

Advance Praise for Millennials' Guide to Relationships

"Millennials' Guide to Relationships provides a one-stop actionable workbook for the minefields of the myriad relationships a generation juggling outsize expectations, a difficult world, and re-defined paradigms about love, family, and work are managing. The beauty of this book is that it can be tailored to the relationship needs of the reader – whether it's dating, family issues, or roommates. Drs. Hallett and Wisdom do a great job of consistently revisiting the pillars of healthy relationships such as self-reflection, self-awareness, respect, and empathy, qualities that can often get lost in the shuffle."

– **Ramani Durvasula**, PhD, Clinical Psychologist, Professor of Psychology, and Author

"Millennials' Guide to Relationships is full of down-to-earth tips for people at any stage in life. If you are a person who sometimes speaks to other people, this lists reasonable, objective advice based on your situation and what you want for yourself—not what society or the authors think you should be doing."

– **Caroline Mays**, English Professor and admitted Millennial

"Millennials' Guide to Relationships is another must-have Millennials' guide for your bookshelf, providing clear and action-oriented guidance for people in their 20's and 30's who are looking to build and strengthen existing relationships. The book is easy to navigate and offers quick yet thorough considerations, tips,

and tricks that can be applied to romantic, professional, familial and other relationships. *Millennials' Guide to Relationships* will be a helpful resource for Millennials to use in their own lives and for them to share with friends, family, and other loved ones of all ages."

– **Jennifer Felner**, PhD, San Diego, CA

"Dr. Hallett and Dr. Wisdom's guide to relationships is extremely helpful for anyone, but especially a Millennial such as myself – it's like having a therapist and a best friend in your back pocket! I will be recommending this incredible resource to all Millennial clients I work with as an occupational therapist as well as to all my friends!"

– **Laura Stursberg**, Occupational Therapy Doctoral Student

"*Millennials' Guide to Relationships* is a wonderful breakdown of how to look at your feelings, figure out your intentions, and interact with other humans to have a successful relationship with yourself, your friends, your family, and even romantically. I really enjoyed the road map-style reading and feel like I gained a lot of knowledge and tools on how to have healthier relationships. This book has so much useful information and it is written in a manner which is easy to digest and fun to read."

– **Leah Gallagher-Hull**, Real Life Millennial

"Millennials' Guide to Relationships is one of the most powerful guides to navigating any relationship. The candid and direct support given by Dr. Kristina Hallett and Dr. Jennifer Wisdom is gold. If and when you ever struggle no matter what kind of relationship it may be, this book will guide you to the other side with care and honesty."

– **Tricia Brouk**, Director, Writer, Producer, Curator, Coach

MILLENNIALS' GUIDE TO **RELATIONSHIPS**

What No One Ever Told you About
Happy and Healthy Relationships



WINDING PATHWAY BOOKS

KRISTINA HALLETT, PHD ABPP
JENNIFER P. WISDOM, PHD MPH

© 2021 Kristina Hallett and Jennifer P. Wisdom

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 International Copyright Act, without the prior written permission except in brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

Published by Winding Pathway Books



WINDING PATHWAY BOOKS

ISBN (print): TBD

ISBN (e-book): TBD

Book design by: Deana Riddle at Bookstarter

Cover design by Brian Sisco at 115 Studios and Diego G. Diaz

Photo credit: Diego G. Diaz

For more information or bulk orders, visit: www.leadwithwisdom.com

Printed in the United States of America

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank the following for their expert and insightful comments: Lindsay Harris, Jennifer Felner, Alison Feuer, Adam Hart, Maria Lawrence, Greg Muriello, Laura Stursberg, and Elizabeth Warren. We appreciate Diego G. Diaz for cover design and photography, Deana Riddle at Bookstarter for publishing support, and Cassandra Blake for exemplary administrative assistance.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

PART 1. WHO ARE YOU? GETTING TO KNOW YOURSELF

CHALLENGE 1: KNOWING WHAT YOU LIKE

CHALLENGE 2: IDENTIFYING YOUR INNER VOICE

CHALLENGE 3: IDENTIFYING YOUR CORE VALUES

CHALLENGE 4: WHEN FEAR IS IN CHARGE
(OR ANXIETY BY ANOTHER NAME)

CHALLENGE 5: ENGAGING IN SELF-CARE

CHALLENGE 6: WHEN YOU CAN'T SAY "NO": CREATING HEALTHY
BOUNDARIES

CHALLENGE 7: WHEN THE BRAVE FRONT ISN'T ENOUGH: HOW TO
KNOW WHEN YOU NEED THERAPY

CHALLENGE 8: SETTING REALISTIC GOALS AND CRUSHING THEM!

CHALLENGE 9: THE DARK SIDE OF SOCIAL MEDIA:
IT'S NOT ABOUT THE "LIKES"

CHALLENGE 10: HAVING HEALTHY CONVERSATIONS

CHALLENGE 11: BEING LABELED A "MILLENNIAL"

PART 2. RELATIONSHIP WITH PEERS

CHALLENGE 12: MAKING FRIENDS AS A GROWN-UP

CHALLENGE 13: READING VIBES QUICKLY

CHALLENGE 14: FRIENDSHIP DEALBREAKERS

CHALLENGE 15: COLLEAGUES, FRIENDS OR BOTH?

CHALLENGE 16: BREAKING UP WITH A FRIEND - OR WHEN A FRIEND
BREAKS UP WITH YOU

CHALLENGE 17: BUDS TO BOO: BENEFITS AND RISKS

CHALLENGE 18: AGREEING TO DISAGREE

PART 3. RELATIONSHIP WITH ROMANTIC PARTNERS

CHALLENGE 19: KNOWING WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

CHALLENGE 20: FINDING "THE ONE"

CHALLENGE 21: WHY THE GRASS ALWAYS SEEMS GREENER:
HOW NOT TO SETTLE

CHALLENGE 22: MAKING IT WORK: IF THEY'RE NOT TRYING,
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

CHALLENGE 23: STAYING YOURSELF WHEN YOU'RE WITH
SOMEONE ELSE

CHALLENGE 24: WHEN IT'S NOT WORKING

CHALLENGE 25: FIGHTING "FAIR"

CHALLENGE 26: TAKING A BREAK

CHALLENGE 27: CALLING IT QUILTS

CHALLENGE 28: WHOSE IS IT: HOW TO DIVVY UP
PROPERTY AND ASSETS

CHALLENGE 29: IF KIDS ARE INVOLVED

CHALLENGE 30: IF PETS ARE INVOLVED

CHALLENGE 31: AFTER THE BREAKUP

CHALLENGE 32: DATING AGAIN AFTER A BREAKUP

CHALLENGE 33: WHY AM I NOT DATING?

CHALLENGE 34: TO "I DO" OR NOT TO "I DO"

CHALLENGE 35: OPTIONS BEYOND MONOGAMY

CHALLENGE 36: DATING AND SAFE SEX DURING THE PANDEMIC ERA

CHALLENGE 37: NAVIGATING SOCIAL MEDIA: EGO AND ETIQUETTE

CHALLENGE 38: TALKING, HANGING OUT AND HOOKING UP

CHALLENGE 39: SEXTING

CHALLENGE 40: POLITICS BETWEEN PARTNERS

PART 4. RELATIONSHIP WITH ROOMMATES

CHALLENGE 41: CHOOSING ROOMMATES

CHALLENGE 42: LOGISTICS OF AGREEMENTS

CHALLENGE 43: BEING A GOOD ROOMMATE

CHALLENGE 44: COMMUNICATING ABOUT CLEANLINESS
AND OTHER STUFF

CHALLENGE 45: ROOMMATE DEALBREAKERS

CHALLENGE 46: MOVING OUT/ENDING SHARED LIVING

CHALLENGE 47: TRAVELING TOGETHER

CHALLENGE 48: POLITICS IN THE HOUSE

PART 5. RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY

CHALLENGE 49: DEALING WITH FAMILY EXPECTATIONS

CHALLENGE 50: LIVING AT HOME AS AN ADULT

CHALLENGE 51: WHEN PARENTS HAVE PROBLEMS

CHALLENGE 52: PROCESSING CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

CHALLENGE 53: DEVELOPING ADULT RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY

CONCLUSION: YOU'VE GOT THIS!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

How to Use this Book

This is not a book best read cover to cover. We encourage you to review the table of contents and identify a challenge you are currently having or recently experienced. Turn to those pages to start finding a solution!

This book is about relationships — all of the different types of relationships that we may have, including the relationship with yourself! Each challenge includes a brief description and a number of possible solutions that you may want to try. Many times, you can see success after trying just one option. You'll see some solutions repeated across different challenges because they're likely to be helpful for many problems. For complex challenges, you may want to attempt several interventions at the same time. We suggest using a little bit of the scientific method as you try this process: After you identify the challenge you're having, visualize what it would look like for you once the issue is resolved. Then as you try out solutions, you have an ideal to measure progress against. It's helpful if you take an approach of curiosity; pretend you're Sherlock Holmes trying to figure out and solve the problem, or putting together a massive 3-D puzzle.

It's important to have patience and give the solutions a little bit of time to work. Some ideas that you try won't solve the problem but will make it a little better — that's still success! If you don't feel comfortable trying a solution or if it works partially or not at all, try something else. Some of the solutions are very low risk, such as changing your expectations of the other person. Others can appear more challenging, such as directly discussing a concern with a partner or asking your roommate to move out. Start with solutions that feel lower risk to you and work your way up to more challenging solutions.

It's important to remember a few basic rules of relationships that will never steer you wrong:

1. Be honest *and* diplomatic with everyone, including yourself.
2. Listen to what others are saying before responding.
3. Be patient. Sometimes people are working on your behalf to make things better and you don't even know it.
4. Be curious about yourself and seek constant self-improvement.
5. Set and maintain boundaries and limits that reflect your priorities within your relationship(s).
6. Remember that we all have struggles. Be kind and respectful.

As you work through possible solutions, you'll get better at knowing yourself, reading situations, responding to issues, building relationships, and applying solutions effectively. There will sometimes be situations in which there is a game being played around you that you don't fully get — a version of “relationship politics”. Observe, be patient, clarify your own boundaries, and learn. The more you know what you want, the more you'll be able to achieve your goals and have the kind of relationships you want. If you're not sure what you want, that's okay too — that's a perfect place to be while you're in your 20s and 30s. The goal of the strategies in this book is to help you develop skills that will serve you well as you continue to move forward in life.

Each of you reading this book is a unique person with talents to share with the world. Our hope is that this book can make it easier for you to do so. Good luck improving your relationships!

Part 1.
Who are you? Getting to Know Yourself

Challenge 1.

Knowing What You Like

In order to have positive relationships (including family, friendships, professional colleagues and intimate partners), it really helps to have a sense of who you are and what style works for you. Each one of us is a unique individual and we have a lot of different aspects to our personalities. Try creating your own self-inventory to figure out what you like and don't like. Self-awareness is a major key to feeling good, having the life you want, and not getting caught up in comparisons to other people. If you feel you've got a good handle on who you are, consider using this exercise as a moment of self-reflection and a "check-in" on how you're connecting with yourself.

1. **Write down at least 5 things that describe your personality.** Do this without judgment, as this is just part of the process of getting to know yourself.
2. **Write down at least 5 things that you would like other people to know about you.** Often, we feel that people don't "really know" us and there may be elements of yourself that you don't feel get expressed very often.
3. **Write down at least 5 things that you find helpful when you're anticipating meeting someone new** (this can be something about yourself (a fun fact is always a conversation-starter!), or something about a situation such as: talking face to face; entering an unknown situation with a friend; paying attention to how you dress for an occasion).
4. **Identify one thing about yourself that you don't like** or that you think interferes with your relationships. Create

a list of at least 5 things that you could do to address this issue.

5. **Write down at least 10 things that you like about yourself.** If you are having a hard time coming up with this list, consider asking close friends or family what they find positive or enjoyable about you.
6. **Take the Values In Action (VIA) Character survey** which can be found at <https://www.viacharacter.org/>. Try taking the longer version (both are free). Using the top 5 strengths identified in the VIA character survey, identify at least 2 areas where you demonstrate those strengths. Consider the whole 24-character strengths — what are at least 2 areas that you might like to improve or address? Write down at least 3 action steps you can do to take action.
7. **Take the 5 Love Languages quiz** which can be found at <https://www.5lovelanguages.com/quizzes/>. It gives you some insight into the kind of things that spell “love” to you (and what might matter to other people as well).
8. **Are substances (such as alcohol and cannabis) part of your life?** If so, take a moment to consider the circumstances in which you partake, the outcome, and any potential effect on your health or functioning.

See also: **Challenge 2:** Identifying Your Inner Voice
 Challenge 3: Identifying Your Core Values
 Challenge 5: Engaging in Self Care

Challenge 2.

Identifying Your Inner Voice

We all have an inner voice that “weighs in” on how we are living our life. For most of us, there are two main inner voices – one that is critical and focuses on the negative, and one that is more positive and nurturing. The inner critic tends to increase feelings of self-doubt, shame and blame, while your inner nurturer is kinder and more compassionate. It’s also likely that your inner voice will change over time, as you encounter various life stages and milestones. Remember, this is not about judgment, it’s about self-awareness.

1. When you close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, what are the first thoughts or sensations that come to your awareness? Write down what comes up. What does this tell you about what’s going on with you?
2. How often did you engage in negative self-talk over the last few days? Negative self-talk is when you say things to yourself such as “I’m stupid” or “I will never get ahead.” It takes practice to be able to recognize when this is happening.
3. How often did you engage in positive, self-affirming talk over the past few days? Positive, self-affirming talk involves saying things like, “I did a great job” or “I’m going to succeed.” It takes practice to be able to recognize when this is happening as well.
4. Consider keeping a record for a week of how often you are engaging in positive or negative self-talk. This is going to give you a baseline of the frequency with which you use

both kinds of self-talk. Don't be surprised to find that the negative self-talk seems to increase once you are keeping track. This is completely normal. It's just pointing out that you haven't been noticing the degree to which those negative thoughts come up.

5. Once you have a sense of how much you engage in positive and negative self-talk, you have succeeded at the first step of making a change — awareness. It's pretty hard to change a behavior when you don't realize you're doing it! For the next week, each time that you notice an instance of negative self-talk, take a deep breath and ask yourself “what's the data to support this negative information?” Actively seek to counter the data with something positive. This will help you to begin to challenge and combat those negative thoughts — and it's strengthening the ability of your positive inner voice to be more nurturing and kinder.
6. Imagine what you would say if someone you love talked about themselves using negative self-talk. For the next week, after you challenge your negative thoughts, take your imagined response to your loved one and say it to yourself. This is allowing you to actively choose to engage in a more self-compassionate dialogue.
7. Engage in the process of Awareness - Breath - Challenge - Compassion. This means you first recognize that you're using negative self-talk, second take a deep breath, third challenge the negative statement, lastly say something compassionate to yourself. Over time, your negative self-talk will decrease!

See also: **Challenge 3:** Identifying Your Core Values

Challenge 4: When Fear is in Charge
(or Anxiety by Another Name)

Challenge 5: Engaging in Self-Care