

## Men - Can't Live With them, Can't Live Without Them



Boys, boys, boys. As a woman, that's all we're trained to think about just as soon as we can talk. Do you have a boyfriend? When are you getting married? Are you seeing anyone? Dating apps? Are you TRYING to find a husband?

When you look back a few generations, finding a husband for a woman was considered essential in order to have a good life. A man would take care of you, and basically give your life a purpose. Are you a good cook? Well, you better get learning if you want to find a husband. Act like a LADY, or no man is going to want you. No husband? There must be something wrong with you. So, it makes sense that we were brought up this way when every generation before us leaned on men for meaning in their lives.

But, let's jump to today. The feminism era - the girl power, women run the world mindset that women have made efforts to embody and push for. This is a time period where many young women can count their blessings to have the privilege of growing up in. Although, don't think this whole "men are everything" trend has gone away completely - it's just showing up differently these days.

Finding a boyfriend, husband, or partner is still at the forefront of many young women's minds. Yes, we know we can have a fulfilling life without them. Yes, we can become CEO, make our own money, live by ourselves, and do every single thing we need alone - but do we want to?

There's something still ingrained in us, that little voice inside our heads that says *you need a man*. And, although this may not mean financially, or to gain social acceptance

anymore, we want them because we feel more fulfilled and whole with tying a man down and having someone by our side through life.

Sure, people say, be happy on your OWN. All you need is YOU. But, do we really believe that? The answer is most often, no, because so many of us women go on horrible date after horrible date, message 30 guys on Hinge just for it to lead nowhere, and spend most of our time waiting around for a text or Snapchat from the one guy who will never give us the time of day. So, why do we do it? Because we crave male attention and approval like it's the goddamn drug that we're in rehab for. And, as much as we try to make ourselves stop - delete the dating app, refuse all date offers, cut ourselves off from the male world, all it ultimately does is make us feel even more alone than when we were getting the half-assed effort from these men. And so, the cycle repeats.

Let me tell you, it is HARD being a single girl in this day in age, so I'd like to take a moment to give a big round of applause to all the single ladies out there dealing with the dating world of the 21st century. We get ghosted more times than we can count, heartbroken over guys we haven't even actually "dated", and then we do it all over again with the next guy we match with on Bumble. How do we let this happen to us? So many of us are strong, independent women who have our shit together and are going places. So, why do we need a man to acknowledge how great we are? Like Miranda from Sex and the City said, "It's amazing. We can feel totally good about ourselves and then it all goes out the window if a guy doesn't mirror that right back to us". What is this NEED for a man and their approval and desire for us?

So, what do we do here? How do we break this pattern of horrible dating and this irresistible desire to have someone? The answer isn't so clear, but the first step may be realizing *why* we feel as though we need this person in our lives. What does having a boyfriend or husband make us feel in which we can't get that feeling elsewhere?

The second step might be to throw ourselves into ourselves. Yeah, you read that right. **Take as much time searching for yourself as you do searching for someone else.** Although it's cliché and often over-said, true happiness does lie within yourself. If you can be happy alone, nothing can shake you. And, your next relationship will be better from it tenfold. No one wants the responsibility to make you happy - that's your job!

The third step is to cherish the relationships you do have. Your family, your friends, your coworkers, etc. Those are your people - treat those relationships as important as you do trying to find a romantic one.

So, there you have it. Say goodbye to being so dependent on a man. Create the life you dream of, and once that internal happiness comes...Chad from Hinge just might ask you on another date. ;)

## Letting Go of Things That Don't Serve Us



Letting go is not always an easy feat. It is ingrained in many of us to fight for what we want, to push past all obstacles, to never quit until we reach our goal. But what we may not always realize is that letting go of things that don't serve us is just as important as pushing ourselves to the finish line.

Have you ever wanted something that you knew maybe wasn't good for you? I'm not talking about the extra piece of cake or the one too many glasses of wine you had last weekend. I'm talking about a relationship with someone who brought out the worst in you, or the career that made you so stressed that your hair started falling out. The bigger things in life that maybe we once thought we wanted, that we once thought were good for us, or meant for us, but turned out to weigh us down more than lift us up.

Sometimes it can be hard to recognize these things. Or even if you do recognize it, you may think, "this is what I've chosen, this is a part of my life and this is the path I'm meant to be on". But what we *also* may not realize, is that we are ever changing beings with ever changing lives and circumstances. Nothing is permanent, no person, no place, no situation. We are constantly evolving, and one thing that may have been good for us a year ago, may not work for us anymore. Maybe we outgrew that person or that job or that city.

It is imperative that we recognize when something is taking more of a toll on us than it brings us joy. If all of your energy is going into one thing, there are certainly other

things in your life that are taking a hit. For example, say you are in a relationship with someone who tends to be a bit controlling. Your friends have noticed that you haven't been hanging around as much, and your behaviors are shifting to match what your partner wants. This is a dangerous game, as the relationship is no longer serving you, **you are serving it**. All of your energy is going into one person, into one area of your life - and you're making it your *whole* life. And not even one that's yours! Be able to recognize when something in your life is consuming you and shifting who you are as a person (and not in a good way). This may not always mean to kick it out of your life completely, but to dial it back, re-evaluate, and recenter yourself to remember your true values and desires.

While it is all well and good to recognize and address these things that don't serve us, it is easier said than done when it comes to letting these things go. It is never easy to leave something behind, even if we know it isn't good for us. A bad breakup, moving on to a new job, cutting the toxic friendship...there is no "poof", everything is good now! It takes time to grieve these things and the good times and experiences you had (if any - if not, then a huge weight really is just lifted off your shoulders). But once you come out on the other side, you will be much happier and grateful that you allowed yourself to move past the things that were anchoring you down and continue to grow into the next chapter of your life.

So, let it go! Make room for the new experiences that are coming your way, and never stifle your growth. Remember that anything that is currently dragging you down, you are meant for more - and if you let it, it will come.

## Girls Just Wanna Have Fun(damental Human Rights)

GIRLS JUST  
WANNA HAVE  
FUNDAMENTAL  
HUMAN RIGHTS

Women's rights has been, and continues to be a cause that women in many countries are still making strides towards, as equality, in many areas has not been fully reached. The goal is to eventually be "equal" to men - in pay, in opportunities, in education, and beyond. Many countries have made leaps and bounds in terms of this gender equality, while others are still severely lacking in 2020. So, where does America stand in this versus other countries? Let's look at some of the rights that a woman in 21st century America has:

### **We can work**

In the U.S, women are allowed to pursue a career in whatever, and wherever they wish. Women residing in other countries aren't so lucky, as according to the World Bank, "there are 104 economies with labour laws that restrict the types of jobs women can undertake, and when and where they are permitted to work. It estimates that this affects the employment choices of 2.7 billion women." (Wood, 2018). 2.7 billion women whose right to work is restricted or taken away altogether! But, don't think the U.S has it all. According to the Washington Post, only SIX countries give women the same working rights as men - Belgium, Denmark, France, Latvia, Luxembourg and Sweden. So, America still has some work to do here as well.

### **We can vote**

Now, American's didn't pioneer this whole idea of women voting. New Zealand was actually the first country to grant voting rights to women back in 1893 (Miller, 2020). Following New Zealand was Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Russia, Germany, the UK, and

finally in 1920, the US. The most recent country to grant this was Saudi Arabia in 2015. As of today, the only country where women can't vote is Vatican City.

### **We have the freedom to decide**

Whether this be who we choose to date, where we go to college, or where we are going on vacation, we legally, as American women, have the right to decide. While this may seem like a given to many of us, some countries still have restrictions on what women are allowed to do and have access to. For example, in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, women cannot marry, receive health care, have equal rights to divorce or child custody, travel, or pursue higher education without the permission of their "male guardian" ([globalcitizen.org](http://globalcitizen.org)).

### **We have reproductive rights**

In the U.S, women have the right to their bodies (while restrictions/accessibility can depend on the state). This means having the right to get an abortion if one chooses. 590 million women (36% of the world's population) live in countries where abortion "on request" is allowed ([reproductiverights.org](http://reproductiverights.org)). This means, not due to health complications, or other dangers a pregnancy may inflict on a woman. However, 90 million women (5% of the world's population) live in countries where abortions are banned completely ([reproductiverights.org](http://reproductiverights.org)).

### **We have the right to an education**

Whether this is elementary, middle school, high school, or higher education, American women have the right to it all. While education may not be completely banned in most countries, many countries make education difficult to access. Somalia has been ranked the worst country for education, where 95% of poor females do not attend school ([graphicmaps.com](http://graphicmaps.com)). This is also a country that places higher importance on males getting an education than females ([graphicmaps.com](http://graphicmaps.com)). Other countries with similar restrictions include Nigeria, Liberia, and Mali. Early marriages, sexual harassment, and beginning to work at an early age are some of the reasons these girls never attend school, or drop out early ([graphicmaps.com](http://graphicmaps.com)).

While the list can go on and on, it is clear that, although steps still need to be taken in the U.S for women's equal rights, American women have it better than many women across the globe. However, things are certainly not equal as of yet, even in America. There are still wage-gaps, a lack of women in positions of power, and even a lack of respect for care-giving, like stay-at-home mothers. For such powerful, brilliant, resilient beings, women do not always get the credit or RIGHTS they so deserve. And, so, we chug along in the fight to be seen and valued as such.

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## For the Love of Food



Food - we love it, we hate it, we crave it. From the gooiest chocolate fudge brownies to sinking your teeth into the cheesiest tuscan flatbread, our palate for feel-good food is limitless. But, does it always make us feel good? Many times, the answer is no. Women in particular have a complicated relationship with food, and most often, our link to food has to do with our emotional state. Depending on the person, if we just got dumped, some of us are binge-eating Ben & Jerry's, some of us are too nauseous to even keep a cracker down. If we just got a promotion, some of us are headed for the pub down the street for all-you-can-eat wings and beer, while others celebrate with a healthy home-cooked meal.

Whatever your taste, food is many times an expression of how we feel. If we're binge-eating everything in our fridge, we may not be feeling our best. On the other hand, if we *aren't* eating, we may not be feeling so hot either. But, what about the in-between? Well, there are various types of eaters:

### #1: The Foodie

This type of woman *loves* food - like, it is the most important relationship in her life. She probably has a food blog, posts her meals on her social media, and spends her days watching Cupcake Wars and digging through Pinterest for her next have-to-try recipe.

## #2: The Picky One

This type of woman is extremely selective with her food. She can NOT have her food touching, anything with peas, onions, or fish is outlawed, and she'd honestly just rather Kraft mac-and-cheese than the homemade meal you spent 4 hours slaving over.

## #3: The Health Guru

We all know a health nut. This type of eater probably tracks her calories, only buys organic produce, drinks a Kale smoothie to start her day, and cringes at the thought of sugar or processed foods.

## #4 The Living-On-a-Budget

This type of eater is probably in college or freshly out on her own. She lives off of ramen, hot cheetos, and bananas from the dining hall - and probably, White Claws.

## #5 The Garbage Disposal

This woman eats literally anything - you name it, she loves it. She's probably traveled around the world and tried exotic cuisine like alligator and frog legs. She's equally as happy with a bowl of cereal or beef bourguignon - a palate that is sure to please.

Whatever type of eater you are, one thing remains true - food is our fuel, and what we put in our bodies matters. To get scientific, the food we eat literally affects the dopamine and serotonin in our bodies, thus affecting our mood. Many women think, "okay I need to eat healthy", and try to stick to such a strict diet, which only sets them up for failure and binge-eating later on.

The key, as many of you probably already know, is to have a balance. Eat the organic veggies, and also allow yourself a homemade chocolate chip cookie after dinner. Food doesn't have to be our enemy - and, anyone that has perfected the chocolate chip cookie knows, it can actually be your saving grace.

## Together We Rise - An Interview On Sexual Assault



April is sexual assault awareness month. Although it is a topic not too often discussed, strides have been made in attempts to bring survivor's stories to light, bring justice to those affected, and stop sexual assault from happening altogether. College campuses hold events like "Take Back the Night", where students silently walk around campus, join hands, and share survivor stories to let those affected know they are loved and supported. Movements like the #MeToo movement has also brought light to this, as its goal has been to make survivors feel heard and understood, and ultimately, to spur change (North, 2019). States have implemented sexual harassment laws in the workplace, funds like The Time's Up Legal Defense Fund has helped bring justice to over 3,600 survivors, and perpetrators are being sentenced to prison (North, 2019).

While improvements are being made, there is always work to be done in helping this behavior come to an end for good. She Will Speak is proud to present one specific survivor's story in hopes to do our part in shedding light on this topic as well as spread our love and support to this inspiring woman and beyond.

**Can you share a little bit about your experience (as much as you're comfortable with)?**

I was 12 yrs old. My mom and I were visiting my aunt and her new husband in Pennsylvania. My mom and aunt were talking in the bedroom. I was sleeping on the couch in the living room and awoke to my aunt's husband touching me inappropriately while he sat next to me on the couch.

**What did you do after this attack?**

I immediately jumped up from the couch and ran into the bedroom to tell my mom. I was crying and very upset. I told them to ask John what was the matter with me. My aunt went in to speak with her husband while I spoke to my mother in private. I told my mother everything. She believed me but didn't know how to handle the situation. She told me to keep quiet about it until she could figure out what to do. She also had experienced sexual assault and, in her day, it wasn't talked about. My aunt's husband of course lied, and said I was mistaken and he was just trying to adjust my blanket. Trust me when i say he was NOT doing that.

**What are your hopes for the future?**

My hopes for the future are for no man/woman, boy or girl to ever have to experience a sexual assault and have to remain quiet about it. Ever.

**What are your thoughts on the #MeToo movement?**

I am so grateful that women and anyone inflicted are speaking up and not being silent or intimidated anymore! I am grateful for those who are brave to stand up to the predators and show them no more! This is a godsend! I am proud to support the #MeToo movement. It's a blessing this is finally happening.

**What advice, if any, would you give to other survivors?**

I want to say, stand strong and believe in yourself and your power. What doesn't kill us, can make us stronger. I know it has for me. I also think it's important to learn and grow from the challenges we endure - to let the pain go and move on. Holding on to past pain just brings you down. Don't let this happen. You have a choice.

I also encourage survivors to forgive the people who caused this pain, not for them, but for yourself. The only way to heal is to forgive. The people that do these heinous things are very flawed and possibly mentally ill. Leave the past in the past, as it can't hurt you anymore. They can't hurt you anymore. We are stronger, wiser, and smarter. Don't let anyone ever get away with disrespecting you again.

It is stories like these that shake us to the core; to think that these things still go on today, and to think any child or adult would have to experience such an invasion and lack of basic human decency. This is what we fight against, and what we hope to bring justice to. We thank our interviewee for being so open and vulnerable with us and hope her strength is radiated to all those suffering and who have suffered. You're not alone, and you never will be.

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## Our Drug of Choice: Social Media



Social media is the world of the Gen-Z-ers. We grew up with this; it's second nature to us. Luckily for some of us older Gen-Z-ers, social media's inception wasn't until we hit our teen years, so we had a little bit of time to still spend most of our childhood playing outside, calling a friend on our house phone, and being sheltered from the traumas that social media would later inflict. But those growing up now are exposed to social sites at an extremely young age, thus shaping them immensely - and not always for the better.

When social media first began, it was mainly sites like MySpace and Facebook. There were no ads, and you only followed people you actually knew and, most likely, were friends with in real life. During this time, people posted pictures with their friends more-so as a way to connect and share their lives- no harm there, right? But then, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, and now TikTok, came to life, which spurred a whole new era - what was meant to spur social connection, turned into social destruction.

With these apps, first came the obsessiveness. These apps are what spur all of us to be on our phones 24/7, because the content we can consume is endless. This takes away us living our real lives, and instead, we focus on other people's "lives" (which isn't actually their real lives either).

Let me back up. All of these apps started out with no ads – completely organic content. Then, companies started joining, these sites grew, and ads became ingrained in our feeds as organically as normal posts. We began seeing airbrushed models across our screens. And, then, came the celebrities. We all started following our favorite actors, models, singers. Then, the apps like Face-Tune, and those that shrink your body down to a size zero. Everything started becoming less and less organic – we edited our faces, our bodies, to look like these celebrities and models in the ads.

And, then, even though we knew all of these alteration apps existed, we believed these people truly looked like this, and then we started feeling badly about ourselves if we didn't match this so-called perfect image. We may not have perfectly smooth skin, or brilliantly white teeth, or ab lines, or the perfect glowing tan – but that's what we try to portray on our Instagram feed.

And not only that, but sites like Instagram and Snapchat enable this fake portrayal of ourselves. They create skin smoothing, eye-popping, modelesque filters and entice users to use these filters to make themselves look “better”.

So, it's no wonder social media has had a negative impact on so many of us. We are exposed to an endless reel of content day after day – and a lot of it, isn't even real. We curate our profiles to show as “perfect” of a life as we possibly can. Many influencers have even come out and said, their Instagram may look perfect, but they're actually depressed.

We get so caught up in this digital world, which in turn, affects our real world. While there is no clear answer on how to fix this, I do believe we are coming to a point where people are trying to bring back a more organic social media experience. There have been movements like the “#nofilter” movement, where celebrities have posted (supposedly) totally unedited, unfiltered, natural images of themselves to try to enforce the idea to love ourselves as we are – without the alterations, the makeup, etc.

While there is certainly no going back now, as social media is an integral part of our society today, the more movements like this may foster a more genuine representation of who we are and our lives, and hopefully, bring back the authentic connections it once cultivated.

## How to Stress Less



We all have stress in our lives, no matter who you are. It doesn't matter what career you have, your financial status, your body type, etc. – stress does not discriminate, and is present in all of us whether we like it or not. However, you may think, “no, this person in my life is *never* stressed. She doesn't even have anything to be worried about!” Well, surprise! She probably just has a handle on how to manage her stress, which makes it appear as though she actually has no stressors (claps for her). And, also, let's remind ourselves that we really have no idea of knowing what people are going through – so, friendly reminder to always be kind, to help lower these stressors for everyone around us. But, let's get into how to be like that person in your life, the one who seems to have it all together, who is easy-breezy, stress-free.

### #1: Acknowledge that you're stressed

This may seem like an obvious step, but oftentimes, we can get super wound-up, without even realizing our emotional state. We know we're irritable, but why? We know we feel anxious, and have that pit in our stomach, but what is the cause? We're breaking out, getting headache after headache but can't pinpoint the culprit. Train yourself to know when you are stressed and what you need when this happens. Just being able to recognize your emotional state is the first step in dealing with stress.

## #2 Do what you need to do

Some of us need to go for a run, some need to meditate, some need to grab a pint of Ben and Jerry's and watch *The Notebook*. Whatever you need to do, do it. And, remind yourself when you're feeling this way what made you feel better last time. Stress is a trigger warning that says, "I'm overwhelmed. Something isn't right. There's too much on my plate." To combat this, we need to do things that we know make us happy, and honestly, distract us. Going out with a friend, going swimming, having a dance party in your living room. Let out that tight, pent-up feeling with things you know are going to boost your mood.

## #2 Write it down

Sometimes it's hard to put our feelings into words, but when we get that stressed-out feeling, it's great to grab a notebook and write. Write anything! Sometimes you'll even write things you didn't realize you were feeling. Writing is cathartic and let's us actually see our feelings, thoughts and emotions on paper. This act in itself, will decrease your stress levels. It's almost like venting to a friend (which is also a great way to relieve stress), but you're venting to yourself - a pen pal, if you will.

## #3 Laugh

If you're in a stressful situation, find some time to do something that you know will make you laugh. Whether this is watching a comedy, reading a funny book, or calling your grandma who never fails to give you a giggle, laughing will put your body at ease. Scientifically speaking, when you laugh, the neurotransmitter, dopamine is released, which is literally a "reward" to the brain - talk about the ultimate stress reliever.

## #4 Breathe

Weird that we sometimes forget to do this. Deep breathing is literally proven to calm your body down, as doing this sends a message to your brain that says "chill". Not only does it help you relax, but it helps you clear your thoughts as well. Taking some deep breaths when you're feeling some sort of crazy will help recenter yourself.

## #5 Embrace it

What? Embrace *stress*? You read that right. Whether we like it or not, stress is there to protect and help us. It tells us, hey, something really important is happening that I'm nervous about. Or, hey, we have a lot of work we have to finish for Monday. It's like a signal that is saying, pay attention buddy, we're not used to this. Stress is not always a bad thing. Sometimes it pushes us to work harder, to do better. If you're stressed about something, chances are it *matters*. And guess what else? Chances are it will be over

before you know it and since you were stressed and it made you push yourself more, it will probably even turn out in your favor. And if it doesn't, now you know for next time.

So, next time you're stressed - acknowledge it, do things to help it, and be thankful for it.

## Women's Activists You Should Know



Human rights are a simple, yet controversial topic, and have been for centuries. What should we be allowed to do? Should gender play a factor? Luckily for those of us living in America and other leading countries, equality has been reached in various areas when it comes to rights (although, check out our other blog on women's rights to see where we still need some work). But, while many of us may take our human rights for granted, we should take a moment to stop and think about those who paved the way for us to live the lives we live - specifically, 3 women's activists who have changed the game for females across the globe.

Edna Adan Ismail, a Somali nurse fought against all odds to provide healthcare education and speak out against female genital mutilation (unfpa, 2017). "She was one of the first women in Somalia to become a nurse and midwife, to obtain a driver's license and to gain a leadership position in the health system" (unfpa, 2017). In her country, she witnessed harsh gender discrimination against women, and Somalia has one of the highest numbers of maternal deaths in the world (unfpa, 2017). This spurred her to open a maternal and teaching hospital to fight against these numbers, and to educate people on women's health (unfpa, 2017).

In addition, she even began a university to spread education further. This drive and determination lead her to receive the French Legion of Honour. She has paved the way for not only women's health, but women's education as well.

Tanzila Khan is a 26 year old writer, artist, and youth/disability rights advocate (unfpa, 2017). Khan published her first book at only 16, which discussed her experience with having a disability and how it actually gave her confidence (unfpa, 2017). She began advocating for disabled rights and taught people about their sexual and reproductive rights (unfpa, 2017). Lastly, Khan “founded a production company for young artists and became a motivational speaker, encouraging youth to seize their rights and make change” (unfpa, 2017). She exemplifies the idea of embracing who you are, and standing up for what you believe in.

Last but certainly not least, is Marijana Savic, the founder of the NGO Atina; a “safe house” for victims of trafficking and violence (unfpa, 2017). A Yugoslavian native, Savic witnessed the harsh realities for women and girls in her country and sought to provide support and justice to those affected. NGO Atina does not only open their arms to women, but children and men as well. This program “provides psychosocial, legal and medical assistance” to these victims and helps them get back on their feet (unfpa, 2017).

It is women like Savic that break out of the darkness and bring light to so many lives. The world needs more people like all three of these incredible women. They have brought safety, knowledge, and a voice to those who need it most. Without women’s activists (and any activist for that matter), where would we be? What would our world look like? What would change? We are lucky to not have to know that answer, as activists like Ismail, Khan, and Savic continue to make a difference and make our world a better place.

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