

Chapter 2. WHOLENESS

"Bella...When you were gone, when the meteor had fallen over the horizon, everything went black...And there was no more reason, for anything." — Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight*

Confession: I've always had a serious romance problem.

I was the little girl who sat in the forest in my flowy white princess costume, refusing to come in because I knew that a unicorn was going to show up at any moment. I'd squeeze my eyes shut and extend my hands out with a carrot offering, waiting for the unicorn to come and gently take it.

In my tween years, I dreamt that Prince Charming was going to sweep me off my feet, though my vision only lasted up to the first kiss. Then I discovered my sister's secret stash of sexy historical romance novels and I realized that there was a *lot* more to the story. Reading this racy collection drastically improved my vocabulary ("rogue," "heaving," "ravished," "defiant," "pulsating," "naïve," "obdurate," "titillating," "member," "penetrating"), but it also gave me some pretty far-fetched ideas about sex, love, and romance.

Hollywood didn't help.

I devoured movies like the *Breakfast Club*, *16 Candles*, *Pretty Woman*, and any other rom-com that suggested that true love would drop into my lap and knock me senseless. In these movies, every heroine is a damsel in distress, true love always saves the day, and bad guys (vampires, werewolves, or general scoundrels) are actually the good guys who are just waiting to be reformed by the love of the right woman.

"You complete me." — Jerry McGuire

I bought into the Hollywood fairy tale hook, line, and sinker. Isn't there something intoxicating and delicious in thinking that Mr. or Ms. Right will just ride up on a hypoallergenic horse and fix all of our problems? Ah, at last, a saviour! How wonderful! How inspiring! How romantic!

And how impossible.

I call this, "Searching for your Missing Piece."

Missing Piece Dating

I had a *total* crush on Jeremy.

He was a successful filmmaker and I fervently admired his passion and commitment to his craft. He was also a decent cook and cute to boot.

But Jeremy turned out to be a shitty boyfriend. He was distracted, distant, and usually out of town. The sex wasn't even that good. And yet I couldn't get him out of my head! Jeremy was Rachel catnip.

And then Jeremy dumped me.

I felt as if my soul had been amputated. My heart turned into a hollow, burning hole in my chest. I was devastated. (You'll hear more about Jeremy in chapter nine when we talk about rejection.) What was going on? Why did I miss him so desperately?

With a little time and perspective, I came to understand that my pathetic need to be with Jeremy wasn't really about Jeremy at all. I felt scared and crappy on the inside, and Jeremy's attention had been distracting me from my own bad feelings. When Jeremy paid attention to me, I felt validated and good about myself. When he ignored me, I was so busy chasing after his affection that I didn't have to deal with my own inner mess.

I wasn't dating Jeremy just because I liked him; I was dating him because I hoped he could fix me.

There is a big problem with the "I'll date you and you'll fix me" scenario: it assumes that we are dependent on someone else for our wholeness and happiness. When we think that someone else can fix our "Missing Piece," we are pretty much enslaving them to be our validation machines. Without their approval, we are lost.

We're on an emotional rollercoaster.

When the relationship is going well, we feel amazing. When it's not going well, we feel horrible. And deep down, we have a small, festering, and irrational belief: we believe that if the relationship ends, we will die.

Because I felt so dependent on Jeremy, I was afraid to let him go even when it was clear that the relationship wasn't working. Because I was scared, I couldn't make the best decision for myself - or him - because of what I thought I would lose.

Staying with someone because of how they "make" us feel is a classic Missing Piece confusion. When we're in a Missing Piece confusion, our relationship becomes obligatory and dependent rather than free and truly loving.

When Jeremy dumped me, I did feel lost. But here's the thing: I already was lost.

His departure simply exposed the truth.

Perfectly Imperfect

The fact is that we all feel like we have a Missing Piece. At the core of our beings, we each have a fundamental sense of being incomplete, imperfect, unsafe, and unfinished. It's a feeling of being unworthy of love.

You know this feeling: it's the one you get when you feel like you have done something wrong. Maybe you had a fight with a friend, or you just woke up feeling crappy. When we get this feeling, we scramble to cover it up. We search for stuff in the world (houses, cars, wealth, esteem, success) to make it go away. And when our cover up job stops working, we're fast on the prowl again. We are constantly trying to fill the Missing Piece.

"Anyone who falls in love is searching for the missing pieces of themselves." — Haruki Murakami

In romantic love, we use our relationships to cover up the Missing Piece. Like I did with Jeremy, we expect our partners to make the bad feelings go away. ("Tell me I'm pretty," "Commiserate with me," "Tell me you love me.") And they do. And it works.

For a while.

And then it stops working. Uh-oh. This must not be the right person, we think. Because according to the great Hollywood romance, the *right* person would make the Missing Piece feeling go away *forever*. So if this relationship isn't covering up my pain anymore, then it's got to be a bad fit. So we dump our faulty partner and find someone else. And hope that *they'll* be the One.

But here's the secret that Hollywood keeps on the down low: that terrible feeling of uncertainty and imperfection isn't going to go anywhere. It will never be "solved" by Prince or Princess Charming - or anyone else.

Because it's an intrinsic part of the human condition.

| [Anava_Mala](#)

A fundamental human misperception that causes us to feel as if we are incomplete and imperfect. This misunderstanding makes us feel as if there is always something lacking, which we frequently try to fill with resources from the outside world. However, this feeling of lack is a simply a part of being human. And it can only be addressed internally, by us.

Your missing piece can never be “fixed!” Eureka! Stop the press! We can end the search! Yes, your partner may briefly cover up your bad feeling, but soon enough it’s going to sneak up from the basement and – voila! – appear again. Inevitably. Because it’s always there. And we are so used to calling this feeling a “problem” that we never actually just sit in how it feels.

The bottom line: finding “the one” is not going to make you happy. You will never be “cured” by romantic love – not even when your lover is the Vampire Edward, Mr. Darcy, Ryan Gosling, or Theo James.

Lasting happiness can only come from the *inner* recognition of your own worthiness.

Ohhhhhh my friends, I understand that you may be disappointed in what you just read. You may want to toss this book down. You’re thinking, “That’s crap. This is a dumb book. I thought this was going to help me date! Other people *do* make me happy and bring me joy. I deserve connection and love!”

Yes, I understand – and I agree with you! And we’ll get there. But here’s the sixty four thousand dollar question that we have to ask ourselves before we start to tango with another person: are you looking for *love*? Or, are you just looking for someone to *fix your problem*?

It’s time to stop selling ourselves short. It’s time to stop mistaking *romance* for *love*.

Romance v. Love

Romance is delicious. It’s the bloom on the rose, the icing on the cake. It’s full of good nether region tingles and all sorts of fun fantasies. We should all enjoy the thrill of a first kiss and the giddiness of falling in love.

But romance isn’t love. Romance thrives on mystery; it can only exist in the adventure of uncertainty. Love, on the other hand, is rooted in intimacy, which is the deep knowledge of another person. In a sense, romance and love are polar opposites; as you get to know someone better, their mystery is dispelled. Their flaws appear. This is usually about the time that we get mad at our partners and think about ending the relationship.

And right in that very sticky moment lies the opportunity for love.

Love lies in our willingness to know someone else deeply: flaws, farts and all. But you can only see someone else for who they really are when you aren’t busy using them as a human shield for your own bad feelings.

When you stop trying to fix your own Missing Piece with your romantic partner, then you can see your person for who they are. Instead of *needing* the relationship, you can *choose* the relationship. And if your partner has a bad day, your world doesn't fall apart. Because you don't need them to be a certain way for you to be okay.

This time, we're going to do dating differently. We're not going to settle for romance. We're going to go for love.

Rather than seek out partners to fill our Missing Pieces, let's seek out partners because we want to *more fully* express ourselves and *connect authentically* with another human being. Let's seek out partners in order to cultivate true intimacy and see them for who they are beyond our own needs. And when our own unfinished business gets exposed, let's treat it as a glorious opportunity for a little self-work rather than a pity party.

"You complete me," becomes, "you complement me."

Yoga

From the root, "yuj," to yoke. Think of an ox, yoked to a plough in order to sow a field. When we practice yoga, we are yoking our attention to something deeper and more sustaining than the temporary delights of the external world. Yoga is about connecting more deeply to ourselves.

When we have a stronger sense of who we are, then we can arrive in our relationship adventures from a place of strength, rather than desperation; open-handed, rather than grasping; centered, rather than needy.

In some ways, this wake up call seems like a complete bummer, "What, you mean I can't just find someone to fix what's wrong with me?"

Well, yes, you can. And you will.

That person is you.

Sat-cit-ananda

"Whole, free, blissful:" a description of our true identity. Although our connection to our true nature is usually obscured by the limitations in our own understanding, through practice we can begin to uncover and experience our intrinsic wholeness for ourselves.

Practices

Journal: Heart's desire

For this exercise, write freely and give yourself permission to brainstorm. Stream of consciousness, baby. The less you think about it, the better!

- What are the most essential traits you crave in your dream partner (sexy, kind, entrepreneurial, creative, safe, wealthy, musical, funny)?

Be honest: what do you *really* want? The more specific and quirky that you can be, the better. Don't be polite, be real. No one's watching; share what you really want - not what you think sounds good. For example, one of the random things on my list: "I want someone who can change a tire on my car...I find that damn sexy."

Dating Practice: Self-dating

For every date that you go on with another person, make one date for yourself that is at least a half hour. Put it in your calendar.

For your self-date, consider one of the traits that you selected above. Now, choose an activity that will empower you to create that skill or emotional experience for *yourself*. For example, if you're a closet artist, sign up for painting lessons, or pull out your guitar.¹ If you feel financially insecure, sign up for a course that helps you to manage your money, or set aside time to work on your budget. If you are seeking someone successful, find a personal coach, work on your resume, or do job research.

- After each self-date, journal or reflect briefly: how do you feel?

Meditation Practice: Feeling the Missing Piece

We all have a Missing Piece feeling. But we've become so good at covering it up that we reflexively react before we even notice it. We drink the wine, eat the cookie, or call the friend before we give ourselves a chance to experience our feelings. This meditation is an opportunity to become friendlier with ourselves *just as we are*.

Don't worry if you've never meditated before; this simple meditation is the perfect way to practice creating space to come home to yourself.

How to find your meditation seat

Choose a position that allows your spine to be long and tall without effort. While we usually think of yogis sitting on a cushion or block on the floor, you can also sit on the edge of a chair. The most important part of your meditation seat is that are you able to keep your spine upright and tall without undue effort. (If sitting is hard on your back, you can also lie down on your back with your knees bent.) Choose a position that you can stay in relatively comfortably for

¹ A wonderful book to support creative work is *The Artist's Way* by Julie Cameron. If you have uncovered some fears around creativity and self-expression, pick up a copy.

five minutes. If something starts hurting partway through the meditation, then don't be a hero! It's okay to change your position so that your body is at ease.

Once you are seated, feel the anchor of your sitting bones connecting to the earth. Position your chest over your pelvis, and your head over your chest so that your skeleton supports your body weight without undue effort. As your head floats toward the sky, release any unnecessary tension in your shoulders, face, and neck. Allow your chest to be broad and open. Place your hands on your thighs (face up for a sense of openness, or face down for a sense of grounding).

I recommend closing your eyes. If you find that closing your eyes is disconcerting or that you start to feel sleepy, then keep your eyes open and softly focused.

For each meditation exercise, you can set a timer (I recommend starting with five minutes) or sit for as long as you wish. After each meditation, open your eyes and take a few moments to transition back to the "real world" before leaving your seat.

- Find your meditation seat (as described above).
- Breathe and sense your body and your feelings.
- Do an "internal scan" where you focus on the physical sensation in different parts of your body.
- What physical sensations do you feel?
- What emotions do you feel?
- Distraction will be natural. As thoughts arise, gently return your attention to your breath and to your feelings.

Yoga Practice: Self-Connection

Visit www.rachelyoga.com to do this practice with me. Use your practice to connect with how you feel. If your practice were a reflection of self-love, would it be different? How can you use these poses to nourish your connection with yourself?

- Cat/Cow
- Child's Pose
- Ujjayi Breath
- Downward Dog