knees go weak and every ounce of your sensible girl power sassiness shoot right outta your head. Yep. THAT guy.

I first met him five years ago and went home and told my mom I had met the boy I was going to marry. We then proceeded to have an on-again, off-again, very perpetual shade of gray "relationship" for the next two years, until circumstances swept him out of my life for a year and a half. In the summer of 2010, he reemerged, and for three months, he lit up my world and shook the foundation of everything I thought I had already figured out about him. He changed me. He helped me come out of my shell and learn to be vulnerable, to lay my heart on the line without fear, and to leap off the edge of "safe" and grow my wings on the way down. We danced under the stars. We watched fireworks together on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. We tracked down the actual stone steps that Baby shimmies up in *Dirty Dancing* (since it is my all-time favorite movie), where he took my hand and asked me, "Remember that day you were kissed on the *Dirty Dancing* steps?" I said, "It hasn't happened yet." Then he twirled me around, dipped me grandly, and kissed me there; on the steps where my childlike heart had already been a thousand times in my mind, just never daring to imagine that my "Johnny" would turn out to be the boy I had loved for as long as I could remember.

Then just like that...summer was over...and so were we. He disappeared again...only to occasionally flit in and out of my life like the lightning bugs I tried in vain to capture when I was little but quickly discovered no jar could ever REALLY contain.

We never even really had a last dance.

You see, in true Mr. Big form, he escaped to California last year after we spent the magical summer of 2010 together. Typical behavior for someone who only allows himself to get so close to someone before he hides behind either physical or emotional distance; or, in really special cases, both.

The most ironic part of it all is that, for once, we almost had it. We had really grown closer...were spending more time together...and there was a moment when I felt a shift in our dynamic. A line was crossed that neither of us had ever ventured over before, and I thought for a moment that he was finally going to give in to this thing we had between us and see what happened on the other side of taking a chance. But then, like so many times before, life and fate swept him away again...just like that...and the line in the sand that we had finally crossed over was washed away in the waves of his hesitation. But this time...he was gone for good. Not only because of HIS indecision...but because of MY decision that it was time for me to walk away. To let go and move on. The truth is, you can only give a person so much time to realize what's standing right in front of them. You can only let a person chase you for so long before you realize that maybe, just maybe, they never intended to catch you at all.

In the past, I would have gone into mourning over his departure, marking it perhaps with the type of angst-filled gesture I'm famous for: holding a sappy chick flick marathon; driving past all of our old spots with Taylor Swift blasting at top volume; deleting him from my Facebook page in an attempt to delete him from my life...only to immediately regret it.

But not this time.

This time...something was different. Something had shifted. Something had changed.

Was it my increasing impatience and lack of tolerance with his inability to commit to a relationship, a career path, or even a city? Was it my preoccupation with my own life and the addition of so many new dreams and goals that kept me from dwelling on the subtraction of his presence from my life? Or did I just assume that, like most of his dramatic exits, this one was only temporary, and before I knew it, the invisible rubber band that bound us together would snap him back to Tennessee and back by my side?

Or...

Was the “something” that had changed...ME?

One night, a few months after he had sped off into the sunset and out of my life once again, we were having one of our typical Mandy/Mr. Big phone conversations, with me trying to convince him WHY he should take a spontaneous pilgrimage back to Music City to tie up loose ends (or, more specifically, the frayed, ripped, tattered end known as “our relationship”) when it hit me.

I was over him.

The growing feeling of restlessness that had me fighting against the constraints of my life and ridding my existence of any excess baggage and turmoil and drama finally burst to the surface, awakening my senses and opening my eyes for what felt like the very first time.

Suddenly every word that came out of his mouth sounded false and hollow and empty. His complete inability to ever let me scratch beneath the surface of who he *really* was and get close enough to SEE and FEEL his heart felt like laminate, or a shiny veneer, or a smooth coating of what he WANTED me to see instead of what I NEEDED him to be. I suddenly realized that I was no longer in love with who this person was, but rather with the potential of who I thought he could be.



**THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *No matter how attractive a person’s potential may be...you have to date their reality.*

As Big went on and on about something—I have no idea what, since I had tuned him out in the midst of my “aha!” moment—I managed to find my voice.

“Don’t.”

He kept chattering away as though I hadn’t spoken.

“No, don’t!” I said, louder this time. “Don’t come here.”

He stopped talking. Silence. I could hear the clock ticking on the wall behind me.

Nothing. Not a word spoken between us for several seconds. Then finally...

“What?” He asked, sounding confused.



“Don’t come home. Don’t come to Nashville. Don’t come to Tennessee. Don’t come here. Don’t.”

More silence. Then a loud sigh.

“You’re doing it again, Mandy,” he said in exaggerated exasperation. “You’re doing it again.”

“No...that’s not...”

“No!” he interrupted. “That IS what’s going on. You do this every two or three months. ‘Break up’ with me. I wish I had a calendar so I could better track when you’re going to throw me out of your life. Why are you always trying to quit me?”

“That’s not what I’m doing!” I protested. “And how can I even ‘break up’ with you? We’ve never even been in a real relationship! It’s not quitting if there’s no committing!”

“Okay, Mandy. Whatever you say,” he said in a patronizing tone. “But you ARE trying to break up with me again. And in a few weeks, you’ll change your mind. Just like always.”

“No.” I said, with resolve in my voice. “Not just like always.”

And because I had come too far to turn back now, I continued: “It is obvious to me that our lives are on two VERY different paths. And it needs to stay that way.”

He started to object, but I cut him off.

“I have to go.”

“Okay, well, I’ll call you back later, when you’ve had time to calm down,” he said cajolingly, as though talking to a child who was throwing a temper tantrum.

“There’s no need,” I said calmly. “There’s nothing more to say.”

I hung up.

For a long moment, I lay there on my bed in silence, staring at the phone...not moving, barely breathing, waiting for the rush of familiar pain to flood in like it always did after I attempted to cut this never-ending, never-evolving relationship out of my life.

But this time, I felt nothing.

And then something dawned on me, a thought as enlightening as though someone had turned on a bright, illuminating light in the middle of the pitch black room I had been living in for FIVE LONG YEARS. I scooped up my Blackberry and began tapping out a text message.

*“For years I’ve been beating my head against the wall, trying to figure out what I could do to make myself worthy of you,” I wrote. “Tonight, for the first time, I realized that YOU’RE not worthy of ME.”*

Without hesitating, I hit Send.

About a week after I sent that text, I received a phone call from him. Then another. Then another. All went unanswered. Then...an email. Considering this was not a guy who went out of his way to express himself to another human being via written word, this act alone was somewhat astonishing. It read:

*“I do hope that you are doing well...and I miss your voice...”*

*Then, almost as an afterthought, a second email came through less than a minute later.*

*“And for the record...I think you are mean for breaking up with me again.”*

Still...I didn't respond. I couldn't. I had used every word in the English language trying to express myself to this guy over the past five years, and had given my heart to him only to have it handed back too many times to turn back now. “You break it, you buy it” didn't exactly apply to this relationship. And while I always encourage women to be vulnerable and open and take risks when it comes to love...this relationship has taught me that if you keep handing your heart to someone and they keep handing it back, or worse, breaking it—it's okay to protect yourself and your emotions by removing yourself and your presence from their life. Furthermore, if someone keeps spitting game *at* you but bringing nothing but the same *to* you, it's okay to forfeit and walk away. The right one for you will *always* handle your heart with care and treasure it for the precious gift that it is. The problem with some people is you hand them your love in a Tiffany's box and they treat it like it came from a Cracker Jack box. Someone like that is simply not worthy of your time.

After his numerous attempts to reach me went unanswered, he finally stopped trying and fell silent... leaving the space between hanging on and moving on a little smaller.

And as fate would have it, about a month A.B. (After Big)—it came time for me to move.

The house I had been living in belonged to my best friend, Jason...who also happens to be the best friend of Mr. Big (I know, this is where the story gets a little confusing). And Big and Jason were roommates before Jason and I were, so the room I was moving out of was actually once Mr. Big's. Yes, I had been residing, on and off, for nearly three years, right smack dab in the middle of my “Ex-Files.” His spirit permeated every room of that house. The hat he was wearing the night I met him... the giant Webster's Dictionary he liked to reference during reading and writing to expand his vocabulary (he is a voracious learner)...the memories, both good and bad, of our times spent there together...and apart...all left behind in one of his many departures from Nashville to “greener pastures.”

So many of you have written to me, telling me your own stories of love and heartbreak and loss and the number one question you always ask is: “How do you let go and move on?”


Well, my friends...here it is. Letting go and moving on, in real-time.

I was lucky in the “moving on” department, because while I was working to move on emotionally, I also had the good fortune of moving on physically, which I believe is a key ingredient to the process. You can't *truly* move on and get excited about new opportunities that life has in store if you're still physically living in a time capsule of everything that has come before. But here's another key to moving on, one that is often overlooked or ignored in the attempt to outrun the pain of letting go: **YOU MUST ALLOW YOURSELF TO GRIEVE IT IF YOU WANNA LEAVE IT.** If you wanna heal

from it, you're gonna have to deal with it—plain and simple. There's a quote from "Eat Pray Love" by Elizabeth Gilbert that I think sums up this process perfectly:

*"Someday you're gonna look back on this moment of your life as such a sweet time of grieving. You'll see that you were in mourning and your heart was broken, but your life was changing..."* ~Elizabeth Gilbert

You can't move PAST something until you walk right up to it and move THROUGH it. You must confront your hurt and your loss and your sadness...sit down with them...look them dead in the eye...allow yourself to feel every emotion without judgment...and before long, you won't have to worry about letting go of your heartbreak, because it will have let go of YOU. Or in other words:

 **THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *What's done is done. You can't erase it, so you might as well face it. Take your heartbreak to dinner, allow yourself to heal...then leave it with the bill!*

In my situation, I was afforded the rare opportunity to take one last tour through the museum that was Big's and my relationship. Everything in the house I was leaving behind was another relic, another piece of history in the long, run-on sentence of "us" that could never quite decide how it wanted to end. I knew this was perhaps my last opportunity to really sit down with my broken heart and unresolved feelings and allow them to dance among the memories of what "almost was" one final time.

So I did.

I sat in that familiar place on the couch, the same spot where I was sitting three years earlier when he sat down directly across from me on the loveseat and told me earnestly how he knew he had made a mistake...had "swung at the wrong pitch," as he put it...by running from my arms directly into the arms of another during a time when we had grown particularly close and he couldn't take the heat. Problem was, by the time he realized the error of his ways, I had already moved on with someone else...proving that once again, our timing couldn't be more off. I could still vividly recall how I got to express to him for the first time how much he had hurt me. I saw the remorse in his eyes, but as always, it came one moment too late.

I sat in that space for a long moment, recalling every word of the conversation that day so long ago...then I moved on.

To the front door, where I sleepily stumbled one early May morning in 2008 to find him standing there like a lost puppy, in need of a ride to the airport. By this point, I was already in another relationship...and yet, when he needed a friend, I couldn't find it in my heart to leave him out in the cold. So I allowed him to swing his one lonesome bag into my car and drove him through the crisp spring air to the airport to watch him chase another pipe dream to the City of Angels. I never told him this—in fact, I never told anyone this—but after dropping him off at the gate, not knowing if I would ever see him again, I cried all the way home.

With the image of him standing on the front stoop, duffel bag in tow, I walked out the front door and closed it behind me for the last time.

Then, finally, there I was: in the driveway, where in November 2008, I found him loading up the last


of his belongings to leave Nashville for the final time. L.A. hadn't been kind to him, and he felt he had nothing left in Music City, so he was packing up and moving home to South Carolina indefinitely. Yes, I was still in another relationship, but the sight of him preparing to leave Nashville in his rearview mirror for the last time was heartbreaking. There were so many things I wanted to say to him...send him off with...let him know I felt about him before he vanished from my life, possibly for good. But unable to find the right words to say...I said nothing. Neither of us did. For a long moment, our eyes met as I stepped out of my car and he into his U-Haul. It was as though time had gripped me in its hand and refused to let me move on. I was frozen next to my car, unable to speak, unable to wave, unable to move. We held the moment in complete silence...our eyes never wavering from each other's until finally, he began to slowly back out of the driveway, leaving me behind. Though not a word had been spoken, I could physically feel the sheer weight of his goodbye. I wouldn't see him again, wouldn't speak another word to him, for a year and a half.

Still...no time or distance had ever really truly separated us. The thin, gossamer strands of "what might have been" bound me to him, despite my best intentions.

That is, until April of 2011, when I stood in that very same driveway for the last time, with my own U-Haul, with everything but his memory packed and ready to go. It was usually him that did the leaving, but not this time. This time it was me driving away, and although he wasn't there to witness it, the Ghost of What Might Have Been was...and the look of resolve on my face and confidence in my step quickly silenced its chains.

I had done the grieving. Now it was time to do the leaving.

So I did. And I didn't tap the brakes once.

 **THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *Sometimes you just KNOW it's time to let go...so you do...and every day after is a little bit better than the day before.*

Do you ever REALLY let go of a "Mr. Big"? Many of you have asked.

Here's what I know.

You hurt, you cry, you say goodbye...you move on, you grow strong, you remember how to fly.

And one day, you find yourself so far removed from what once WAS...you look back and realize that somewhere along the way, his memory LET GO OF YOU.

To love someone for five years is a powerful thing...but to love yourself MORE is an even more powerful thing. My Mr. Big hurt me, challenged me, refined me, disappointed me, strengthened me, infuriated me, motivated me, polished me, and inspired me. He taught me both how to let down my walls and be vulnerable and to set boundaries to protect my heart. He taught me to embrace my spontaneous side and follow my heart instead of my head, and to live for the moment a little bit more. More importantly, he taught me how to love myself too much to stay connected to someone who doesn't love me enough.

There's a quote by Ethel Person that says: *"People should not judge failed love affairs as failed experiences but as part of the growth process. Something does not have to end well for it to have been*

*one of the most valuable experiences of a lifetime.”*

Yes, my relationship with my Mr. Big was, without a doubt, one of the most valuable experiences of my lifetime.

I was forever changed by the time I spent loving him.

But I was MORE changed by walking away from him.

Let's Review...

### **Letting Go & Moving On: Five Fabulous Finds**

- No matter how attractive a person's potential may be, you have to date their reality.
- If someone keeps spitting game AT you but bringing nothing but the same TO you, it's okay to forfeit and walk away.
- You must allow yourself to grieve it if you wanna leave it and deal with it if you wanna heal from it.
- What's done is done. You can't erase it, so you might as well face it. Take your heartbreak to dinner, allow yourself to heal...then leave it with the bill.
- You hurt, you cry, you say goodbye...you move on, you grow strong, you remember how to fly.

# The WHAT of Letting Go & Moving On

So now we know exactly what letting go and moving on means and you came along with me as I kicked Mr. Big to the curb...but WHAT exactly does it mean FOR YOU? What do YOU need to let go of?

Here are the top five things that I believe we find ourselves struggling to let go of in life:

- Jobs
- Friendships
- Opportunities
- Grievances (This can include unforgiveness, jealousy, or bitterness directed at another, or negative emotions directed at ourselves, such as insecurity, fear, doubt, anger, etc.)
- Relationships


Or to sum it up: anything or anyone that you've outgrown, that has outgrown you, that doesn't feel right, that is surrounded by red flags, or that would require you to compromise your dignity or self respect to hang onto.

Basically if it's not honoring you—it doesn't deserve a seat at your table.


Sometimes it's a job. Perhaps you are working a job merely to "pay the bills." Perhaps you are juggling the dream and the job. Or perhaps you are stuck in a job that makes you miserable, yet you stay chained to someone else's desk because it's what people "expect" of you. It's your mom's old job. Your dad's old job. It's a "nice, respectable career." It offers great health benefits. It's what generations before you did; therefore, you are expected to carry on the family tradition without complaint...to maintain the family business...or live up to your older sister's impossibly pristine reputation as 'the responsible one.' So you sit, day after day, at a desk that feels more like a prison, living out someone else's dream while your own dream gathers dust on the shelf.

Sometimes it's a friendship. Maybe you're still trying to make the puzzle pieces of your life and your lifelong best friend's life fit together, even though you long ago stopped having anything in common. Maybe you're entrenched in a toxic friendship with someone who constantly ridicules you, tears you

down, or tries to “one-up” you. Maybe it’s a “Stage 5 Clinger” friend, who never asks you about your life because she’s too busy whining about her own. She complains, she moans, she weeps, she sobs... and you’re pretty sure she hasn’t asked you how YOU’RE doing since 1995. Or maybe it’s the Casper the Friendly Ghost type...the one who vanishes for months on end, who you have to chase and jump through endless hoops to nail down a simple ice cream date with, and who you’re pretty sure MUST be in the Witness Protection Program, because NO ONE should be THAT difficult to get in touch with.


 **THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *Rid yourself of all the things you’ve outgrown and the things you’re meant to grow into will track you down!*

Sometimes it’s an opportunity. Something that looks good on paper. Something that appears too good to be true. Something that other people would walk on hot coals to obtain, yet you’re lukewarm about it. Something just doesn’t feel right in your spirit . You’re unsettled. You’re not at peace. And here’s the secret: If it doesn’t FEEL right, it’s NOT right—at least not for you. And at least not right now. Maybe the opportunity will cause you to compromise your integrity, morals, or belief system. Maybe you’re being asked to check your ethics at the door. Maybe it’s too soon, or too early, or you still have some lessons to be learned before the blessings can be earned. Or maybe it’s as simple as you just don’t feel right about it.

 **THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *Timing is everything. What good is finding the RIGHT thing if it's the WRONG time?*

Sometimes it’s a grievance, either against yourself or another. Perhaps you got into a fight with your best friend three years ago and haven’t spoken since. And although you can’t even remember what the argument was about, you’re still clinging to the anger and hurt and resentment of that disagreement as if it happened yesterday. You have that unsettled, wounded, downright icky feeling inside that stays with you on a daily basis...and you want it gone. Yet you’re too stubborn or proud or angry to humble yourself, be the bigger person, and say those two words more magical than “hocus pocus” ever dared to be: “I’m sorry.”

Maybe it’s a grievance you carry in your heart against yourself. Maybe you think you’re too short or too fat or not pretty enough. Maybe you’ve harbored insecurity in your soul for so long you don’t know what life would be like without it. Or perhaps you struggle on a daily basis with fear, worry, jealousy, or inner turmoil.

 **THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *When you let go of the pain and let go of the strife, you make room for more FABULOUS to enter your life!*

More often than not, though...it’s a relationship.

Maybe it’s an ex. A former flame. Someone who went from lighting up your world like fireworks on the Fourth of July to burning you with the same flame. Exes are, by definition, bad news. Exile, excommunicate, exclude, extradite, exhume, exhausted...do any of these words give you a warm and fuzzy feeling? Think about it. There’s a reason that “ex” comes before “boyfriend.” It’s best to leave that relationship in the ground where it belongs instead of trying to recreate a moment that probably

wasn't all that great to begin with. Besides, if you're filling up your calendar with X's, you're leaving no room for O's—as in “OH, he's so wonderful!” So the only “ex” you should be headed for is the EXIT, lady, and quickly!



**THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *You must let go of your EX to receive your NEXT! You can't embrace the future while clinging to the past!*

Or maybe, just maybe, it's someone like my Mr. Big. Your own Mr. Big. Someone who's never really quite in but never really quite out of your life. Someone who takes your breath and your heart away simultaneously. Someone who doesn't want to lose you yet doesn't make any effort to keep you. Someone who is stingy with his heart and his time but extremely generous with excuses. Someone who you've given chance after chance after chance to get right or get left...yet, you're still there. Someone who you KNOW you should walk away from but you can't quite force yourself to take that first step. Someone who you make excuses for when you know you should be showing them the door.

This not-so-rare species of man is our blind spot. Our strongest weakness. Our almost lover. Or, as I like to call him, our Justin Case.

Justin Case (more commonly known as “Just In Case”) is a smooth operator. He knows how to push our buttons. He knows how to get under our skin. He knows how to offer just enough of himself to keep us hooked, sometimes for months and even years at a time. He doesn't really want us to stay, but he doesn't want us to go. He never comes out and says yes, but he also doesn't ever say no. No matter how black or white we need the terms of our relationship to be, we are willing to stay in a perpetual state of gray just to keep him around. We quite obligingly allow ourselves to take up residence in Relationship Purgatory because we're not willing to give up the ghost and move on, but we're also not willing to give up the most and sign on for what could be a life of always being second place. And therein lies the crazy, tragic, sometimes almost magic conundrum of Justin Case.

Here's the bad news: Justin Case will be perfectly content to keep you around, indefinitely, JUST IN CASE something “better” never comes along. And here's the real kicker: his definition of “something better” usually involves someone that is clearly inferior to the fabulousness that is YOU. For whatever reason, somewhere along the way, he started to see you as the “safe” choice, the in-between girl, the backup plan. Not because you are any of those things but because he is incapable of seeing you clearly enough to recognize the diamond he has standing right in front of him. Perhaps his blinders are there out of fear or immaturity. Or (as much as we hate to admit it) maybe he simply prefers Jell-O to crème brûlée and no matter how many times you hand him the menu, he's going to keep choosing Jell-O, time and time again. Whatever his reasoning, do you really want to spend another second waiting around for him to realize how incredible you are? Or do you want to make today the day you let him go and move on to someone who wants to rock your world, blow your mind, and will never hand your glass slipper to the wicked stepsister when he has Cinderella standing right in front of him?

Here's the good news:



**THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *You're a first place girl...not a “just in case” girl!*

When you realize you're worth so much more, it won't be so hard to finally close that door! You have to know when to say when to what might have been and get in line with what can still be. The hardest



part is realizing his part in your story is over. Yes, you were crazy about him. No, you can't just make your feelings disappear like magic. And yes, it's probably going to hurt for awhile. But here's the best part: You are stronger than even your strongest weakness. Know your power, lady! There is no one that you are not strong enough to walk away from, so put on your best stilettos and start walking! If he can't say yes, it's time for you to say no and GO. The time for hesitation is over. The Future is waiting; but it will never fight with the Past to get your attention. And once you've made the decision to move on, don't look back. You will never find your Future in the rearview mirror.

Ultimately, Justin Case might have been one of those fun tunes to hum along to for a while, but you can only repeat the chorus of a song for so long before you realize the record is skipping: never moving back but also never moving forward. It's time to stop singing the chorus and start rewriting the verses. Remember: Mr. Right will recognize the music of your heart and sing along to a tune that could never be heard by Mr. Wrong. So go ahead, First Place Girl. Rock his world. In life and in love, there are no points for second place. Make today the day you let go of and move on from Justin Case.

Let's Review...

### **The WHAT: Five Fabulous Finds**

- If it's not honoring you—it doesn't deserve a seat at your table.
- Rid yourself of all the things you've outgrown and the things you're meant to grow into will track you down.
- If it doesn't FEEL right for you...it's NOT right for you.
- Timing is everything. What good is finding the RIGHT thing if it's the WRONG time?
- You're a first place girl...not a "just in case" girl!

# The WHY of Letting Go & Moving On

We know WHAT and WHO we're letting go of...but maybe you're still asking yourself: "WHY should I let go of this person or job or opportunity or negative emotion?" Or "Shouldn't I play it safe and cling to the familiar rather than take a chance on the unknown?" Or even: "WHY should I move on from something that still makes me smile, even if only for a little while?" Or my favorite: "WHY should I let go of THIS, when nothing better may ever come along?"

And my answer is this: Because YOU ARE SOMETHING BETTER.

Just like Rose let go of Jack and I let go of my Mr. Big, you will instinctively KNOW when it's time to let go. For whatever reason, no matter how good the thing looks from the OUTSIDE, if your INSIDE is telling you it's not the right choice for you—it's time to strap on those running shoes and head for the hills!



**THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *Stop in the name of intuition! When your gut says NO—it's time to GO!*

Here's the thing about that still, small voice: It's never wrong.

Better than any crystal ball, palm reader, or Nostradamus prediction—your instincts feel it before they even reveal it. The 1988 Roxette song "Listen to Your Heart" attempted to explain it but couldn't define it. Our heart. Our intuition. A weird feeling. A gut instinct. Whatever you call it—female intuition has been around since the dawn of time and will live on 'til the dust of time. I would even go so far as to say that on that fateful morning in the Garden of Eden, Eve must have grabbed the remote control and put her intuition on mute; otherwise, she and Adam probably wouldn't have ever taken a bite out of that infamous apple and we might still be walking around naked. (In other words, blame Eve for your credit card bill!)

Time and time and time again, we read stories of women who knew their husbands were cheating with absolutely no evidence...and they were right. Women who canceled flights at the last minute because they had a bad feeling...and the plane later crashed. Women who let go and moved on from a friend or a job or a relationship with no provocation besides "just a gut feeling," and were likely teased mercilessly and doubted and looked at like they were crazy...only to later discover a fundamental flaw in the friend or job or relationship that would have caused them massive amounts of heartache had they not left the party early. If it's so essential, so instrumental to our lives, why are we so quick to dismiss this internal voice of ours?

Perhaps because sometimes it's painful...and inconvenient...and even scary...to heed this voice that is often saying something that we don't want to hear. In my own life, my intuition has always served me well—when I am willing to listen to it. A few years ago, I had a flirtation going with my trainer at the gym. It just so happens, Trainer Guy also worked out with my best friend at the time, whom we'll call Violet (to protect the not-so-innocent). Somewhere along the way, I picked up on a vibe that was, for lack of a better term, icky. Uneasy. Like a black cloud hanging over me every time I saw Trainer

Guy and every time I saw Violet, similar to the infamous cloud that trails behind Pig Pen from the Peanuts gang. Since Violet was married, I had no real reason to suspect that anything was going on between her and Trainer Guy, and yet, something wasn't right. It was driving me crazy. I confronted Violet; she flatly denied it. I confronted her again. Denial again. This went on several more times until eventually, the feeling got so strong and so overwhelming, I had to completely sever the friendship. She told me I was crazy and couldn't believe I would accuse her of such a thing and that one day I would learn the truth and feel foolish. Guess what? I DID learn the truth, but it wasn't me who felt foolish. As it turned out, Denial IS just a river in Egypt, because a few months later, Violet was divorced and another trainer at the gym confided in me that Violet and Trainer Guy had been hooking up behind my back the ENTIRE time. And sometimes it happens that way. We exit a situation that feels wrong for reasons we can't quite put our finger on, only to find out later that we were right all along.



**THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *If a situation FEELS wrong for you, it IS wrong for you. Call it a day and walk away!*

Your intuition IS REAL, and is a key element in the process of letting go and moving on. Don't just hear it. Listen to it. If you sense a red flag going up in your mind, STOP, slow down, listen, reevaluate. It only takes ONE stop sign to make us stop a car, so why does it take numerous red flags to bring a relationship or situation to a halt? If something is nagging at the corners of your mind about a person, place, job, or circumstance...listen to your heart and get to the bottom of what your concern is. However, if you can't get to the bottom of it and you're still feeling uneasy, let it go anyway. It is always, always better to be safe than sorry. You will NEVER find your destiny down a dead-end road...so make a YOU-turn and take the next exit onto Possibility Avenue!

Remember: Your heart talks the truth so your legs can walk the truth. Once you've determined why you're reacting so strongly to a situation, you must start letting more than your fingers do the walking, and exit stage left. If you find out a person is backstabbing you, a boyfriend is cheating on you, or a situation at work will cause you to compromise your values or beliefs, and you still hang around for the fallout...you're not honoring yourself or your truth. I have found, over and over again, when I don't heed my internal voice and I move forward anyway, disaster strikes. And there ain't nothin' fun about having to put out a fire that I could have stopped before the match was even struck.

At the end of the day, to truly live the lives we were meant to live, we have to be willing to walk away from, or walk toward, the things that our hearts are urging us to catch or release, often with little to no evidence other than our intuition to support our decision. But here's the thing: It's impossible to go wrong when you actively, doggedly, ardently follow your heart. More often than not, it takes stepping away from the crowd and charting your own path in order to heed that still, small voice...so if you find yourself alone out there, never fear; it means greatness is near!

The WHY of letting it go is quite simple: You have to let go of what is NOT meant for you in order to receive what IS. So now I ask you: What are YOU willing to let go of today, to get a little closer to your life's purpose? A relationship with someone who "seems" like the Perfect Guy on paper, but your intuition is telling you otherwise? A "dream job" that would bring you more money than you can count, but leave your happiness tank running on empty? A friendship that you outgrew long ago, but like that pair of skinny jeans in the top of the closet, you hope and pray will one day fit again? (Believe me, I understand. I gaze wistfully at that pair of skinny jeans every time I open my closet.) I

urge you, right this very minute, to check your inner compass, ask yourself if you are following your heart or your head, and then let that still, small voice guide you in the direction of your TRUE North Star. Remember: Success is determined as much by the opportunities you are willing to release as the ones you seize. Every opportunity you let go of that isn't meant to be a part of your life's journey is another clue...pointing you toward the ones that are meant just for you.

### **The WHY: Five Fabulous Finds**

- Stop in the name of intuition! When your gut says NO—it's time to GO.
- It only takes ONE stop sign to make us stop a car...so why does it take numerous red flags to bring a relationship or situation to a halt?
- You will NEVER find your destiny down a dead-end road...so make a YOU-turn and take the next exit onto Possibility Avenue!
- You have to let go of what is NOT meant for you to receive what IS.
- Every person, job, or opportunity you let go of that isn't meant to be a part of your life's journey is another clue...pointing you toward the ones that are meant just for you.

# The WHEN of Letting Go & Moving On

So now we know WHAT we're letting go and moving on from, and WHY we should let go and move on...but maybe you're looking at your watch and wondering: WHEN is the right time to move on? Half past gut feeling and a quarter 'til dead-end road? Well, in a manner of speaking.

When something or someone is no longer bringing you up, but pulling you down—it's time to let go.

When something or someone is no longer adding to your life, but subtracting from it—it's time to let go.

When you're remaining in a job or a relationship or a situation because you're afraid to find out what's on the other side of taking a leap into the unknown—it's time to let go.

When an opportunity would diminish you, cause you to compromise your integrity, truth, or self-respect, or require you to be anything other than authentically YOU—it's time to let go.

When a negative emotion is holding you back from living your best life—whether it's anger, jealousy, bitterness, unforgiveness, insecurity, fear, self-doubt, or any other toxic emotion—it's time to let go.

When someone shows no interest in being with you, is consistently inconsistent, and their actions don't match up with their words—it's time to let go.

When a relationship comes wrapped in a big red flag instead of a big red bow—it's time to let go.

When someone is treating you poorly, lying to you, cheating on you, disrespecting you, pushing you around, or being verbally, mentally, emotionally, or physically abusive in any way, shape, or form... it's WAY past time to let go.

Let's break this down a bit. Maybe you've been struggling to let go of a relationship, a friendship, a job, an opportunity, AND a grievance—and if that's the case, I urge you to read through all of the following sections. Perhaps even several times! But if there are only one or two “Leonardos” you're clinging to, pick and choose the sections that apply only to you and tap into your inner Rose. She's there, waiting to survive and thrive. *She* knew WHEN to let go—and you do, too. You've just been hitting the snooze button on your internal clock a little too much lately. Well, I'm here to tell you to WAKE UP, sassy lady! Your fabulous life is waiting!

## When to Let Go & Move On From: A Job

You told yourself it was only a short-term gig. A way to pay the bills and still be able to pursue the dream. A brief layover on the way to your REAL destination. So why is it that you find yourself sitting at the same desk, at the same thankless job, five years later?

Since this is the Real World (no, not the MTV version), and we are mature and responsible adults, we

all have bills to pay and responsibilities to fulfill and credit reports to keep in reasonably decent condition. So it's not like we can afford to just leave behind our corner office with a view and gallop off into the sunset for parts unknown...parts that most likely don't come equipped with medical and dental and a 401k. HOWEVER, that being said, you were not put on this earth to stay chained to someone else's desk while your own dream sits on the shelf gathering dust.



**THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *The desires of your heart were not put there by accident. Follow them.*

Every dream...every desire of your heart...everything that you're passionate about...your God-given talent: All of these things are clues pointing you to your greater calling. But there are some things you're going to have to hang up on in order to answer that calling. Most of us spend more time at our jobs than we do with our own families. Do you really want to waste another second of your life on a job that's filling your bank account but doing very little for your soul?

Bottom line: A dead-end job will never get you to your destination in life. It might feel like the safe, comfortable choice to stay in a steady, reliable position out of fear of the unknown, but the truth is—it's really the riskiest thing you can do. While you spend minutes, hours, days, and even years toiling away at a job that you're not 100% passionate about, precious time that you could be dedicating to your own dreams dwindles away.

So WHEN is it time to let go and move on from that job?

The minute you find yourself going through the motions instead of kicking butt and pursuing that latest promotion. The minute your goal becomes punching a clock rather than climbing your way to the top. And definitely the minute you find yourself starting to schedule even the most unpleasant of tasks, like your yearly gyno exam, during work hours because, frankly, a date with the stirrups sounds like a walk in the park compared to another 9-5 at a job that no longer makes you come alive.

You have to want the life that's meant for you bad enough to surrender everything that's not. And that includes being willing to surrender even the cushiest, easiest, most high-paying job. Why? Because not even a seven-figure salary is worth the price of your dream.

### When to Let Go & Move On From: A Friendship

You've been friends since before the dawn of time. If life were a Barbie Dream House, you'd be Barbie and Skipper. You own the "BE FRI" necklace to her "ST ENDS" necklace. Every major event of your entire life is linked to this person, and you hardly have a memory without her in it. As a matter of fact, you even served as her maid of honor.

But lately, it seems as though she's just not honoring YOU. Instead of celebrating your life's choices, she belittles them. Instead of encouraging you to do your best, she giggles behind your back when you do your worst. Instead of picking you up when you're down, she kicks you while you're down. For whatever reason, somewhere along the way, the friendship went horribly awry...and the two of you seem to be more at home facing one another on a battleground than finding common ground.

It happens as we get older and grow up and change. Friendships we thought would be in our lives forever turn out to have an expiration date. Your lives are on two separate tracks and it seems as though there's simply no going back. And as much as you love her and cherish the memories you've shared together, you know in your heart that the friendship has run its course.



**THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *You have to lose some friends and lovers along the way to find the ones that are meant to stay.*

Perhaps your friend is overwhelmingly emotionally needy and draining you of your time and energy. Or maybe she lied to you, betrayed you, or inflicted some other pain upon you. Or maybe your friend is incredibly negative, cynical, and pessimistic, working overtime to rain on your parade because she's jealous of your sun and tired of her shade. Whatever the case may be—if a friendship brings out the WORST in you rather than the BEST in you, it's not a friendship that belongs in your life.

You can love them...forgive them...want good things for them...but still move on without them.

I've discovered throughout my journey that every time I release a negative presence from my life, two or three positive ones pop up in their place. However, new things can't enter your life until you make room for them. No matter how fabulous and chic that new dress from Barneys might be, there will be no room for it until you clear out all the old, outgrown, out-of-style ensembles and overall clutter from your closet. Or you'll cram it in anyway with all the old items, forcing it to become wrinkled and rumpled and worn-looking before you've even had a chance to wear it.

My point? Spring clean your life the same way you would your closet. Let go of the old and make room for the new. The friendship had significance and meaning and importance...for a season. And that season has passed. Just like you wouldn't wear a bikini in the winter or snow boots in the summer, it makes no sense to try to extend a friendship that was only meant to be a season into a lifetime. Make peace with what has been and what will never be again...and in doing so, you usher in WHAT IS YET TO COME. You won't BELIEVE what life has in store once you release the people who don't fit you anymore.

### When to Let Go & Move On From: An Opportunity

I was recently offered an opportunity to star on a reality show—an opportunity that most people never receive. To potentially be the “next big thing” is an opportunity that most people would have seized, no questions asked, without hesitation, and never looked back. The show was even being shot in Nashville, where I live, so I wouldn't even have had to pick up and move my life, or really disrupt it much in the least in order to participate. But for me, something just didn't feel quite right. I felt inner turmoil and resistance, and my gut was speaking up in a big way, telling me to walk away. “But what if I never get an opportunity like this ever again?” my head kept asking me, trying its best to override my heart. Ultimately, I couldn't sign on the dotted line of that contract no matter how many changes the producers made to make me feel more at peace. Why? Because it just WASN'T THE RIGHT MOVE FOR ME.

So I let it go...and I moved on.

A few weeks later, I received complete confirmation about why I never felt a sense of peace with doing the show. Confirmation that came much, much quicker than I could have ever anticipated. The show is already receiving negative buzz around town and features some highly questionable cast members...people who I would never want my name linked to, especially not on national television. And though I'm pretty sure I hurt a friend (who would have starred in the show with me) by making the decision to walk away, in the long run, I know now that I saved both myself and my friend from a world of grief with my decision. That one decision could have, and likely would have, altered the course of both of our lives forever—and not in a way that either of us would have desired. By listening to my gut and being willing to act on what I KNEW was the right decision, regardless of what others thought of me or how crazy it looked to everyone else or how cool of an opportunity it appeared to be on the surface, I steered my inner compass a little closer to my ultimate destiny.



**THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *A red flag is just a stop sign waiting to happen.*

A couple of weeks after turning down the show, I signed on the dotted line with my current business partner—a relationship that is completely God-centered and ordained and that I haven't had a moment's hesitation about. We are planning some amazing things and working on projects that have the potential to make a positive impact on women all across the globe. And it likely never would have happened had I rushed into the reality show against my better judgment.

Do a gut check. Does the opportunity FEEL right for you, or does it just SOUND or LOOK right for you? Do you have any hesitation at all? If so, take a step or two back and reevaluate. In my experience, I have found that if a situation is TRULY right for you, it will still be there after sitting on it for a day or two. And if it's not—well, then maybe it was God's way of closing the door because He has something so much better in store! God and the Universe will never fail to reward your willingness to surrender what's NOT meant for you with something that IS. No opportunity that is meant for you is ever lost to you. Ultimately, as much as I love to encourage people to dance with chance, if the DJ's not playing the music of your heart, it might be best to sit this one out.

### When to Let Go & Move On From: A Grievance

Maybe you're living with regret. Or anger. Or unforgiveness. Or bitterness. Or unhappiness. Or fear. Or blame. Whether it's directed at either yourself or someone else—it doesn't matter. Negative mindsets and toxic emotions will leave you locked in a prison of your own making...and all the while, YOU hold the key!

The time is always NOW to free yourself from the chains of unresolved issues and unforgiven grievances. Continuously clinging to past hurts and wounds and mistakes and expecting your life to be positive and happy is like trying to plant a garden in a garbage can. It just ain't happening! You can't talk and think trash and expect everything to come up roses. Isn't it time to trade the WEEDS from the past for the SEEDS of the future?



**THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *Refusing to forgive those who walked away from you or hurt you allows people who aren't even in your life anymore to control you.*



So many times in life, we (myself included) are guilty of misplacing the blame on someone else for OUR issues...for OUR unhappiness...for OUR pain. I don't say that to discount the fact that we are ALL going to face challenges and yes, life is at times, extremely difficult. But the bottom line is this: there comes a point when we have to assume responsibility for our OWN lives and our OWN happiness, and unless we want to keep experiencing more of the same...stop the blame.

No one can make you happy except you...and no one can make you miserable except you. As tempting as it is to blame the person that betrayed you or abandoned you or cheated on you or let you down as the cause for your unhappiness, it is ultimately up to you to decide if you are going to let your peace and joy and hope walk out the door simply because they did.

Perhaps it's not someone else walking away from you that's causing you pain—but the fact that you are unable to be there for yourself. For example, maybe you struggle with insecurity. You've surrounded yourself with self doubt and self loathing and depression and low self-esteem for so long that letting go of those old familiar faces, as torturous, unforgiving, and relentless as they might be, is scarier than the thought of traveling the same path over and over and over again without ever reaching the destination. Maybe when you were growing up, no one remembered to tell you that you were pretty, or that they loved you, or that you had worth. There are absolutely no circumstances where that is acceptable, and it's important to remember that's it not your fault, in any way, shape, or form. You were wronged. You were disempowered. You were the victim.

But guess what? You don't have to STAY the victim.

At the end of the day, regardless of who did what to you in the past, the only person responsible for your present is YOU. When all is said and done, we ALL go through things in life that if we allowed them to, could destroy us, make us jaded or bitter, or cause us to throw in the towel. However, we CAN make the choice to let tough times polish us instead of demolish us. We CAN take what they meant for bad and turn it into something good.

So WHEN is the right time to let go and move on? NOW! This very moment! Take responsibility for your own life TODAY. It's empowering. It's freeing. It's necessary for becoming who you were born to be. At some point in your life, you may have been victimized...but that doesn't have to make you a victim, unless you let it. Allow everything you've been through to propel you toward everything you're going to be. Take your power back from the past and the people that hurt you there by choosing to forgive and live. Stop looking for a hero and BECOME one.

Remember: Happiness starts with YOU. Not with your relationship, or your friends, or your job, or anything other than YOU. Not with what's going on OUTSIDE...but with who you are INSIDE. You are NOT broken simply because your heart is...and your worth did NOT walk away simply because they did. Stop giving away your power and realize that YOU alone choose your energy and your attitude and your mindset every day. It's up to you. You can keep dwelling...or you can start prevailing.

The time is NOW to let go and move on. Today is the first day of the rest of your life. Get out there and make it the first day of the BEST of your life.

## When to Let Go & Move On From: A Relationship

This is the number one question I get for advice, hands down. How do I let go of **(Insert Guy's Name Here)** ?

*Dear Mandy,*

*I met this guy who I'm CRAZY about...but he never calls, texts, asks me out, or really shows any interest at all. But when I call HIM, he's SO sweet and we have a blast together! Only trouble is, I'm ALWAYS the one calling him. Do you think maybe he's just shy? Or is it time to let go?*

*Love,*

*In Denial in Indianapolis*

OR...

*Dear Mandy,*

*There's this guy who I just KNOW is my soul mate...we laugh all the time, we agree on EVERYTHING, he treats me with utmost respect...I really think he's Mr. Right! Only—he has a wife. He's miserable with her and he says she's crazy and that the marriage ended a long time ago...he's just waiting until all the planets align and we put a man on Mars and well, you know...pigs fly and Hell freezes over to leave her. This sounds like a reasonable time frame to me. What do you think? Hold on, or let go?*

*Love,*

*Duped in Denver*

OR...

*Dear Mandy,*

*I just can't seem to get over my ex. I really think he's the person I'm supposed to spend the rest of my life with. Sure, he doesn't have a job...he stole my checkbook and wrote hot checks all over town posing as me, so I actually have a warrant out for my arrest now...and he regularly brings home other women in the car that I own to the house that I pay for...but I think he's just misunderstood. A diamond in the rough! What do you think? Shouldn't I stick around and help him realize his full potential?*

*Love,*

*Clueless in Columbus*

Ladies.

Beautiful, wonderful, deserving, intelligent, successful, sassy, got-it-going on LADIES! Has it been THAT long since *He's Just Not That Into You* ? Did we learn nothing from Greg Behrendt's straight-talkin', to-the-point, no-holds-barred account of what it looks like when a man is crazy about you, as opposed to when a man is just crazy?

Let me put it to you this way...



**THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *If a man's being shady with you, cut him loose! A true diva is too busy walkin' on sunshine to chase a man in the shade!*

When a man wants to be with you, truly wants to be with you—he'll be with you. Simple as that. There won't be excuses, angst, drama, explanations, apologies, other women, shadiness, uncertainty, ifs, ands or buts about it...HE WILL BE WITH YOU.

When a man is truly feeling a woman, he will make a way. Ain't no mountain high enough or valley low enough to keep him away. Period. End of sentence.

Let's face it—in every single girl's life, a bad relationship, a wishy-washy man, or a Justin Case will eventually fall. It's inevitable, sort of like the dryer eating your socks or hitting all the green lights in town when you're trying to put on your makeup en route to work. And it's nothing short of a major letdown when your dashing prince transforms into a warty frog right in front of your very eyes. The good news is this—there are red flags that will start waving pretty early on to signal a disaster waiting to happen.

So WHEN is it time to move on and let go from a relationship?

- If he has a girlfriend
- If he has a wife
- If he doesn't call you, text you, ask you out, or show any interest in spending time with you
- If he makes excuses instead of making plans
- If you can never find him, or feel like your "relationship" is a constant game of *Where's Waldo?*
- If he steals from you, lies to you, cheats on you, or takes advantage of you in any way
- If he lists "Gainful Employment" as one of his allergies

- If you're dating him because you think you can change him
- If you are dating him because you're afraid to be alone
- If he is verbally, emotionally, mentally, or physically abusive. In this case...don't just let go and move on. RUN.

We'll touch on abusive relationships a little later.

While it takes guts and courage and bravery to end a relationship in progress, to walk away from someone you really, truly care about, or to learn to stand on your own two feet again once you've gotten used to the support of another—it is a bold and necessary act when you know in your heart that it's not the right relationship for you. Besides, wouldn't you rather have a SOUL mate than just a plain ole mate? Ultimately, finding the right guy begins with YOU. BECOME the love of your life, and you will ATTRACT the love of your life. And letting go and moving on from relationships that don't serve you makes room for the ones that deserve you!

Let's Review...

### **The WHEN: Five Fabulous Finds**

- The desires of your heart were not put there by accident. Follow them.
- You have to lose some friends and lovers along the way to find the ones that are meant to stay.
- A red flag is just a stop sign waiting to happen.
- Refusing to forgive those who walked away from you or hurt you allows people who aren't even in your life anymore to control you.
- If a man's being shady with you, cut him loose! A true diva is too busy walkin' on sunshine to chase a man in the shade!

## The WHO of Letting Go & Moving On

The WHO of letting go and moving on is probably the easiest to identify, but the most difficult to put into practice. It involves actually removing a person from your life that you deeply care about, or at least did at one time. When I find myself in a situation where I'm facing the departure of someone I care about, whether by my choice or by default, I remind myself of one of my favorite quotations, by author and all-around rockstar human being Paulo Coelho:

*“When someone leaves, it’s because someone else is about to arrive.”*

Isn't that a comforting thought?

Every time in my life that I've let go of someone that I knew my life no longer had room for, without fail, their absence has been replaced by another, more positive person, promotion, or push in the right direction. Remember: New things can only grow where you give them room to bloom.

Just as we let go and move on from the literal seasons of life, it is just as vital, if not more so, to let go and move on from the figurative seasons of life. Think about it—what would happen if we tried to wear winter clothes in the summer? We would be miserable, feel smothered, unable to perform to our highest capacity. The same holds true if we cling to a winter relationship once a new season of our souls has arrived.

There is always a certain melancholy that comes with the changing of seasons. When lazy summer nights turn into brisk fall evenings...when the hot sun is replaced by a cool breeze...when the never-ending summer suddenly reveals it does, in fact, have an expiration date...and when the season that changed your life in so many ways falls away with the leaves on the trees and becomes just another memory to keep you warm on a cold winter's night.

Typically, when Mother Nature shifts from one season to the next, we notice a visceral shift in our own lives...nudging us gently from one era to another...urging us to always reach for the next level and refuse to remain stagnant...reminding us that nothing is permanent: not joy, not pain, not friendship, and sometimes, not even love.

My friend, Mastin Kipp, founder of The Daily Love, has this to say about moving on:

*“Do not deny the sadness of moving on. Instead sit in it with a whole lot of love for yourself and the situation. No matter how much you may wish that life could be different, accept that this is what's true for today.*

*“There is a jewel within the melancholy of letting go. The jewel is the beginning of a new awareness within yourself and a new life. Each relationship, business venture, job, and phase of our lives serves as platforms for us to grow.*

*“Joy comes to those who are able to sit in the in between, the space between what was and what will be. Joy comes to those who do not run from their feelings but courageously embrace them in search of*

*the new jewel of awareness.*

*“Remember, for a new day to begin the darkness of night must fall. Each is a natural part of the cycle of life. Embrace the dark moments and remember that just before dawn is the darkest of night.*

*“Just be with it—the dawn will break.”*

~The Daily Love, 9/18/10

Many times in life, it is right at the moment that we begin to get comfortable that everything shifts. Sometimes the change is almost imperceptible, until one day we awake to find our lives are radically different. Often when we transition from one season of our lives to the next, certain things don't survive: relationships, mindsets, friendships, careers. It's as if we take stock of our lives the same way we take stock of our wardrobe and decide what to keep, what gets to make the move with us from one era into the next, and what gets discarded because it no longer fits.

It is during these moments of life that we have a choice: Go with the flow, release who and what WAS, and embrace what IS...or stubbornly cling to yesterday, all the while denying the present and delaying the future.

There are two major WHO'S that we need to let go and move on from in life...

- Friendships
  
- Relationships

### Letting Go & Moving On From: Friendships

I, as most of you probably do, tend to invest a lot of myself into people and into friendships, and it hurts when you feel that the other person is not making an equal investment. That's normal, and it's perfectly okay. You can give yourself permission to feel hurt or even angered when people do not treat you with the same love and respect that you show them.

However, the thing you must remember, and this is SO important—is to not stay STUCK in that anger or hurt. Allow yourself to really feel it and to sit with your pain for awhile, then allow yourself to let it go. The reason people become bitter and disenchanted with life is because they cling to anger like a bad habit and never release it.



**THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *It is healthy to allow yourself to FEEL emotions, negative and positive. It is not healthy to let those emotions hold you captive.*

Also, if there is a particular person in your life that repeatedly chooses not to honor you and causes

you more sadness or pain than joy, it might be time to release that friendship back to God and the Universe and trust that it is not where you belong. I have had to cut ties with people that I loved very deeply because they were choosing to abuse the boundaries of our friendship and to take advantage of my heart in a way that was causing me great pain, and life is too short for that! It hurts to let go of a friendship that means a great deal to you; however, I have found, time and again, that when you release your hold on a negative friendship (or, as I call it, a “toxic friendship”), the Universe has a way of bringing two or three positive friendships into your life as replacements. We MUST let go of the old to receive the new—it is a rule of life. Better to hurt temporarily and let go of negativity than to allow yourself to be hurt over and over and over again. Give NO ONE permission to hurt you! True friends will love you and support you and honor you and never trample on the beauty of your friendship by purposely causing you pain. It’s better to have two or three TRUE friends than roomfuls of faux friends.

At the end of the day, whether you speak up and let the person causing you pain know that their actions are unacceptable or whether you just choose to walk away—HONOR YOURSELF FIRST. When you truly begin to honor yourself, others will fall into line, too. You have to believe that you are worthy of respect and kindness and loyalty and love...and YOU ARE!

Remember: Life is too short for constant struggle and pain. LET IT GO and move on to the beauty and light. It is there. Trust me on this one.

### Letting Go & Moving On From: Relationships

This one can be even trickier than friendships, because the dating game is often uncertain and unclear. Ironically enough, it seems the more forms of communication we obtain: texting, tumbling, tweeting, Facebooking, IMing, Google+ chatting, Face-Timing, the list goes on and on...the more room there is for miscommunication.

### **The Dating Game**

If you’re in the early stages of dating and he’s showing normal levels of interest—calling you, texting you, asking you out—you have every reason to feel encouraged that this might be a relationship that is going somewhere. The catch in this scenario is, of course, to carry on your life outside of him and not get so wrapped up in the relationship SO quickly that you douse the spark with neediness before you’ve even really had a chance to fan the flames.

There’s a quote by Helen Rowland that says this: *“A man is like a cat; chase him and he will run. Sit still and ignore him and he’ll come purring at your feet.”* Since ancient times, man has thrived on the thrill of the hunt and the excitement of the pursuit, and if you make it too easy on him, he feels deprived of the chance to win your affections...steal your heart...earn your love. Or let me break it down, woman to woman: think back to when you were little. When your parents just outright gave you a new doll with no stipulations and no requirements attached, more often than not, you played with the doll a few times, ran her through the mud, chopped all her hair off playing “Hairdresser” and discarded her into the pile of forgotten toys. But when you had to do chores and save up every cent of

allowance you earned for six months to buy that doll yourself, she was treated with the utmost care and caution. Her dress stayed clean. Not a strand of hair was out of place. In fact, she's probably still perched in your china cabinet to this day in pristine condition. The lesson? Sit your affections, your heart, and your precious time out on the doorstep without so much as making him ring the doorbell first, and he'll treat you like a doormat. Make him work a little to get next to you, and he won't stop 'til you're his. Then he'll keep showing up for you, over and over, because he'll know that you are a steel magnolia and not a shrinking violet.

Am I suggesting you play games? Not at all. Am I suggesting you "pretend" to have a life? No! I'm suggesting you actually go out and GET one. A busy, vibrant, goal-oriented woman is so much more attractive than a woman who waits around for a man to validate her existence. In the Game of Love, here are a few simple tips to keep you on Fierce and Fabulous Avenue instead of Desperate and Needy Street:

1) Don't make a habit of calling him. Once you've established a dating relationship, it's okay to bend the rules a little and initiate contact from time to time, but in the early stages of getting to know each other, LET HIM COME TO YOU. Remember, "If you chase it, it will run." Constant calling, texting, emailing, Facebooking, sending a carrier pigeon with a handcrafted note in its beak telling him how fabulous he is = overkill. Give him a chance to miss you a little. If you're always in his inbox or call log, you're not giving absence a chance to make his heart grow fonder.

2) Practice the art of the occasional "No" instead of the permanent "Yes." You don't have to repeat "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes" like a parakeet every time he asks you to hang out. Once in awhile, say no. Unfortunately, a woman that's always available can quickly become synonymous with a woman that is DESPERATE. You have a fabulous, busy, rewarding life of your own—so don't always be so quick to leave that fabulous life and go rushing over to his! A woman who is not afraid to be unpredictable is a woman that will always, always keep his attention.

3) Finally, and most importantly, love yourself enough to pursue your own dreams and your own passions in such a way that you will never be mistaken for a girl without a life and a mind of her own. Don't make him the center of your universe—make him a fantastic constellation that you gaze at and enjoy from time to time but that doesn't stop your world from spinning happily on its axis. Or as Henry David Thoreau put it: "*Go confidently in the direction of your dreams and live the life you've imagined.*" The only way you can do that is if you follow your own North Star and refuse to allow the sun and moon to rise on the face of anyone other than yourself.

The main thing to remember in all of this is this: your value and your worth and your fabulousness will never be wrapped up in another human being. The only person you have to live with every day for the rest of your life is yourself, so start with making her happy...and the rest will fall into place.



**THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *Don't PLAY hard to get. BE hard to get.*

## The Ex-Files

In the life of every single woman, occasionally a brief, or sometimes extended, hiatus from singledom will occur. This phenomenon is commonly known as a "relationship." Yes, for one brief, shining



moment, your Prince Charming gallops into your life and into your heart on his brilliant white horse, and you just know that all is right with the world and that your Happily Ever After has officially begun.

But then, inevitably, your world comes crashing down when you discover that the horse he's been riding is on loan, the castle he lives in is really a house of cards, and the words he's been whispering in your ear were from someone else's script. Yes, you have fallen victim to the Prince Charming imposter, also known as a "Frog in Prince Charming's Clothing." Weary from the game, losing faith in fairytales, you hang up your glass slippers and vow "Never again!" before descending into a heap of pajama-clad, tear-stained, Ben & Jerry's-eating hopelessness—a dark cloud from which you are certain you will never emerge.

Here's the key to unlocking yourself from the chains of misery that ensnare you after a failed relationship: this unfortunate turn of events not only doesn't have to DEFINE you, but your response to it can (and will!) REFINE you—if you are open, willing, and ready to read between the lines of your past to extract the lessons for your future. Here are some ways to let go and move on from your Ex in order to avoid RSVPing to your own "Breakup Pity Party":

1. Allow yourself time to feel the grief and let it wash over you—but take a quick shower in it, not an extended bubblebath. There's no need to start wearing head-to-toe black and refusing to wash your right hand because that was the last hand that he held. Absolutely allow yourself to be sad, but keep it in perspective. NO wallowing allowed! Sit with your sadness for a little while, then show it the door. Sadness is a houseguest similar to that annoying, ever-unemployed friend of yours (you know the one)—it will hang out as long as you let it. Also similar to that friend, it will deplete you of your time, your energy, and your will to be fabulous. And never let anyone take away your fabulous without a fight!

2. Purge the constant reminders from your living environment. You don't have to hold a "cleansing ceremony" and burn all his belongings a la the infamous *Friends* episode circa 1995, but if you're still sleeping in his favorite sweatshirt and spraying yourself with his cologne every night—girl, you gotta let go. Pack up all pictures, clothes, CDs, stuffed teddy bears, anything that keeps you tied to his memory and store it away somewhere safe. I recommend not throwing it away, because there might come a day when these tokens elicit smiles instead of sadness; but I would also steer clear of a big, dramatic "return the things" meeting with him, also known as "an excuse to see him one last time." If you tuck everything away in a safe place, you can always go back later when you're feeling stronger and decide what to do with it without having to stare at it on a daily basis. There really is something to the whole "out of sight, out of mind" theory.

3. Call your girls and tell them to circle the wagons. When your soul is in need of a little chicken soup, there is nothing more comforting than the presence of your soul sisters. Go dancing, go see a movie (a comedy—not a sappy chick flick!), get a pedicure, consume large amounts of chocolate, and let the warm sunshine of friendship dry your tears. Chances are if you've been wrapped up in a serious relationship for the past six months, you might have been neglecting your girl time anyway, so there's no time like the present to reestablish those bonds of sisterhood! After all, as Carrie Bradshaw once said:

*"No matter who broke your heart, or how long it takes to heal, you'll never get through it without your friends."* ~*Sex & the City*

4. Absolutely no stalking allowed! Step away from Facebook, Twitter, Google+, or any other mechanism you might be using to track his every move. In fact, consider deleting him from your social networking circle all together—at least for the time being. You cannot move on from someone by staying glued to your computer screen for fear he might be moving on from you. Let go. Breathe. When you're feeling tempted to call him, call a friend instead. When you're feeling tempted to drive by his house to see if he's home (Yes, we've all been there. And if you say you haven't, remember that Denial ain't just a river in Egypt), drive to Starbucks or the gym or the bookstore instead. Once the relationship is over, it's over, and revisiting it in the form of a restraining order is not exactly going to bring you closure. Besides, you're FAR too classy and sassy for that kind of behavior! True divas refuse to lower themselves to chasing a man through cyberspace (or anywhere else, for that matter).

5. Get reacquainted with YOU. What have you been putting on the back burner while you've been fanning the flames of love? Get back in touch with YOUR passions, YOUR dreams, YOUR goals. Start a new hobby. Pursue a new interest. Try yoga. Join a book club. Volunteer. Do something to contribute to the greater good of the world and the greater good of your soul, and before you know it—you'll be smiling again. Focus all the energy you've been focusing on him on something you're passionate about, and the universe will start rolling out the red carpet for you. Amazing, unbelievably good things start to happen when you follow your gut, your truth, your passions, your heart. Isn't our heart always more reliable than GPS, anyway?

At the end of the day, in the succinctly put words of Greg Behrendt, *"It's called a breakup because it's broken."* (Great breakup book, by the way. Buy it!) God and the universe clearly saw that the man behind the curtain wasn't the man for you and steered you back onto the Yellow Brick Road to L-O-V-E. Someday soon, you might even look up and say, "Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore!"



**THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *Don't recycle your exes. It's bad for the environment!*

### **The Single Woman's Zero Tolerance Policy**

While most of my advice is designed to be lighthearted and funny while also informative—there is a WHO of letting go and moving on that is no laughing matter.

It is a WHO that I have experienced firsthand—a “Leonardo” that I clung to like a life raft in a sea of self-imposed isolation and fear and loneliness—all because I didn't want to let anyone get close enough to me to see what was REALLY going on.

It is a WHO that can leave you feeling powerless, worthless, and helpless. It is a WHO that you see in Lifetime movies and think to yourself, “I could never fall victim to someone like that.” A WHO that can make you question everything about yourself: your sanity, your worth, your choices, your very existence.

The WHO I'm referring to is, of course, an abusive mate.

For a year and a half out of my life, I was tied to someone who verbally, emotionally, mentally, and physically abused me.

For the purposes of this book, we'll call him Steven.

I say I was “tied to him” because for all intents and purposes, I was. We shared an address. We shared belongings. We shared our lives. At the beginning, it was out of love. Then it was out of co-dependence. Finally, it was out of fear.

The abuse started off small. He would push me out of the way or grab me by my arms during an argument, leaving purple bruises in the shape of fingerprints on my upper arms. Bruises that I would make up elaborate stories for how I got whenever someone at work would see them and ask about them. He would call me names...horrible names. Bitch, whore, psycho, slut. Basically any degrading name you can think of to leave me feeling as unworthy as he possibly could.

One night it escalated to the next level when he kicked my feet out from under me as I stood on the hard tile kitchen floor in our apartment. I crashed to the ground, my ankle pinned beneath me at an unnatural angle. At first he ignored my screams of pain, telling me I was faking my tears. It was only when he saw me attempt to stand to my feet and my legs crumpled beneath me that a look of guilt started to register on his face.

I called in sick to work that day. And I limped for three days after. But only in private. In public, I steeled myself to walk as normally as possible to keep anyone from asking questions about what had happened. I protected him, as I always did. My entire life became all about protecting Steven, while he was doing nothing to protect me.

He lied to me about everything. Cheated on me. Treated me horribly. And he would tell me that every bad behavior he exhibited was my fault. I was crazy, he said. I was needy. I needed help. He was only defending himself against me. I pushed him to the edge. MADE him hit me. Everything he did to me, I brought upon myself.

I started to believe him.

He punched holes in the wall of my apartment and never paid the damages...broke items that belonged to me and never replaced them...once even ripped a brand new shirt completely off of my body in a fit of rage. A shirt I had just told him earlier that day how much I loved.

Still, I stayed.

After a certain amount of time, a victim of abuse becomes like a wounded dog. With a wounded dog, the owner can kick him and beat him time and time and time again, and the dog will keep coming back for more. Continually trying to win his owner's affection. Trying desperately to do something to make his owner love him, feel proud of him, and speak lovingly to him rather than spit words of hatred at him. Never giving up hope that someday, his owner will bestow love upon him instead of withhold love from him.

In my situation, I had closed everyone and everything else out of my life. I was embarrassed to let anyone know what my boyfriend was TRULY like behind closed doors. I didn't want the faces of my closest friends reflecting back to me what I already knew—that I needed to run for dear life, as far away from this guy as I could. After a while, I became so isolated from fear and shame and humiliation that this guy, as horrible and abusive as he was, was my only lifeline. I lost friends and

opportunities and belongings and precious time and every last ounce of my dignity to fight for this relationship...but still, I kept fighting.

And so did Steven.

One night, after another heated argument over me catching him in another lie, I got out of bed to go into our living room and get a drink of water. His cell phone happened to be lying on the kitchen counter. Desperate to know the truth and to find out once and for all whether or not he had cheated on me (and I had every reason to believe that he had), I picked up his phone and started going through it. Mind you—I DO NOT RECOMMEND OR CONDONE this type of behavior at all. He was honestly the first and only guy I had ever deployed these tactics with, and I will never do it again. But after being repeatedly lied to and kicked around and insulted for months on end, knowing in my heart that he had cheated on me was the final indignity. I just needed proof. Proof that would finally make me strong enough to walk away.

At that moment, he came into the kitchen and saw me holding his phone. In a fit of white-hot anger, he picked me up and threw me onto the floor as hard as he could, pinning me to the floor and wrapping his hands around my neck, choking me. I was kicking and flailing with as much strength as I could muster to get him off of me, but he's short and stocky and strong, and my 120-pound frame and tiny fists did little damage. Finally I started screaming to the top of my lungs, which caused him to grab my face and cover both my mouth and my nose with his hand, positioning himself in such a way that I couldn't breathe at all. I was literally getting no oxygen. In a panic, as the blood began to drain from my face, I found enough gumption to bite down on his finger as hard as I could, which caused him to yelp like a wounded puppy and back away from me. Gasping for breath, I ran to the phone and dialed the first number I could think of.

911.

That night, Steven was arrested.

And that night, somewhere in the midst of the hurt, and the chaos, and the heartbreak...The Single Woman was born.



**THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *There comes a point when you pick yourself up off the floor, and say, "You don't get to hurt me anymore."*

Though it took me another two months to finally disentangle myself from the relationship, I finally did. And I never looked back.

I threw him out of my apartment. Took out the garbage, once and for all. After a year and a half of countless insults, slaps, and betrayals, I finally let him go and moved on with my life.

Over the next year, I chased dreams and had adventures and restored relationships far beyond anything I could have ever imagined would be possible for my life. I saw a counselor. I found healing. But most of all, I restored the relationship with MYSELF. I owed myself a BIG apology for putting up with so much abuse for so long. When we're in the midst of an abusive relationship, and being constantly demeaned and degraded, over and over and over again, it's hard to remember how we got there or imagine a time when we would be able to break free.

I'm here to tell you that you CAN, and MUST, break free.

The Single Woman's Zero Tolerance Policy on Abuse states this:

**“No way, no how, will I EVER, as long as I live, stick around to wait for the apology if a man ever lays his hands on me. The last thing he will see of me if that happens is the back of my shirt as I walk away from him. I won't put up with a slap, a punch, not even the smallest of pushes. There is no room for violence in TRUE love.”**

I'm asking you to love yourself and your life enough to agree with this policy, right now...without fear, without hesitation.

God spoke to my heart very clearly while I was in the midst of this toxic relationship and told me that if I chose to stay with Steven, there was a very good chance I would wind up badly injured...or worse. And I'm speaking to you now, saying the same thing. If you are in an abusive relationship of ANY kind...verbal, mental, emotional, or physical...don't just let go and move on. Run, don't walk, to the nearest safe place. NOW. There is help out there for you. Tell a friend. Tell a family member. Tell your pastor. Tell your local police department. There are resources for you. YOU DON'T HAVE TO STAY. You can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline right now at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or visit them online at <http://TheHotline.org>.

I have never spoken at length about this season of my life publicly, until now...which shows you how serious I am about stopping the senseless tragedy and vicious cycle of domestic abuse. There is NEVER an excuse for abuse. Love yourself enough to walk away.

And like me...I hope you never look back.

Let's Review...

### **The WHO: Five Fabulous Finds**

- It is healthy to allow yourself to FEEL emotions, negative and positive. It is not healthy to allow those emotions to hold you captive.
- Don't PLAY hard to get—BE hard to get.
- Don't recycle your exes—it's bad for the environment!
- Amazing, unbelievably good things start to happen when you follow your gut, your truth, your passions, your heart.

- There comes a point when you pick yourself up off the floor, and say “You don’t get to hurt me anymore.”

# The HOW of Letting Go & Moving On

We've been on a long, enlightening journey, my friends. We now know WHAT, WHEN, WHY, and WHO we need to let go of and move on from. We've laughed, we've cried, we've fought, we've surrendered, we've forgiven, we've forgotten.

There's just one more thing.

Now that we know WHAT needs to be kicked to the curb...HOW exactly do we muster the strength to kick it there?

I started this book with a story of me "Letting Go and Moving On: In Real-Time." And that's the best way I know how to finish it.

On October 13, 2009, my life changed forever.

On that day, "The Single Woman" was born in an incubator of heartbreak and heartache...a resilient, spirited, feisty female who rose from the ashes of the destruction of everything she'd known and got busy on the construction of a journey into the unknown. She took her first steps on shaky legs and emerged from the cave of an unhealthy relationship with more than a little uncertainty, discovering that the further she walked, the stronger her stride became and the louder her broken heart sang.

On October 13, 2009, I stopped fighting the fight and started to heal...because I stopped being polite and started getting real.

It was on that day that I finally grabbed hold of the key and set myself free from the abusive relationship I spoke of in the previous chapter.

I had just returned home from a cross-country road trip to Arizona with my father where I had been a bridesmaid in the wedding of one of my best friends. I had three glorious days of celebrating love and laughter and new beginnings, even catching the bouquet at the reception—typically a sign that I might be the next girl to wed.

A little past Little Rock, however, I knew that the only ring in my near future would be the sound of my own inner Liberty Bell ringing as I declared my independence from the toxic relationship I felt trapped in...one that had left me bruised, broken, beaten down, and sick and tired of being sick and tired. Though I haven't discussed the details of this relationship until this book, it truly was that life-changing, destiny-defining relationship that was going to either heal me or kill me. You know the one. The one that you KNOW you don't belong in, but fear and habit and complacency keep you trapped in it like quicksand? The one where you're unable to stay but unwilling to go? Or, as Liz Gilbert puts it in *Eat Pray Love*:


*"The only thing more unthinkable than leaving was staying; the only thing more impossible than staying was leaving."*

I was trapped in a prison of my own making. I had lost myself completely in this person, in his lies and emotional unavailability and inability to love me like I deserved to be loved. I didn't know how to walk away from someone, who, for all intents and purposes, was my best friend, my lifeline, my probable future husband. How do you exit a relationship when your nieces adore him and you share belongings with him and your lives have somehow merged into one entity without you even realizing it?

And HOW do you let go and move on from ANYTHING in your life that no longer fits, no longer works, no longer brings you joy but pain, no longer brings you sunshine but rain?

Here's how:

You take a deep breath, you say the words that you never imagined yourself saying, and you walk away. Battle-scarred and scared and unsure about the future as you may be, when you KNOW in your heart that this is not the person, not the job, not the opportunity that God and the universe intended for you, there is no other option but to walk away. To let go and move on. You cannot allow yourself to settle for anything that you know is wrong for you just because his name next to yours on the invitation will impress your friends or the nameplate on your office door looks nice. Leaving the comfortable shell of a secure situation, no matter WHAT it may be, is one of the scariest things a person can do; but think about it...what would happen to the butterfly if she refused to exit her cocoon? She would never grow, never change, never acquire her wings. And trust me on this one: it is far, far better to live a life of uncertain happiness than of certain misery. If you outgrew a dress, no matter how fabulous it once fit, you wouldn't keep wearing it, would you? Then why are we so willing to stay stuck in a relationship, situation, job, or friendship once it has become clear that the other person or opportunity is not our perfect fit?

 **THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *Our hearts will never sing as long as we cling to anyone or anything.*

Letting go is not for the faint of heart. It's the hardest thing most of us will ever have to learn how to do...but still, we must do it. Loving oneself demands nothing less.

But chin up, kid. You're more resilient than you think you are. Sometimes it REALLY is as easy as opening your hand and releasing the person or thing you've been clinging so tightly to.

I personally like to PHYSICALLY release something to symbolically show that I've let go and moved on. My way of doing this is by taking myself down to the nearest party supply store and purchasing a bundle of bright, colorful, shiny helium balloons. On each balloon, I write down everything that's holding me back...the What or the Who that I need to let go of.

Then, one by one, I release them into the air. And with each balloon that disappears into the distance, a little piece of ME starts to fall back into place.

It is an exercise that I HIGHLY recommend. And it's the reason behind the cover of this book.

Perhaps when all is said and done, after all the tears have been cried, we've dried our eyes, the dust has settled on our goodbyes, and those bright, beautiful balloons are floating toward the sky...maybe all we can do is cling to what completes us (like our self worth, our dignity, and our best friends) and



release what depletes us (like a guy who can't see the crown jewel standing right in front of him). Sometimes in life we have to create our own closure. Sometimes we have to decide when enough is enough and walk away. I urge you to find a way to peacefully close the door on the past so you can walk away with your head held high and with no regrets. Because at the end of the day, sometimes it takes opening a door to get to a new place...

...and sometimes it takes closing one.

Let's Review...

### **The HOW: Five Fabulous Finds**

- When you KNOW in your heart that someone or something is not the person, not the job, not the opportunity that God and the universe intended for you...there is no other option but to walk away.
- We have to let go. We have to love not just the other people involved, but also love OURSELVES, enough to let go.
- Our hearts will never sing as long as we cling to anyone or anything.
- Letting go is not for the faint of heart. It's the hardest thing most of us will ever have to learn how to do...but loving oneself demands nothing less.
- Sometimes it takes opening a door to get to a new place...and sometimes it takes closing one.

## **EPILOGUE: On the Other Side of Letting Go & Moving On**

My beautiful, sweet, worthy passengers who have joined me on this ride to the next chapter of our lives, I THANK YOU for taking this journey with me. I thank you for trusting me enough to allow me to speak into your lives. It is the biggest honor of my life to know that you care about what I have to say, and you believe in my message enough to follow me on Twitter and read my column and purchase this book.

I want to encourage those of you currently going through a heartbreak or a break-up or any transition in life, whether it's surrendering a friendship, a relationship, a job, an opportunity, or a grievance: There IS happiness on the other side of letting go and moving on. I am living proof.

Here's what the sad movies and songs forget to tell you:



**THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *After the pain comes the rain...and after the rain...comes the sun! And before you know it, everything's coming up daisies again.*

Just two years ago, I was alone and uncertain and lonely and sad. I remember wandering the rooms of my apartment feeling like the silence was almost palpable. I was starting my life over again, from scratch, and it was scary as hell. There were even moments when I doubted I made the right decision by ending the unhealthy relationship I was in. It takes work to rebuild a new life after letting go and moving on from the old one. But before I knew it, something miraculous happened. I smiled again! And then I laughed again! Little by little, I reconnected with my friends and made new ones and started chasing my dreams and doing ME and having fun and setting new goals and realizing something so incredible about myself that had somehow gotten lost in the shuffle of the sorrow and the hurt and the tears. I AM STRONG. I am worthy. I am a fighter.

And then it hit me. I had to say goodbye to everything I thought my life was SUPPOSED TO BE, so I could say hello to ME.

So, my friends, and especially those of you who are currently nursing a broken heart, walking away from a dead-end job or a toxic friendship, or finding that The End is just a new place to begin again... you must remember this, if nothing else: You will find your smile again. You will get your groove back. You will love again. And you will be able to take where you've been and use it as a roadmap for where you're going...and for where you'll never go again. I did. Although I know in my heart I will never revisit the abusive relationship, the almost lovers, the fair-weather friends, the missed opportunities, or the paths not taken, ever again...I also know I wouldn't have missed any of it for the world. Why? Because every moment of the journey helped create me. Every tear, every piece of my broken heart, every second of pain, every last situation in my life that I have had the strength to let go and move on from, are all colors on the canvas of my life. These things didn't DEFINE me. They helped REFINE me. The ashes of the girl I used to be turned me into the diamond of the woman I am today.



**THE SINGLE WOMAN SAYS:** *It is in the letting go that we become who we are meant to be.*

And that's how, Once Upon a Time, a girl named Mandy let go and moved on...and the adventure of a lifetime began.

Won't you join me?



If you find this book to be meaningful in your life, please consider giving it a positive review, online, where you purchased it. This will help spread the word of The Single Woman. Thank you.

## About the Author



Mandy Hale is affectionately known around the world as “The Single Woman™.” In less than two years, Mandy has garnered a massive Twitter following of more than 400,000 people from across the globe. As of the release of this book, she attracts nearly 3,000 new followers each and every day on Twitter. In her home state of Tennessee, only Al Gore and Dolly Parton have more followers!

Some have called Mandy “the real-life Carrie Bradshaw.” As a huge *Sex & the City* fan, Mandy loves the comparison to the fictitious character, but she’s as real as they come. She cuts to the heart of the matter with her inspirational, straight-talking, witty, and often wildly humorous take on life and love. She’s also not afraid to let her hair down and talk about the many realities of being single in a world that still asks “And WHY are you still single?” While Mandy does not want to be labeled a “role model,” she is more than comfortable being a mentor to other single women.

Recently named a “Twitter Powerhouse” by the *Huffington Post*, a 2011 “Woman of Influence” by the *Nashville Business Journal* and featured as a “Single in the City” in *Nashville Lifestyles* magazine, Mandy is making a name for herself as the voice of empowerment and sassiness for single women across the globe.

In October of 2009, Mandy ended a year and a half long toxic relationship and was looking for an inspiring “single woman” role model to look up to for encouragement and motivation. She quickly discovered that since the world bid farewell to Carrie Bradshaw and the gang when *Sex & the City* went off the air in 2004, no one has stepped up to fill Carrie’s sassy stilettos. If anything, the word “single” seemed to carry a stigma with it; of being unwanted, unlovable, and undesired. Looking around at all the fabulous, rockin’ single ladies around her, Mandy knew something must be done. It was time for a “Single Woman” Revolution! Mandy launched her Twitter page and TheSingleWoman.com – both of which became an instant success. Now one of the most influential positive forces on Twitter, “The Single Woman” is synonymous with “Girl Power!”

The power behind Mandy’s message lies in that she doesn’t claim to be an expert, or a guru, or a

counselor. As she has departed her 20s and is barely in her 30s, she is highly relatable because she speaks through the lens of her own life and the lessons she's learning as she goes through life as "the single woman." While she doesn't have all the answers...she's brave enough to ask the questions. Whatever life and love throws at her, she maintains her fierce belief in happy endings and Prince Charming's and fairytales; and every column, Dash of Sass, or 140 character encouragement she sends comes straight from an honest, real, authentic place. Less of a life coach and more of a big sister, best friend, or mentor to women as they walk the single girl walk, Mandy is the voice of every woman experiencing the incredible, beautiful, magic, tragic highs and the many challenges of single life.

To continue your journey, join Mandy at:

[TheSingleWoman.com](http://TheSingleWoman.com)



[@TheSingleWoman](https://twitter.com/TheSingleWoman)