

I. Introduction: SEEKING

You know that dream?

The dream where you find the love of your life, have magical adventures, master a rewarding career, and then have a couple kids? Wrap it up with some financial success and healthy living, and then bam, life is complete!

That dream.

I had that dream. But when I was thirty-nine, my long-term relationship ended over the question of having children. We finally figured out that I wanted them and he didn't. There I was: single, no babies, and pushing forty. My career – which perhaps could have been a consolation prize – felt empty and dull. The big dream – my dream – had gone up in smoke.

I sat in stunned defiance of my life.

How had I come to this? Wasn't I a savvy and smart modern woman? Wasn't I a good planner and at least *moderately* self-aware? Come on, I was a yoga teacher! Weren't we supposed to be, I don't know, *mindful* about this stuff?

And yet, there I was, blindsided by the results of my choices and wondering how the hell this had all happened.

I felt like a failure.

While on the outside I may have looked like a successful yoga teacher (director of education for a prestigious yoga company, living the dream in Vancouver), inside I felt as if I were missing the greatest opportunity in my life: creating a family.

I'd like to say that this watershed moment prompted a profound journey of spiritual insight where I woke up every day, drank kombucha, practiced yoga for two hours, and found inner peace. In reality, I kicked myself, drank wine, ate popcorn and watched Netflix.

After a couple of months, I realized that having popcorn for dinner for the fourth night in a row was perhaps an indication that something had to change. After all, there could still be time for kids. Maybe. And if I wanted my future to involve a husband and children, then I was going to have to stop watching *Downton Abbey* and *do* something differently. I certainly wasn't going to meet someone while I was crying over my popcorn. It was time to step out of my comfort zone.

I squared my shoulders, took a deep breath, and signed up for Tinder, Match, E-Harmony, Plenty of Fish, The Right Stuff, and OK Cupid all in the same week.

My God.

I'd never really enjoyed dating, and *online* dating felt even worse. It was full of unfamiliar pseudo communication in the form of “likes,” “winks” and “favorites.” There were no rules to follow, no guide maps for help. It was the wild west of human interaction.

Questions abounded:

- Was everyone on Tinder really just there to hook up?
- Did a wink mean that he wanted to talk?
- How did I respond to, “Hey, grrrr!”?
- Should I initiate a chat first or did that make me seem desperate?
- How honest should I be? Would “Yoga Teacher Seeks Excellent Baby Daddy to Knock Her Up Really Fast” be too blunt?

And once I did manage to navigate the texts, IM's, and winks, then I had to actually meet these fellows in person.

Here I was, a veteran yogi and experienced teacher trainer, freaking out and trying to uphold my Zen in the midst of Tinder swipes and Starbucks lattes. I watched in horror as all my unfinished emotional business flooded to the surface: my desire to be “nice” rather than honest, my fear of commitment, my wishy-washy boundaries, my objectification of others.

Although I patted myself on the shoulder for the courage in “getting out there,” I felt like I had entered the jungle naked without a machete. Or bug spray.

“You think yoga is hard? Try relationships.” Beverley Murphy, my first yoga teacher.

It was terrible. And it was also wonderful.

I began to see each date as a precious opportunity to practice what I preached on the yoga mat. Could I be accountable for my needs? Could I be centered in the middle of the storm? Could I be both honest and kind? Could I question the ridiculous narratives in my head and instead stay present and open to possibility? Yoga philosophy was coming alive — vividly! — in every coffee date encounter, challenging conversation, and intimate moment.

“The success of Yoga does not lie in the ability to perform postures, but in how it positively changes the way we live our life and our relationships.”- TKV Desikachar

I had come to Tinder trying to find “The One”, and instead I wound up finding myself.

Dating

Dating is a weird combination of high and low stakes. It's like a game. After all, you've got nothing to lose by going out on a coffee date. If it doesn't work out, it's no big deal. There's likely another date right around the corner. Another roll of the dice.

Low stakes.

And yet...

There's also the crazy possibility that this person sitting across from you could wind up being your life mate. You could be with them *forever*.

High stakes.

The thrill of this possibility plus a dose of sexual attraction create the perfect storm for losing our cool. The stakes may be low, but they *feel* really high. Our palms sweat. We wonder if our deodorant is working. We worry about our breath. We stumble over our words. And in those messy and stressful moments, we start to see who we really are.

Svadyaya

Self-study. Wisdom begins with the courage to look at who we really are. From this vantage point, every situation – particularly a scary one - becomes an opportunity to see ourselves more clearly. Each encounter on our dating path becomes an opportunity for self-growth and self-love.

We aren't perfect, and the first step on the transcendental train is being willing to hold up a mirror up and take a good, hard look at what we see. We can only perceive so much of ourselves on our own; we need the external world - and other people - to reflect our unseen facets back.

For thousands of years, yoga has provided this mirror.
An unexpectedly, so does dating.

Kriya Yoga

Yoga doesn't just take place on a mat or on a mountaintop; it's happening every moment in our daily lives. Kriya yoga (yoga in action) has three parts: self-study, the willingness to be uncomfortable, and surrendering to what we can't control. Dating is the perfect place to practice all three.

Atha Yoganusasanam

"Yoga is now." Yoga is happening right now. And now. And now. Each moment is a fresh opportunity for us to show up. Every moment – profane and profound- is an

opportunity for mindfulness and transformation. Even that weird second date at Starbucks.

This book is for seekers. For those who sense that dating can be so much more than a cattle call for connection. This is for you if you want to - with curiosity and courage – make your quest for a relationship a magnificent opportunity for self-love and personal growth.

How to Use This Book

In each chapter, we will link practical real-life relationship issues with key philosophical yoga concepts so that you can immediately start living your yoga in your daily life. I am raw and real with my own personal stories; these candid anecdotes will help illustrate these principles in action. They may also give you a giggle from time to time. At the end of every chapter, I give you tangible dating, yoga, and meditation practices that will help you deal with obstacles and integrate these concepts into both your yoga practice and your life.

I recommend spending a week with each chapter to deepen your connection with each set of ideas. Put what you've learned into practice in your dates and in your life. Audio of the meditation practice and videos of the brief yoga sequence that I suggest can be found at rachelyoga.com so you can practice with me as you go.

Through integrating your yoga practice into your quest for love, you will expand your self-understanding, learn to speak your truth, cultivate courageous compassion and soften more into the infinite vulnerability of your heart. And while following this remarkable process will help you find a rewarding relationship with a loving partner, it will do something far more important: help you to find yourself.

So let's begin.

“The only reason we don't open our hearts and minds to other people is that they trigger confusion in us that we don't feel brave enough or sane enough to deal with. To the degree that we look clearly and compassionately at ourselves, we feel confident and fearless about looking into someone else's eyes.” - Pema Chodron