

“An essential read. So funny, so smart and cutting—I’m jealous I didn’t write it.”

—Greg Behrendt, *New York Times* bestselling coauthor, *He’s Just Not That Into You*

x Don't
x Believe
x the
x Swipe

Finding Love *without* Losing Yourself

Mandy Hale

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

“Don’t Believe the Swipe is another Mandy Hale essential read. So funny, so smart and cutting—I’m jealous I didn’t write it.”

Greg Behrendt, *New York Times* bestselling coauthor,
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“Where has this book been all my life? Funny, wise, and oh so clever . . . it’s seriously the last dating book I’ll ever need.”

Krista Allen, actress, comedian, recovering
believer in the swipe

“As a fellow single, I am so happy to have this new book by Mandy Hale to help me think and laugh my way to finding the love of my life. Mandy has a way with words that blesses the journey, even on the tough days.”

Yvette Nicole Brown, actress, comedian, writer, and TV host

“Don’t Believe the Swipe is a hilarious and candid guide to navigating dating as a modern single woman. Mandy shares her tales from the swiping front lines, teaches you every pitfall to avoid, and, above all, inspires self-love and hopefulness for anyone still waiting to meet their perfect match.”

Francesca Hogi, celebrity love and life coach

“This book cuts through the fog of modern dating and reconnects us to our single most important relationship—the relationship we have with ourselves.”

Devyn Simone, celebrity matchmaker,
dating expert, and TV host

“Don’t Believe the Swipe is a primer on modern dating. This book made me cry and cringe and laugh and lament, and at the end of it, I feel less alone and better able to tackle this crazy dating world.”

Joy Beth Smith, author, *Party of One*

Don't Believe the Swipe

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Mandy Hale



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For all the single girls
still brave enough to believe in love.

And for our frontline health-care heroes.
THANK YOU.

Prologue

It was New Year's Eve. I had been seeing an ex of mine again (mistake number one), as I was making a second attempt at fashioning a relationship out of a situationship (see “Modern Dating Dictionary”). The ex—let's call him Chandler Bing—and I had plans for that evening, which was a really big deal for me, as I hadn't had a New Year's Eve date since *Friends* was still on the air. I was nervous and excited and completely atwitter about the thought of a New Year's Eve kiss. I had gone shopping earlier that week for the perfect outfit, and my hair, nails, and eyebrows were on fleek, as the kids say. (Do the kids still say that?) I was ready for a night to remember!

Chandler Bing and I didn't have a set plan, and being a type-A control freak, I don't do well when there isn't a set plan . . . so, around noon I shot him a text: “What's the plan for tonight?” Within short order, a meandering response came through that said something to the effect of “Well, right now I'm at home in bed, sick. I think I'm going to head to the walk-in clinic in a bit and see what they say, and then I can let you know something.”

My heart dropped. I'm sure every woman reading this right now can read between the lines of that text. What he *was* saying seemed simple enough: he was “sick.” What he *wasn't* saying? He

was most likely going to bail on our big New Year's Eve plans. The minute a guy—or really anyone, for that matter—plants the first seemingly innocuous seed that there *might* possibly be a reason they won't be able to make plans, you can pretty much expect that seed to blossom into a full-bloom tree of cancellation. It's just the way of the modern world. Technology, texting, and social media have made it possible to avoid all awkwardness by never having to see people face-to-face (only Facebook-to-Facebook) to cancel plans. Since Chandler Bing was notoriously flaky anyway, I had a sinking feeling that, come midnight, the only kiss I would be experiencing would be of the Hershey's persuasion.

I texted back something light and breezy like, "Okay, keep me posted!" But I was most definitely not feeling breezy. I was feeling the exact opposite of breezy. I was feeling like heavy cloud cover with a 100 percent chance of rain. And throw in a tornado watch for good measure. Chandler Bing had bailed on me before, using a similar excuse to the one he had just delivered to my inbox. Would he really bail on me on New Year's Eve?! My female intuition was telling me yes.

I needed to find out exactly what I was dealing with. I needed to deploy . . . the drive-by.

What is the drive-by, you might be wondering? Well, if you're a woman who has spent five minutes in the dating world, you won't need an explanation; however, I am going to pretend for a moment that aliens who are visiting Planet Earth for the first time picked up my book and have no idea what I'm talking about. The drive-by is pretty much exactly what it sounds like: a casual drive by the house of the guy you're dating to see if he is indeed at home like he claims to be, or if he's not and you are being hoodwinked. It must be carried out carefully and covertly, so as not to get caught (because you don't want him thinking you're Love Quinn from *You* on Netflix).

The problem with Chandler Bing's house was that it was nearly impossible to drive by and see if his car was there without getting

busted. His driveway was surrounded by a fence, so you could only see whether or not his car was there if you drove around to the back and down a narrow alley. A narrow alley that was about four feet away from his back door. A narrow alley that you would then have to turn around in and drive back down in order to exit. If he was home and he happened to walk outside or even just glance outside as you were driving by . . . there was zero chance of not getting caught.

I want to interject here that I don't make a habit of the drive-by. It truly is a last resort. But this was New Year's Eve, folks. It was noon on New Year's Eve, and my date was being flakier than a bowl of Frosted Flakes. It was officially time to ring the alarm. I needed answers.

So that's how, on New Year's Eve, I found myself ordering a Lyft to come and pick me up and drive me by Chandler Bing's house. Because, you know, nothing says "inconspicuous" like a car with a giant pink mustache on the front.

I'm not proud of my decision. I cringe at the thought that there was a time not so long ago when I allowed the swipe to so dramatically control my life. "The swipe" being the endless search for a man's approval, attention, validation, affection, etc.—a phenomenon created by the weird and random mating ritual of dating apps, where we wait with bated breath for someone to "swipe right" on us, indicating they might want to spend the rest of their life with us based on a brief bio and a handful of photos. And it pains me to admit I believed, in that moment, that what the swipe seemed to be saying about me was more important than what *I* knew about me. But I can also look back and find the humor in the situation as I picture myself in my pajamas, diving down in the backseat of a random Lyft driver's car as she sped me past my ex's house to see if he really was home sick or if he was being shadier than a pool umbrella.

My driver was a woman, so of course she immediately *got it*. But that didn't stop her from cackling as I swaddled myself in

a blanket, ET-style, and hunkered down in the backseat, yelling directions to Chandler Bing's house from the floorboard so as not to be spotted.

He wasn't home (no big surprise there), so I asked my driver to cruise past the walk-in clinic near his house, and what do you know? He wasn't there either. It appeared that Chandler Bing had in fact fibbed about his illness, which meant he was most likely setting me up for a New Year's Eve no-show.

I know some of you are probably thinking, *Overreacting much? Maybe he was at the store getting some DayQuil and Kleenex and chicken soup. Perhaps there's a perfectly reasonable explanation for his claiming to be sick in bed and yet actually not being at home when you drove by his house.* And I get it. I, too, always want to give people the benefit of the doubt. But with Chandler Bing . . . the shady, flaky, slippery explanation was almost always the right one. And by that point I had already dated him once and watched our relationship blow up in my face due to his dishonesty. So, while it was unfortunate that he was being less than honest with me again and was likely going to disappoint me again . . . it wasn't at all surprising.

But. That's not even the main point I'm trying to make with this story.

The point I want to make with this humiliating yet also painfully hilarious story is this:

If you find yourself hunched down in the backseat of a Lyft driver's car on New Year's Eve, lightly stalking your ex-boyfriend to see if he's lying to you again . . . something has clearly gone wrong. And you're letting the swipe rule your life.

If you find yourself compromising your dignity or self-respect in any way to find a man, get a man, or keep a man . . . you're letting the swipe rule your life.

If you find yourself moonlighting as a private detective, trying to figure out what he's doing, thinking, saying, intending, feeling, or not feeling . . . you're letting the swipe rule your life.

If dating feels less like fun and more like torture . . . you're letting the swipe rule your life.

If you are allowing any other human being or their behavior to define the way you feel about yourself . . . you're letting the swipe rule your life.

If being with him, seeing him, talking to him, texting him, casually dating him, seriously dating him, underwater basket weaving with him . . . is in *any* way causing you to sacrifice your peace of mind, your confidence, your happiness, your family, your friends, your finances, your self-worth, your self-esteem, or yourself . . . you're letting the swipe rule your life.

If you are hinging your sense of wholeness and well-being on something as arbitrary and random and inconsequential as a dating app . . . you're letting the swipe rule your life.

And if you are in fact letting the swipe rule your life . . . this book is designed to help you stop the madness, reclaim yourself, and start swiping right on *yourself*. Because what good is it to find love if you lose yourself in the process?

I am happy to tell you, that fateful New Year's Eve, crouching in the backseat of a Lyft driver's car, was the last time I gave my power away to any man or anyone or anything. And it was also the last time I let the swipe rule my life.

That experience helped shake me awake and open my eyes to just how much I was allowing dating apps and Chandler Bing and, really, every guy I dated to control how I felt about *me*. And in the two years since that happened, I've shifted the focus to myself and to *my* growth: mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I've recommitted to therapy. I've confronted my own junk. I've taken dating hiatuses when I needed a break. I've done the hard work on myself so that now I can look for love and hope for love and pray for love and wish for love while also being grounded in the knowledge that if I never find it, or if it never finds me . . . I'll be okay.

And so will you.

Did you know that almost every modern dating book that has been lauded as groundbreaking has been written by a man? It's true. They always tend to be framed from the male perspective: What a man wants. How to act like a man. Get any man to fall in love with you. The list goes on and on. How completely nonsensical is that? I mean, I don't know about you . . . but I don't exactly see a ton of men frequenting the "Dating and Romance" aisle at the bookstore. Women are the ones reading the books, so shouldn't women be the ones writing them? That's why I knew it was time to take matters into my own hands and write a definitive book about the modern dating experience from the female perspective. To put the power *back* in the hands of women instead of making it all about the man. Why am I qualified to write this book, you might ask? Well, I have twenty-five years of dating experience. I've dated some good guys and some total doofuses (I have to interject here that *doofi* is also the plural of *doofus* and that just slays me). I've used dating apps, and I've met guys organically. I've been the dumper and the dump-ee. I've taken months-long (and even years-long!) hiatuses from dating. I have a ton of single girlfriends who share their fairy-tale stories and their horror stories with me. I have a gold mine of amazing male friends whom I'm able to tap for advice, encouragement, and answers to my most burning questions about the male species. I have three-million-plus social media followers who confide in me their most heartwarming and heart-stopping dating tales on a daily basis. And I'm out here with all of you in this modern dating world, a new frontier that is vastly different from the dating world of even five years ago. I'm not writing to you from a pedestal of happily ever after; I am down here with you in the trenches of *The Hunger Games* that is modern dating. It is not for the faint of heart. And since it doesn't come with a guidebook, I thought . . . why not write one?

We're going to cover it all in this book, or at least all the factors that I think most contribute to the mystery of modern dating:

Online dating/dating apps. First dates. Bad dates. Ghosting. Texting. Exting. Breakups. Makeups. Zombie-ing. Kittenfishing. Monkeying. (Yes, these are all actual modern dating phenomenon and precisely why this book features a Modern Dating Dictionary.) We're also going to answer some age-old burning questions: Can men and women really be friends? Are men really ever "intimidated" by women, or is that an excuse they use when they're just not that into us? Were Ross and Rachel *really* on a break? (Okay, we're not going to answer that one. That one will forever remain a mystery.) And, most of all, we're going to learn how to *stop* believing the swipe . . . and how to find love without losing ourselves. Because, at the end of the day, whether or not someone chooses you means absolutely nothing if you don't choose yourself.

Before we begin, however, I want to share with you how my New Year's Eve story turned out, because it has a surprise ending. Although Chandler Bing *did* lie to me about being home sick, he *didn't* actually end up canceling our New Year's Eve plans! (*What?!*) And I did get my New Year's Eve kiss, though it was a little delayed. To ring in the New Year, we drove to the top of a renowned lookout point in my small town, which offers a breathtaking view of the lights below. And as the clock struck twelve, we clinked our sparkling cider glasses together and drew closer and closer, until . . .

A cop came banging on our window and told us to leave (cue the crying-laughing emoji).

Yep, he mistook us for high school kids who were parking and ordered us right off our romantic perch. Ha! Kinda gives new meaning to the phrase "Stop in the name of love."

Okay, friends . . . picture me now as that cop, banging on the window of your lives and stopping you in your dating tracks. It's time to *stop in the name of love* and realize that singleness and even dating don't have to be about landing a man or chasing a man or getting a man to choose you, validate you, or fall

Prologue

in love with you. They can and should be about falling in love with *yourself* and extending that love to every aspect of your life, surrendering control to the process without surrendering your personal power, and choosing yourself, regardless of whether anyone swipes right or swipes left.

There *is* a way to date with dignity, to refuse to let the swipe rule your life, to stand confident in your worth and not settle for less than you deserve, and to find love without losing yourself. This book is that way.

Let's get started.

P.S. At the end of every chapter, you'll find a "Rule to Re-memeber," which will feature a brief and highly meme-able footnote to the chapter . . . sort of a cherry on top of the sundae, if you will. These rules are purposely broken down into small sound bites to allow you to share them across your social media platforms. That way, when someone sees you strutting your newly empowered stuff and asks, "What's all the hype?" you can simply smile, give them a hair toss, and say, "Don't believe the swipe."