

# Chapter 10: SURRENDER

Falling in love is scary.

I meet him, I like him. Things are going okay.  
But then, something changes: I start to *really* like him.  
I get scared. And I start acting funny. Not ha-ha funny. Like weird funny.  
Because I get worried about what he thinks.

Maybe he won't think that my references to Star Trek are cute, or that my tendency to belch quite loudly (got that from my Dad, thanks Dad!) isn't endearing. Maybe he thinks my funny accents are racist, or that getting weepy when I hear Shakespeare is girly and overly dramatic.

The editing begins. I stop cackling loudly or getting overly metaphysical. I don't sing out loud or wax poetic about delicious food. I start the "amplify/ blandify" process. When I amplify, I trot out all the things about myself that I think will sound impressive.

"Golly, going to Columbia was such an enlivening experience!"  
"My goodness, it was so inspiring to dissect those human bodies."  
"Yes, helping the orphans was challenging, but by God, the refugees needed it."

(Okay, I didn't do that last one, but it really sounds good.)

Rather than just be who I am, I drop interesting fact breadcrumbs, as if these little nuggets will keep my date's attention and interest. Only the shiny bits, thank you very much.

When I blandify, I edit out anything potentially spicy about my personality and settle for the oatmeal.

"I disagree with you," turns into, "Wow, that's an interesting point of view."  
"I feel completely anxious today," turns into, "I'm fine."  
"My parents voted for Trump," turns into, "Look at that bird over there."

When we blandify, we pull in the rough edges and play it safe in the demographic center. Curtail those racy jokes! Dress only in corporate casual! And for god's sake, make excellent small talk.

When we start to *really* like someone, we usually get scared that they won't like us back. So we only share the prettiest and most acceptable parts of ourselves. While some of this is quite reasonable (come on, no one needs to see you cut your toenails at the dinner table), we often hide away the softer and more vulnerable – more human - parts of ourselves. But ironically, it is only through sharing our quirks and vulnerability that we can be authentically seen and understood. By choosing what feels like a “safe” course, not only do we undermine ourselves, we also deprive our partners of the opportunity to see us for who we really are.

## Self-consciousness

“Don't walk like a duck!” My roommate is coaching me how to walk in my heels.  
“I don't walk like a duck,” I scowl.  
She rolls her eyes. “You do walk like a duck. Walk slower.”  
I try walking slower.  
She cocks her head and squints, “Okay, now lift your knees, don't drag your feet.  
No, no! Not like that. That was way too much.”  
“You said to lift my knees!”  
“I didn't say become a flamingo! Okay, okay...that's getting better. Good, yes, you look...almost natural.”  
“Look at that,” I say. “I have become...a swan.”

I'm on my way to a fancy dinner.

It was only date two, but I was very excited about this new guy Steve. (Remember Champagne Steve?) In fact, I was so nervous about our second date that I went out for a pre-date run to burn off some excess steam. Date one had started off as a casual meet up that had morphed into an evening of laughter and connection. Now, for date two, he was taking me out to a dinner at a spectacular restaurant. A restaurant that required heels. I wanted to impress.

I put on an outfit and marched over to my roommate's room for review.

“Tada!” I strike a pose and wait for the response.  
“...Are you going to someone's funeral?” she asks.  
“What?” My shoulders droop. I am so not good at clothes. “I suck at this. I hate dressing up.”  
“Well, it's true that fashion may not be your strength,” she says delicately, “But there are many things about you that are very, very loveable.”  
I looked down at my outfit. “I look like an Italian widow.”

She laughs, “Come on, let’s raid my closet. I’ve got something fabulous you can wear.”

When we start getting self-conscious, it’s usually because we are afraid someone is going to find us out. The jig is up and something terrible is about to be revealed. In my date with Steve, I was afraid that my (ahem) sporty dress style wouldn’t measure up to his standards.

We all have something that we feel embarrassed about. Maybe you snore, have funky feet, or secretly eat brownies for breakfast. If you’re like me, maybe you love eating gigantic bowls of popcorn like your hand is a shovel.

The self-consciousness that we feel as we start to fall in love can be a wake up call to see if there’s really anything there worth investigating. To notice, with love and care, why we’re feeling embarrassed. Sometimes self-consciousness stems from a healthy desire to become better people. For example, feeling self-conscious about making an off-color joke or having a lie exposed is a good sign that we want to make some changes. Our embarrassment is highlighting the difference between who we are and who we want to be and shows us where we have some work to do.

However, sometimes we feel self-conscious about behaviours or desires that are truly harmless, and indeed are part of our individual essence. We can be trained to feel badly about parts of ourselves that don’t fit into a cultural standard or “norm.” Physical standards of beauty are a great example. We may feel sad about our plump thighs or thinning hair because we are inundated by images of inhuman beauty standards. Or we may have a passionate hobby that others don’t consider cool. Maybe your prized bug collection was ridiculed in high school and now you’re ashamed to wax poetic about your local Lampyridae.

In chapter four, we practiced revealing our authentic selves in our online profiles. Now it’s time to share ourselves authentically in person, and to cultivate the bravery to allow ourselves to be vulnerably seen someone else. It’s time to get brave and let your bug-loving, LEGO-building, popcorn-eating freak flag fly.

## Opportunity: Self-Love

“I love Star Trek,” I take a deep breath and it all rushes out. “Love it, love it, love it, love it. Love everything about it. Had a major crush on Wil Wheaton. Used to read the Start Trek books. Long books. Four hundred page books. That’s how much I love it.”

My ears are burning.

“Star Trek?” Alex says, cocking his head. “What did you like about it. Like, why not...Star Wars?”

I shake my head, “Oh, no my friend. Oh no. Not so interested in Star Wars. Star Trek, all the way. See, it’s the values of the world in Star Trek that are so appealing.”

Uh-oh, I’m starting to get earnest.

“Star Trek is like a utopian version of who we can be. Humanity, that is. I mean, we have all these dystopian versions of reality in our culture, post-apocalyptic stuff. Visions of people being their worst. You know, like Terminator or Aliens. But Star Trek is a positive version of what we can become. You know, using technology wisely, grappling with our humanity, valuing education and exploration.”

“...So you love Star Trek for its values?”

“Yes,” I say, self-consciously, and with just a wee bit of defiance. “I do.”

“Hmmm.” Alex seems to be taking this all in. “So I guess there’s really just one question that I have.”

“What?”

He looks at me sideways, “Picard or Kirk? Or are you one a Janeway kind of gal? Or I suppose we could throw Pike in there, too, if you want to get down to brass tacks, no pun intended.”

I pause. And grin right back.

### Santosha

“Acceptance.” Santosha is one of the *niyamas*, which are guidelines for how we deal with ourselves. Santosha invites a richness of acceptance and love into our relationships by giving both parties the space to be as they truly are. As you cultivate greater intimacy with another person, your expectations about who they should be can begin to dissolve in the light of who they actually are. Paradoxically, when we “give up hope” that something will be different, the tapestry and richness of the current moment can bloom, because we are not trying to change ourselves – or our partners - to be liked.

When your sense of self is healthy, you glow.

When you trust who you are, you can be fully expressive with another person, because you don't have to pretend to be something that you are not. When you trust that you are okay, you allow yourself to be seen without fear of rejection.

The opportunity: practice courage. Don't settle for a safe, tepid, and sterile interaction with a potential partner – or with anyone. You are loveable for your wonderful uniqueness, your colourfulness, and your unexpected corners.

And the right person will love you for those details.

## Faith

Being courageous requires faith.

My mom is rolling her eyes, “Oh, it was *that* nurse.”

My Dad pipes in from the kitchen, “Oh c'mon Cheryl.”

My mom whispers, “He dated her when he thought we had broken up.”

My Dad has good ears. “We *had* broken up!”

“Didn't you date other guys, too?” I ask my Mom pointedly. “When you guys were on your, uh, off-time?”

Mom assumes an expression of utter innocence.

“Yes,” says my Dad loudly, “*Couple of bozos.*”

My parents were high school sweethearts. There are photos of him accompanying her to her senior prom. Dad a skinny basketball player, Mom a gorgeous debutante.

My mother rolls her eyes, dismissing Dad's outrage. “Well, we were off and on in college, and then we were really apart when your Dad was in the marine corp. But then we decided that we wanted to be with each other.” She nods and smiles at my father, “And so, we got back together. And here we are.”

My parents risked taking time apart, trusting that the right path for them would appear. And despite the nurse and the bozos, they chose to come back together.

It's meant to be, it'll be. *Faith* is the process of trusting the unfolding.

## Shraddha

"Faith." Shraddha invites us to remember that we are participating in a much larger universal unfolding. We are limited in our human experience; we can't possibly control the world or know the future. Faith allows us to soften to the adventure, and trust that everything will turn out as it is supposed to.

When we like someone, resting in uncertainty becomes very challenging. We feel as if everything could dissolve in a moment! We want to control the situation to make sure that the outcome is what we want. We want to look good, be perfect, and make sure that there is a happy ending to our fairy tale.

When we start falling in love, we can get scared that our future with someone will hinge on a small detail. We feel mortified about our inelegant stumble or accidentally snorting our drink. We get paranoid that the entirety of the relationship will be destroyed when we blurt out that horrible secret that we never tell anyone (*do they think I'm a totally crazy now?!?!).*

But it won't.

The future success of your relationship won't hinge on the terribly awkward sex moment, your first fight, your inadvertent diss of his or her mom, or the first time that you fart really loudly.

When someone likes you – just as when you like someone else - they will like you for more than your details. There is a totality to who you are: your values, your voice, your sense of humour, and your attitude about life. In the face of your totality, the small stuff simply won't matter.

And here's the thing: the real you is going to come out eventually. Inevitably. So why hide?

Think of your past as your own personal iceberg.

To every interaction, you are bringing the significant weight of your experience, actions, and life. While your behaviour (the tip of the iceberg) is on view for the world, it's really the weight of all the unseen ice underneath (your history) that dictates where the iceberg goes.

## Karma

Karma is the residue of the action that we have taken. In short, we have baggage, and (unless he or she is enlightened) your date has baggage too. Our lives are continually unfolding within a larger tapestry of action. And even though we strive for self-

awareness, we are also directed by subconscious forces that aren't always in our control. Our work is to be in the moment and do our best.

The other person has a similarly weighty history. When you go on a date, you are only able to see the tip of his or her iceberg. The rest remains hidden.

But over time, the iceberg will be revealed. And chances are that there will be some interesting surprises in what lies beneath. Though we may try to pretty up the topside (look, I put a Christmas tree on my iceberg, ta da!), changing the superficial landscape ultimately won't change the deeper terrain. Eventually, the navigation of your iceberg will reveal the contours of what lies beneath the water.

So why not be authentic from the start and save yourself the time of all the pretending?

### Vairagya

Literally meaning "without color," vairagya means non-attachment. Non-attachment is not the same thing as not caring; we can care deeply, but also stay stay rooted in our inner, intrinsic wholeness so that we can experience the world without being so reactive.

When we begin to edit out who we are because we are afraid that we don't match up with someone – when we try to be *liked* rather than be ourselves – then we're postponing the inevitable reveal. And in the meantime, we're depriving ourselves of the opportunity to be fully self-expressive - and depriving our dates of the opportunity to experience us as we authentically are.

Faith means remembering that if it's meant to be, then you will both jump over the awkward hurdles of texting, protocol, and embarrassment in order to step closer. "Success" is not all on your shoulders. Your person will meet you halfway. Your person will want to walk beside you.

If it's meant to be, it will be.

"To see new shores, one must consent to lose sight of the shore for a long time." – Andre Gide.

# Practices

## **Journal: Self-trust**

- How do you want people to see you? Why? What happens if they don't?
- What secrets do you have? Why are they secrets? What would it feel like if you told them to someone?
- What qualities do you hide? Are you hiding them because you would really like to change them, or because you are afraid what people think?

## **Dating practice: Trust**

- Notice when you feel anxious in a dating relationship, or when you feel a desire to be liked rather than seen for you are. Explore your fear: what are you afraid of? What's the worst thing that could happen?
- Notice when you stifle yourself (don't say what you think, what you feel, or otherwise edit yourself). Where did the impulse to edit come from? And how did it make you feel?
- Notice when you feel like yourself: free, expressive, and unedited. What created those circumstances?

## **Meditation Practice: Wholeness**

Yoga reminds us that we are already whole, perfect, and free. For this meditation, choose one word (*mantra*) that empowers your full sense of self. For example, "beauty," "whole," "surrender," or "magnificent."

- Find your meditation seat (see chapter two for more detailed instructions if needed).
- Follow your breath.
- On each inhale and exhale, repeat your chosen mantra.
- After about five minutes, take a few normal breaths and notice how you feel.

## **Yoga Practice: Trust**

- Tree
- Eagle

As you explore these balancing poses, change your point of view. Rather than resist their inherent shakiness, embrace it as an opportunity to "learn to fall." If you feel steady, close your eyes. Recognize that the fear of falling is simply a fear; we have lost nothing.