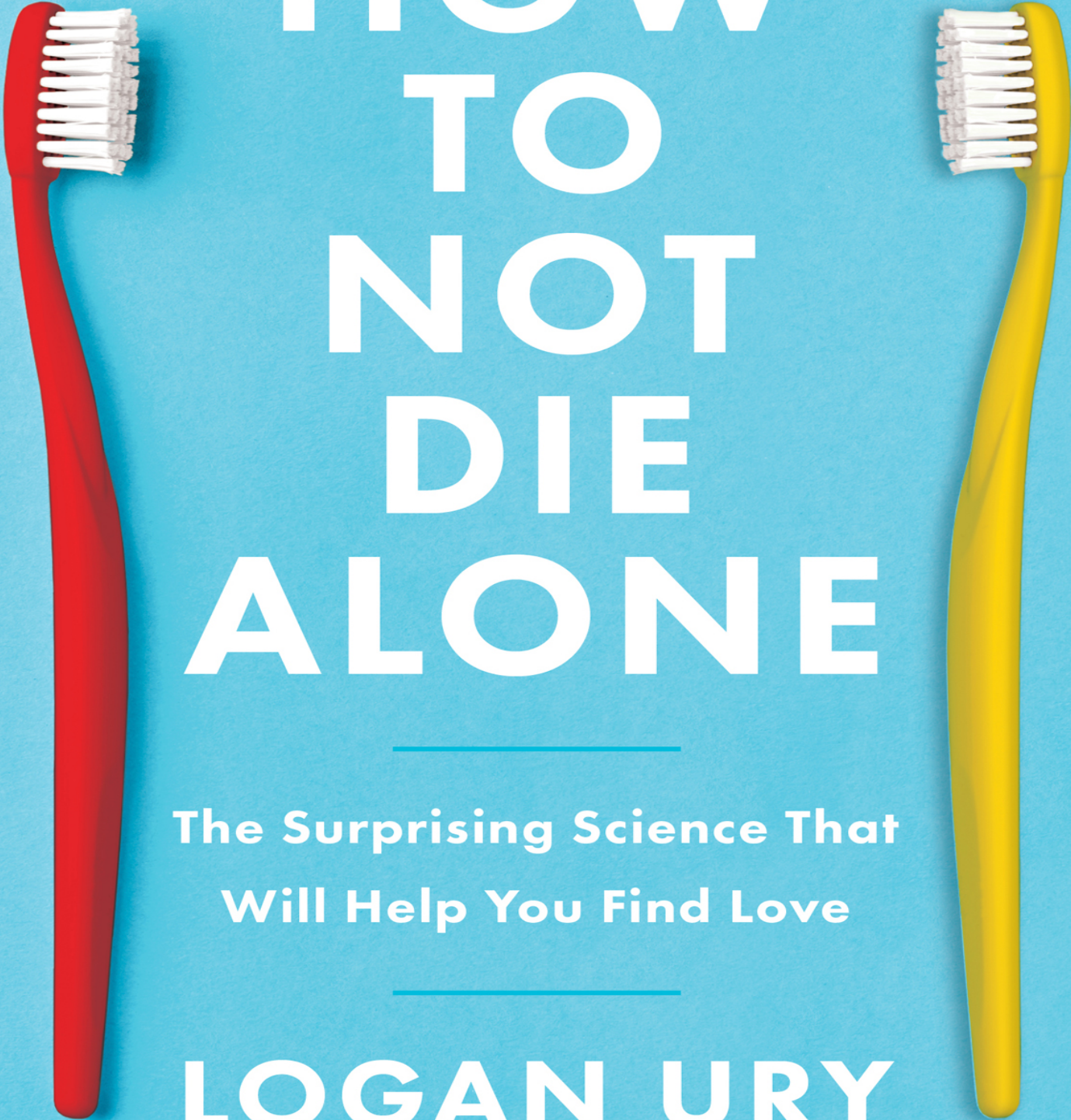


"A definitive guide for a generation navigating the murky waters of modern love." —ESTHER PEREL



HOW TO NOT DIE ALONE

The Surprising Science That
Will Help You Find Love

LOGAN URY

HOW TO NOT DIE ALONE

**The Surprising Science That
Will Help You Find Love**

LOGAN URY

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To Scott, the best decision I ever made.

*And to my parents, whose love and support made
everything possible.*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

When it comes to academic research, here's the bad news: Most studies to date focused primarily on cis heterosexual couples. Fortunately, when researchers *have* studied LGBTQ+ relationships, they've found they share many of the same problems—and benefit from much of the same advice—covered in the existing research.

In writing this book, I interviewed people across the range of sexual orientations and identities. I wanted to share LGBTQ+ love stories and dating experiences. All of the stories in this book are true, although some of the characters are composites of several individuals. Names and identifying characteristics have been changed and dialogue has been re-created.

After completing this manuscript I took a job as the Director of Relationship Science at the dating app Hinge. This role allows me to help millions of people learn how to date more effectively. All of the research and opinions in this book are completely my own.

INTRODUCTION

You might think you shouldn't have to buy a book on love. Love is something effortless, natural, organic. You *fall* in love, you don't *think* your way into it. It's a spontaneous chemical reaction, not a calculated decision.

And yet here you are. Holding this book because you want to find love, and so far it hasn't worked out for you. Here's the truth: While love may be a natural instinct, dating isn't. We're not born knowing how to choose the right partner.

And if we were, I wouldn't have a job. I'm a dating coach and matchmaker. I studied psychology at Harvard and have spent years researching human behavior and relationships. This work has led me to **Intentional Love**, my philosophy for creating healthy relationships. Intentional Love asks you to view your love life as a series of choices rather than accidents. This book is about being informed and purposeful—in acknowledging your bad habits, adjusting your dating techniques, and approaching crucial relationship conversations.

Great relationships are *built*, not discovered. A lasting relationship doesn't just happen. It is the culmination of a series of decisions, including when to get out there, whom to date, how to end it with the wrong person, when to settle down with the right one, and everything in between. Make good decisions, and you propel yourself toward a great love story. Make bad ones, and you veer off course, doomed to repeat the same harmful patterns over and over.

SPOILER ALERT: WE'RE IRRATIONAL

But often we don't understand why we make certain decisions, and that leads to mistakes. And those mistakes thwart our quest to find love. Behavioral science can help.

Behavioral science is the study of how we make decisions. It offers a way to peel back the layers of our mind, peek inside, and see why we tend to make certain choices. Spoiler alert: We're irrational. We often make decisions that are not in our own best interest.

This happens in all realms of life. It's why we say we want to save for retirement and then max out our credit cards on decorating our apartments. Or tell ourselves we'll exercise more, then use our treadmill as a clothing rack. No matter how often and or how earnestly we set goals, we get in our own way.

Fortunately, this irrationality isn't random. Our brains lead us astray in predictable ways. Behavioral scientists use that knowledge to help people change their behavior, with the goal of making them happier, healthier, and wealthier.

In fact, for a while I took my knowledge of behavioral science and applied it at Google. I teamed up with behavioral science great Dan Ariely to run a group at Google called the Irrational Lab, a nod to his book *Predictably Irrational*. And while I loved working with Dan and the Irrational Lab team, studying human behavior and running experiments, I had other concerns on my mind. I was single and in my early twenties. I was struggling with one of life's most essential and common questions—how do we find and sustain love?

I've long been interested in studying dating, relationships, and sex. In college I studied the porn-watching habits of Harvard undergraduates for a paper I wrote called "Porn to Be Wild." (Hint: Harvard students watch lots of porn.) For my first job at Google—years before I ran the Irrational Lab—I managed the Google Ads accounts for porn and sex toy clients, including Bangbros, Playboy, and Good Vibrations. People referred to our group by its unofficial name: "the Porn Pod."

I trace my curiosity about relationships to my own childhood. I had a happy, loving family growing up, but my parents suddenly divorced when I was seventeen. My "happily ever after" bubble burst, and I no longer took long-term marital success for granted.

At the time, I was single. Dating apps had just come out, and I was spending a lot of time swiping. I saw people all around me were struggling, too. We'd gone from the first iPod ("a thousand songs in your pocket") to ubiquitous smartphones with a thousand possible Tinder dates in your pocket. Instead of

marrying Bobby or Belinda on our block, we could pick from thousands of singles online.

With that in mind, I launched a side project called “Talks at Google: Modern Romance,” a speakers’ series that explored the challenges of modern dating and relationships. I interviewed world-renowned experts about online dating, communication in the digital age, monogamy, empathy, and the secrets to a happy marriage. Within hours, thousands of Googlers joined the Modern Romance email list to receive updates on these talks. Once the interviews went online, millions of viewers watched on YouTube. Clearly, my friends and I were not the only ones struggling.

One night a stranger came up to me and said, “I saw your talk on polyamory. I didn’t realize that relationships could work like that. It changed my whole world.” At that moment I realized the impact of my work. I’d found my calling.

But I didn’t want to be just another love guru, offering unscientific advice. I thought, *What if I take the behavioral science tools I honed at Google and apply them to help people make better decisions in their romantic relationships?*

IRRATIONALLY EVER AFTER

After almost a decade in tech, I quit my job and set out to help people find and maintain lasting relationships. I believe our natural errors in decision-making cause us to stumble. Behavioral science is the missing piece that can help people change their behavior, break bad patterns, and find lasting love.

Selecting a partner is already an incredibly daunting task, one weighed down with cultural baggage, bad advice, and societal and familial pressure. But until now no one has applied behavioral science to help people find love. Maybe that’s because we think love is a magical phenomenon that defies scientific analysis. Or perhaps there’s fear of this critique: *Who wants to be rational in love?* But that’s not it. I’m not trying to turn you into a hyper-rational supercomputer that analyzes all possible matches and spits out a soul mate solution. I’m helping you overcome your blind spots that are holding you back from finding love.

Behavior change is a two-step process. First we’ll learn about the invisible forces driving your behavior, those errors in judgment that lead to costly

mistakes. Mistakes like refusing to commit because you always wonder if there's someone better out there (Chapter 4), pursuing the prom date instead of the life partner (Chapter 7), or staying in bad relationships after their expiration date (Chapter 14).

But awareness on its own doesn't lead to action. (Knowing you shouldn't date "bad boys" or "manic pixie dream girls" doesn't make them any less appealing.) You have to actually do something about it. That's where the second part of behavioral science comes in. Tried-and-tested techniques can help you jump from knowing that information to doing something about it. Step two is designing a new system that helps you shift your behavior and achieve your goal. Each chapter includes evidence-based frameworks and exercises to help you navigate important dating decisions.

HOW THIS BOOK CAN HELP

In this book you'll discover you're not alone. You're not the only one struggling with these doubts. You and your questions and concerns are totally normal.

There's no certainty in relationships, but you *can* approach your decision-making in a more strategic way, pulling from research that understands the strengths and weaknesses of our brains (and our hearts). Intentional Love is informed by both relationship science (what works for long-term relationships) and behavioral science (how to get us to follow through on our intentions).

I will give you a process. And process creates peace.

It's worked for my clients, and I know it can help you.

Section 1: Getting Ready

We'll start with an exploration of why dating today is harder than ever before. Then you'll take a quiz to figure out your dating blind spots—tendencies in your life that are holding you back, likely without you even realizing it. Then I'll explain how your tendencies affect your dating life and what you can do to overcome them. Next we'll talk about attachment theory and how it affects whom and how you love. I'll set you straight about what to look for in a long-term partner. It's likely not what you think.

Section 2: Getting Out There

We'll take a deep dive into dating apps. I'll help you identify and overcome the common pitfalls of modern dating. We'll have you swiping better, meeting people in real life (IRL), and going on dates that don't feel like job interviews. You'll learn a better system to decide whom you should see again.

Section 3: Getting Serious

Then we'll talk about how to handle major decision points in your relationship, including how to define the relationship (DTR) and determine if you should move in together. I'll walk you through how to decide if you should break up,

how to break up with someone, and how to get over heartbreak. If things progress, you may find yourself asking, “Should we get married?” The last chapter of this section will help you answer that question. Finally, we’ll end with techniques to make your long-term relationship successful by investing daily attention and designing relationships that shift and change as the people in it grow, too.

COMMIT TO TRYING SOMETHING DIFFERENT

You’re reading this book because you want to find love. Perhaps you’ve dated a series of people who haven’t brought out the best in you, who left you disappointed and alone. Or maybe you haven’t been dating at all. School and work and family and all the complexities of life have gotten in the way. But you know deep down that you want to find someone.

I’m here to help you get to that next step. I want you to think of yourself as my dating-coaching client. Here’s my ask of you: Commit to doing the exercises. (They really work!) And allow me the chance to change your mind. You’ve done things your way for your entire life. Why not try something different? A lasting, loving relationship may very well be waiting for you on the other end.

SECTION 1

GETTING READY

CHAPTER 1

WHY DATING IS HARDER NOW THAN EVER BEFORE

How to Understand the Challenges of Modern Dating

Each generation faces its own set of challenges—wars, recessions, shoulder pads. The same holds true for dating. While people of every era have bemoaned their love lives, today’s singles might just be right: Dating is harder now than ever before. And the next time your mom pesters you about finding someone nice to settle down with, you can tell her I said that.

In this book, I’ll offer solutions to some of life’s most difficult dating decisions. But before I get to the tactical advice, I want to set the stage and explain the factors conspiring against modern daters. If looking for love has left you feeling incredibly stressed out, here’s why.

WE SHAPE OUR OWN IDENTITIES

Religion, community, and social class dictated the lives of our ancestors. Expectations were clear, and personal decisions were few. Based on where and into what kind of family you were born, you knew, for example, that you’d work as a textile merchant, live in Bucharest, eat kosher food, and go to the synagogue. Or you’d work as a farmer, live on the outskirts of Shanghai, and eat livestock and crops from your land. When it came to finding a partner, the answer often came down to the dowry—who could offer the best acres of land or the largest caravan of camels.

Today all these decisions are up to us. Modern life is a path that we must chart on our own. Whereas our predecessors didn’t have to weigh where to live

or what to do for a living, we make those choices now. That gives us incredible freedom to shape our identities—to pick Nashville over Atlanta, to choose whether to work as a meteorologist or a mathematician—but that freedom comes at the cost of certainty. Late at night, our faces lit by the blue glow of our smartphones, we wonder, *Who am I?* and *What am I doing with my life?* The dark side of all this freedom and endless choice is the crippling fear that we'll screw up our lifelong pursuit of happiness. If we're in charge, then we have only ourselves to blame. We could fail, and then it would be our fault.

And one of the biggest questions left up to us—a decision that used to be made by our parents and our community—is *Who should I pick as a romantic partner?*

WE HAVE TOO MANY OPTIONS

We're experiencing a seismic shift in dating culture. Dating itself only began in the 1890s. Online dating started in 1994 with Kiss.com, followed shortly by Match.com a year later. And we've been swiping for love for less than a decade. If it feels like we're in the middle of a gigantic cultural experiment, it's because we are.

We're no longer limited to the single people we know from work or church or our neighborhood. Now we can swipe through hundreds of potential partners in a single sitting. But there's a downside to these seemingly infinite options. Psychologists, including Barry Schwartz, professor emeritus at Swarthmore, have shown that while people crave choice, too many options can make us feel less happy and more doubtful of our decisions. They call this the **paradox of choice**.

People are struggling. Like that obnoxious person in front of you in the fro-yo line who can't pick a flavor ("Can I try them all one more time?"), we're crippled by analysis paralysis. And this is especially true when it comes to choosing a life partner.

WE YEARN FOR CERTAINTY

What's the last purchase you researched online? Which electric toothbrush to buy? Which wireless Bluetooth speakers to get your brother for his new apartment? We live in an information-rich society that offers the false comfort of research. It can feel like the perfect decision is only a few more Google searches away. Whether we're selecting the most authentic taco place or the best-performing vacuum cleaner, we can consult endless rankings and reviews. It feels like if we can research all our choices, then we can select the right one.

We've gotten hooked on this feeling of certainty, and we crave it in our romantic lives. But when it comes to relationships, that kind of assurance doesn't exist. There is no "right answer" to questions like *Who should I be with?* and *How much should I compromise?* and *Will they ever change?* No amount of Googling will reveal if James or Jillian will make a good spouse. We can't achieve complete certainty before any big relationship decision—and luckily, we don't have to in order to be happy. Great relationships are built, not discovered. But our minds are often stuck in a trap, thinking that by combing through hundreds of options, we'll be closer to knowing whether the one in front of us is "right."

SOCIAL MEDIA LEADS US TO COMPARE AND DESPAIR

Years ago, people lived in communal villages. They witnessed other couples being affectionate, fighting, and making up. There was no such thing as a private problem. Today our primary view into other people's relationships is staged, curated, Instagram-filtered social media feeds—excited mid-hike engagement announcements, vacation pictures with a snoozing baby strapped on someone's chest. This leads us to feel like we're the only ones experiencing heart-wrenching struggles in our love lives (just in much less flattering lighting). Feeling like everyone else's relationship is perfect when yours is floundering (or nonexistent) exacerbates that pain. I find this is especially true for men, who tend to have smaller social networks and fewer people with whom they can share their fears. They're even less likely to talk to their friends about their problems and learn that everyone, at one time or another, experiences relationship hardships.

WE LACK RELATIONSHIP ROLE MODELS

We want to find the best possible partner and build the best possible relationship, yet many of us have witnessed few functional relationships firsthand, especially when we were young.

Divorce rates peaked in the 1970s and early 1980s. And while they've gone down since then, many of us are what couples therapist Esther Perel calls "the children of the divorced and disillusioned." Around 50 percent of marriages in the United States end in divorce or separation, and about 4 percent of married people report feeling miserable in their relationships. Put it all together, and a majority of married people have either chosen to end their relationship or are enduring it unhappily.

This is a problem. Study after study demonstrates the power of role models. It's much easier to believe something is possible when you've seen someone else do it, whether that's running a four-minute mile or eating seventy-three hot dogs in under ten minutes (#lifegoals). For example, women are much more likely to become inventors if they grew up in a zip code with many female patent holders. In fact, they're more likely to patent in the *same categories* as older female inventors in their neighborhood.

The same is true with relationships. We all want to build lasting and fulfilling partnerships, but it's harder to do that when you lack relationship role models. Many of my clients confess fears around not knowing what the day-to-day looks like in a strong relationship—*How do healthy couples resolve conflict? How do happy spouses make decisions together? How do you successfully spend the rest of your life with one person?*—because they didn't observe those behaviors in their own parents.

Even those of us with the best relationship intentions may struggle because many of us haven't seen a functional relationship in action.

THERE ARE FAR MORE WAYS TO BE IN A RELATIONSHIP

Many of the relationship questions we tackle today never would have crossed the minds of our camel-herding ancestors, such as *Are we dating or just hooking up?* or *Should I break up now or wait until after wedding season is over?* We agonize

with our close confidants over not knowing whether we're in love with a new boo or feeling burned out from first dates that go nowhere.

Now, thanks to advances in reliable birth control and fertility science, people can ask themselves about new trade-offs, such as *Do I want kids, and if so, when?* (It's unlikely that hunter-gatherers lost a lot of sleep over that one.)

Beyond scientific advances, we're expanding our models for dating and long-term relationships. We're pondering questions such as *Are we monogamous?* and *How do we define monogamy?*

In some ways, these questions are exciting. Who doesn't want to feel free and in control of their destiny? But at a certain point, all these options and opportunities can stop making us feel free and start making us feel overwhelmed.

WE FEEL PRESSURE TO GET THIS DECISION "RIGHT"

To top it all off, we're bombarded with messages imploring us to get this decision right. Everyone from public figures like Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg (who said: "I truly believe that the single most important career decision that a woman makes is whether she will have a life partner and who that partner is.") to our own parents ("Don't make the same mistakes I did!") reinforces how critical it is that we don't mess this one up.

It can feel like our entire lives hinge on the one major decision of whom to marry. This is especially true for women, who face more time pressure to pick a spouse if they want to have children by a certain age.

BUT THERE'S HOPE!

We can take control of our love lives by better understanding ourselves: what motivates us, what confuses us, what gets in our way. And that's where behavioral science—and this book—comes in.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **Dating is harder now than ever before. And you can tell your mom I said that.**

2. **Here's why:**

- **We define our own identities, unlike our ancestors, whose lives were defined by their communities.**
- **We have thousands of options at our fingertips, which causes us to question our decisions.**
- **We're uncomfortable making big decisions when we can't research our way to the right answer.**
- **Social media leads us to believe that everyone else is in healthier, happier relationships than we are.**
- **Far too few of us have good relationship role models.**
- **There are far more models for dating and long-term relationships.**
- **We're bombarded with messaging that we need to get this decision "right"—and that a right answer exists at all.**

3. **But there's hope. Using insights from behavioral science, we can take control of our love lives.**

CHAPTER 2

THE THREE DATING TENDENCIES

How to Discover Your Dating Blind Spots

Have you ever looked around and wondered, *Why has everyone found love except me? I like my job, I like my friends, I like myself. Why hasn't this one piece of my life fallen into place yet?*

I've heard versions of this from nearly all my clients. I've discovered many of them suffer from **dating blind spots**—patterns of behavior that hold them back from finding love, but which they can't identify on their own.

I've categorized the most common blind spots into a framework called **The Three Dating Tendencies**. Each group struggles with unrealistic expectations—of themselves, of partners, and of romantic relationships.

The following quiz will reveal your dating tendency. It will help identify what's holding you back, so you can break your bad habits and develop new ones. Your tendency impacts your behavior at every stage of the relationship, so it's crucial to learn yours as the first step along your journey to finding love.

THE THREE DATING TENDENCIES QUIZ

Instructions

Read each statement and decide how much it describes you. Circle the number that corresponds to your answer:

1. Very unlike me
2. Somewhat like me