



unbreakyourheart

UNBREAK YOUR HEART

HOW TO STOP HAVING
RUBBISH RELATIONSHIPS,
FIX YOURSELF...

and find love

LESLEY CANNELL

Definition of 'Rubbish Relationships'

*Painful, hurtful, messed up, unhealthy or waste-of-time relationships with the **wrong** guys, that **damage your self-esteem**, bring out the worst in you or leave you with a **broken heart**.*

When accepting six Grammy awards for her best-selling album '21', London singer Adele said it was inspired by "something that's really normal and everyone's been through it...a rubbish relationship".

The term may be British, but rubbish relationships affect women from all around the world.



WHY THIS BOOK IS MEANT FOR YOU

This book is for you if you who keep choosing the wrong guys and getting your heart broken or if you're stuck in a relationship that's making you unhappy or if you feel like you're never going to find lasting love... and you really want to change things, starting right NOW.

I'm going to describe how you can 'fix yourself' so you can break out of the downward spiral of damaging and hurtful relationships and be free to choose a loving relationship with a decent guy who's really worth it. In particular I'll be sharing the secrets of **unbreakyourheart**, a process I've created especially for sensitive women who find themselves in this situation. And I'm also going to tell you about the seven strange coincidences that led me to discover this process.

The information I'm going to share with you is different from so many other self-help books, websites and advice pages about relationships because I'm not going to insult your intelligence by giving you 'Ten Tips' to solve anything – if it were that easy you'd have done it by now. I'm not going to suggest affirmations or prayer and nor am I going to teach you tricks and tactics that try to turn you into someone you're not. And, even more unusually, I don't expect you to change just by using willpower alone... that's far too hard.

Instead I'm going to explain how you can get to the root cause of why your relationship history is messed up and then change yourself profoundly and permanently so that the future can be very different.

And you can trust that I know what I'm talking about because I'm NOT a journalist or TV personality who's edited together other people's writing or used her fame to jump to the top of the bestseller list. And I'm not an academic who's far

removed from the real world – though I have drawn on lots of excellent work from universities around the world. Nor am I an Internet entrepreneur who's hoping to make a million dollars by using tricks to get to the top of Google searches or making a viral marketing video.

In fact I'm a highly experienced Chartered Psychologist with a masters degree from University College London who's been helping to 'fix' heart-broken clients in a professional capacity for the last twenty five years – working with demanding multinational companies and private clients all over the UK and Europe. Early in my career I noticed that conventional methods for helping people change had limited long-term impact, so I started seeking out and developing alternatives. After a few blind alleys and a lot of light bulb moments I ended up with a combination of powerful techniques that can enable people to change themselves and their relationships for good. Together they make up the process I have called **unbreakyourheart**.

The other reason I know what I'm talking about is that, although I was always a big success professionally, my personal life used to be a train wreck. I WAS that broken-hearted woman who kept making disastrous relationship choices even though I should have known better. I wasted many years doing things all wrong in relationships, crying a lot and wishing the men in my life would change... all the time looking for explanations and ways to turn things around. But things really began to change when I started working through the same techniques I was using with my clients... which is why I decided to put them together into an interactive, on-line, self-development programme, so I could share them with other women who are having a hard time in relationships.

***PLEASE NOTE: THIS BOOK IS NOT INTENDED TO CONSTITUTE ADVICE.
PLEASE SEEK SPECIALIST PROFESSIONAL HELP IF YOU FEEL YOU MIGHT NEED IT.
THERE'S MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HOW YOU MIGHT FIND A SUITABLY QUALIFIED
PSYCHOLOGIST OR THERAPIST IN CHAPTER 13.***

IN THIS BOOK:

- ♥ You can read the true story of how I discovered a way for you to **unbreakyourheart**, piece by piece, spurred on by a series of strange 'coincidences' that took me from the UK to the Caribbean, on to Ancient Greece and finally to Barcelona. It's a surprising story and I hope you'll really enjoy it!
- ♥ I'll share the painful experiences I had along the way, which pushed me to keep investigating WHY we're attracted to *Heartbreakers*, WHY we get trapped in a pattern of damaging relationships and WHY it's so difficult to change... and I'll share some of the fascinating psychological research that helped me understand what's really going on.
- ♥ I'll introduce some of the techniques that together make up the **unbreakyourheart** process, and share stories of how I've used them to help many hundreds of clients break out of their old patterns, fix themselves and start to enjoy healthy, loving relationships.
- ♥ As the story unfolds through all its twists and turns, it will also become clear how I've fixed myself, bit-by-bit... and how I knew all my hard work had paid off when finally, FINALLY, I left the dark days behind and found love.
- ♥ And we'll conclude by thinking about what all of this might mean for YOU.

So whether you're stuck in a painful relationship or you're just getting out of one or you're fed up being alone... especially if you've ever wondered, '*Why can't I find a decent guy?*' or '*Why does this keep happening to me?*' I'm really glad you're here.... because this book could be just what you need.

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I.

**THE BEGINNING,
BEFORE I KNEW ANYTHING**

Chapter 1

How it all started: howling with grief in a garage



You know how it feels to have a broken heart. When you're so unbearably hurt that you feel as though you can't take it anymore. You might be crying silently, sobbing like a baby or slamming doors in anger. Or you might be long past crying and just left with a dull ache or a feeling of emptiness. You might be asking questions... *"Why this is happening to me?" "How could he hurt me like this when I love him so much?"* or maybe, *"How could I let this happen (again)?"*

It's probably not the first time you've felt this way. And each time it happens it's probably worse than the time before. And you'd give anything for the pain to stop. If only you knew how to make yourself feel better and how to find a permanent solution so you never had to go through this again.

That's how I used to feel. I can remember sitting in my car in the garage of the apartment that belonged to my soon-to-be-ex boyfriend at 3 a.m. with the garage door closed. I was in my car because I didn't want the neighbours to hear me crying and because it was too painful to be near the man I loved so much but who couldn't bear to have me around... and I had nowhere else to go. I felt so alone and miserable. And the longer I spent sobbing in that cold, dark garage, the more hysterical I became. I felt out of control – and like an inconsolable baby I found myself howling with grief. That's when I stopped still in my tracks. Shocked. It was as though I was looking at myself from the outside thinking, *"What's happening here? This is too much. It has to stop NOW."*

I don't know if it was a sense of self-preservation or I was just embarrassed to see myself acting like a drama queen, but the tears dried up instantly and my rational mind took over. I sat shivering in my dressing gown for another hour,

asking myself how on earth I'd got to this point, why this was happening. But I had no idea. So I made two decisions:

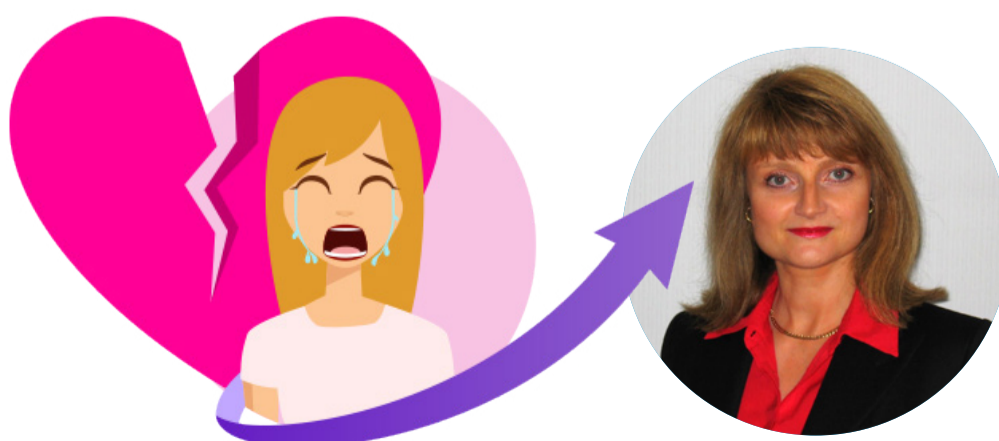
Decision 1: I had to stop pretending this relationship could be saved and find myself somewhere new to live urgently.

Decision 2: I needed some help to make sense of this mess and cope with the pain of this relationship break up.

As I slipped back into the apartment I heard my soon-to-be-ex snoring. At the time I was shocked that he could fall asleep after seeing me run outside in my dressing gown at 3 a.m. on a cold night. But looking back I imagine he was fed up with all the drama and just wanted it to be over... and clearly he wasn't in love with me.

I fell asleep eventually in the little spare bedroom that doubled as my home office, and the next day I was woken up early by the sound of the front door closing. He'd gone to work without a word. I felt sick and unbearably miserable and in that moment I knew anything was better than being stuck there, trying and failing to get him to love me. It was time to get out. There was no going back - I had to put my decisions into action.

As I reached for a pen and made a list of what to do next, I realised it was really hard to think straight when I was 'Lesley-the-unloved-broken-hearted-soon-to-be-ex-girlfriend'. Much easier to look for solutions and take action as 'Lesley-the-professional-psychologist'. So I switched into work mode.



Yes, I'm a psychologist. In hindsight it's hard to believe I had been working as a professional psychologist for several years at that stage, yet I had no understanding of what was happening to me.

- ? Why was I stuck in a painful relationship with a man who'd lied and cheated from the start?
- ? Why did I still love him when he treated me this way?
- ? And why did I keep trying to get him to love me even in the face of all this hurt and rejection, when he clearly wanted me out of his life?

I was great at understanding and solving my clients' problems, (in fact household name, multi-national companies paid me plenty of money to help them solve their 'people problems')... yet I was powerless to tackle my own. I was shocked at how bad I felt and ashamed of not being able to fix myself. I felt like a fraud.

***Note:** In fact lots of psychologists and self-help experts are drawn to this work because, consciously or unconsciously, they're looking for answers. They want to fix themselves or rescue clients because they were unable save themselves or the people they were close to when they were little... but I only discovered this later on.*

Chapter 2

Two years later... the crying heart appears

I found myself sitting with my eyes closed in a dimly lit conference room in a big London hotel, in the company of fifty other curious individuals, enjoying a guided visualisation to discover our 'life's purpose'. I was in 'Lesley-the-professional-psychologist' mode, and this was the much-hyped culmination to a training course, which had taught me some useful techniques for working with clients. The course leader cued us up to pay attention to whatever signs or symbols we became aware of, then he helped us all get into a nice relaxed state (also known as a light trance). Like everyone else, I hoped to see or hear something interesting (and worried that I'd draw a blank).

I needn't have worried. As soon as he gave the simple suggestion: *"Just allow your **unconscious** mind to give you a sign or symbol to represent your purpose in life"* something very strange happened...POW! I saw a huge, pulsating, 3-D magenta, cartoon heart, with a huge crack down the middle, out of which tears were flowing...



And then I heard a woman's voice (not my own) quite clearly saying:

"To mend crying hearts"

At this point you may be thinking *"OK, this woman is clearly not normal. How does she get major companies to hire her to do big change management projects when she's a bit weird?"* If so, please bear with me – I was pretty shocked at the time and it doesn't get any weirder than this. Alternatively you may be thinking, *"What's the big deal?"* or even *"Things like that have happened to me"*, which means you're open to things that aren't ordinary or can't be explained entirely rationally. If so, I'm really glad you're here!

So the course leader brought us all back to our normal wide-awake state and asked what we experienced. Looking around I was surprised to see mostly blank faces. Nobody appeared to have experienced very much (or, if they had, they weren't sharing). One guy said, *"I saw an egg, what does that mean?"* and everyone just shrugged.

I was so stunned that I decided to keep my weird experience to myself. After all, I had no clue what it meant. What were 'crying hearts'? And how did I know how to mend other people's hearts when, frankly, my own was still in bits despite two years of therapy?

The workshop ended and, as I staggered out of the conference room onto a busy London street, I didn't know I was embarking on a voyage of discovery to find the answers to these questions. Fortunately, life was about to present me with a series of learning opportunities (both personal and professional) that would speed up the discovery process. I had no idea how interesting, complicated (and at times painful) my life was about to get.

Over the next fifteen years a series of strange 'coincidences' sent me off around the world, where I met clients who needed fixing and I got into dysfunctional relationships that challenged me to keep on fixing myself. Out of necessity I acquired lots of knowledge and insight... and this enabled me to develop the tools and techniques I use today.

At first I didn't realise all these experiences were connected and didn't know where they were leading. I often felt tired, demoralised and occasionally overwhelmed by my rubbish relationships, demanding workload and hectic lifestyle. But looking back I'm astonished by the amount of 'lucky breaks' and weird 'coincidences' that cropped up in my life. I now believe I was meant to have those experiences so I could discover the process for 'mending crying hearts' that I call **unbreakyourheart**... And just as important, so I could finally find love.

So now I'm going to tell you about some of those strange 'coincidences' and how they led me to discover how you can **unbreakyourheart**. And if you're ready to make your painful relationships a thing of the past, find happiness and get ready for love then let's continue.

***Note:** I put the word 'coincidences' in inverted commas because I'm not sure they were purely chance occurrences. My favourite psychologist Carl Jung referred to these meaningful coincidences - where events happen at the same time and are linked in a meaningful way but where one does not cause the other - as 'Synchronicities'. He felt that life was not just a series of random events but that there was an underlying order or meaning to things that happen and the purpose of these meaningful 'coincidences' was to help people evolve their thinking. Not everyone agrees with Jung's theory, but it feels right to me. (There's more on this topic in 'More Than Just Luck' below).*



II.

**SEVEN STRANGE
COINCIDENCES GUIDE ME TO SOME
FASCINATING DISCOVERIES**

Chapter 3

A chance conversation with a travel agent changes my plans and I fall into the most messed up relationship of my life

The First Coincidence

I was working sixty or seventy hour weeks and living out of a suitcase. Some mornings I'd wake up in a hotel room as dawn was breaking and say to myself, *"OK, I can see I'm in a Holiday Inn. Now let's try to work out which city I'm in and what the hell I'm supposed to be doing here."* I loved my work as a psychologist and my business was going really well, but I was definitely overdoing it in an attempt to boost my damaged self-esteem and blot out the emptiness of my personal life after finally leaving my ex. (It had taken me a whole year to break free of the relationship and in that time I discovered he'd been having an affair with a colleague - and everyone knew except me - that really hurt). So I was glad to have the business to take my mind off things. In fact I only realised how addicted I was to work years later, when I tried to cut down my hours because I was close to burnout, and found it really difficult. But at the time of this first coincidence I was just tired out and in need of a break.

One Sunday I was reading a magazine and saw a big advert for luxury spa holidays. A travel agency was offering discounted last minute deals and I thought, *"I'd love a week in the sun to relax and unwind"*. I felt a bit guilty because it was quite a lot of money even with the discount, so I phoned my sister and she told me I deserved a break after working so hard. I didn't have anyone to travel with and I was a bit worried about going on holiday alone, but then I thought about all those spa treatments and all the novels I could read and how much sleep I could catch up on... So I decided to take the plunge and book seven nights in an all-inclusive spa hotel in St Lucia, a small island in the Caribbean.

I phoned the number in the advert (this was in the days before internet bookings) and found myself listening to steel band muzak as I queued to speak to a call centre operator. The woman who answered my call was *really* friendly. I told her what I wanted to book and she was very excited because she'd just got back from that very same hotel in St Lucia three days before! She said it was great but she much preferred the sister hotel on the nearby island of Grenada where she'd stayed six months earlier. Being smaller and more friendly it had worked out better for her as a single woman. We talked over the pros and cons of each hotel and it didn't take her long to convince me to switch to Grenada.

And then came her second suggestion, *"You know it's a really long flight... you should think about going for two weeks instead of one. It's not that much more expensive."* And then she added, laughing, *"I promise I'm not paid on commission!"*. For some reason I really connected with this woman and trusted her advice, so I thought it over for all of ten seconds and then agreed. A few minutes later I'd made a booking for two weeks all-inclusive in Grenada.

As I put the phone down I shook my head in amazement, thinking:

Of all the call centre operators in all the travel agents in all the world, what were the chances of that particular operator taking my call at that particular moment?

This was a major travel company offering thousands of hotels in hundreds of destinations all over the world, and they had plenty of competitors, so this was an amazing 'coincidence'. That's what made me think of that famous line from Casablanca, *"Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine"*.

A few weeks later, as the plane came in to land, I had butterflies in my tummy. I'd never been on holiday alone and wasn't sure how I'd manage. Two weeks felt like

a long time. But as my gaze was drawn to the white sand and turquoise ocean I thought, *"I'm sure I'll manage. What's the worst that can happen?"*. Little did I know.

Waiting for me on this island, in fact in that very hotel, was someone who would teach me more about dysfunctional relationships than I'd learned from all my studies in psychology and my previous relationships combined. Being with him so soon after my last big break up damaged my self-worth still further, drained my finances and broke my heart all over again. But on the upside, going through this experience made sure I stayed in therapy, expanded my library of self-help books ten-fold and intensified my motivation to find a way out of the downward spiral of painful relationships. And just imagine, if I hadn't met him at that moment I might have met a nice, sweet, well-balanced guy and fallen in love... and then I'd never have discovered how you can **unbreakyourheart**. So I guess it was all worthwhile... though it didn't feel that way at the time.

It was only after that four-year relationship ended that I began to understand what happened and why.

Have you ever read the fairy tale or seen the movie of 'Sleeping Beauty' in which a princess pricks her thumb on a poisoned spinning wheel and falls under a magic spell that makes her sleep for 100 years, only to be woken by a kiss from a handsome prince? Well that's kind of what happened to me on that holiday... I fell under a magic spell and spent the next few years in a kind of trance. Only in my case it was the Caribbean that cast its spell on me. It was my first trip to a tropical paradise and I was captivated by the beautiful beaches, the lush vegetation, the warm breezes, the music and, most of all, by the gentle warmth and friendliness of the local people. Full of rum punch and relaxed by the slow pace of life I thought I was in love with the guy I met, but really I'd fallen in love with the Caribbean – a love affair that continues to this day.



As a result of this “enchantment” – on top of a badly broken heart - I temporarily lost the power of logical thought and jumped head-over-heels into a relationship that anyone could see was totally unsuitable and bound to end in tears.

It happened in no time... I arrived at the resort tired and sad, still not recovered from my last break-up. And in the space of a few days I was happy, smiling and full of energy. The guy I thought was responsible for my new found happiness worked at the resort and he was shy, serious and introverted. He approached me first, it's true, but it was his job to interact with guests. I was in the gym and we got talking about fitness (yes, he was a fitness instructor, what can I tell you?) but then I started asking him about this magical island and the spell began to take control.

In his free time he drove me around the island, showing me hidden beauty spots that tourists didn't get to see and introducing me to the local food and music... and I felt like I'd died and gone to heaven! Eventually one thing led to another and we got closer. I actually had to check into a different hotel as he would have



lost his job for coming to my room at the resort, so we had a romantic night at another luxury hotel (at this stage money felt like no object to me). Looking back I have to acknowledge that I was the one pushing things along. There was obviously a spark there from his perspective... but I was the one who fanned it into a huge flame.

At the end of the two-week holiday I cried my eyes out because I didn't want to leave. But then, who in their right mind would want to leave that amazing place and go back to cold, rainy England? This should just have been a holiday romance but I didn't realise that. I really thought it could be love and believed he felt the same way. I 'just knew' he was the man for me and I had to be with him, whatever it took. I was behaving like a love-sick teenager. If I HAD been a teenager it would have been OK... my Mum and Dad would have taken me

home and I would have got back to normal life. But unfortunately I wasn't a teenager. I was an adult with the resources to keep the dream alive.

I was really naïve about men even though I'd been in two long-term relationships and had even been married and divorced. Did the fact that both those relationships broke up when my partners fell in love with other women explain my desperation to find love? Or maybe having my heart broken by two apparently suitable professional men from the UK drove me to try something completely different? On the surface it's hard to make sense of my impulsive behaviour.

But when you look *under* the surface there was something else about this guy from the Caribbean that hooked me in and made me think I loved him... I had to work really hard to get him to spend time with me. He was aloof and kept his distance and he rarely smiled, almost as though he disapproved of me or had somewhere better to be. So I spent a lot of time wondering what I should do to get closer to him and get him to care about me... and that felt very familiar. It was very subtle - and I certainly wasn't aware of it at the time - but **unconsciously** it reminded me of my relationship with my father. However, I only realised all that several years later, with the benefit of hindsight, a lot of soul-searching and plenty of therapy.

So what happened next?

Well, to cut a very long story a bit shorter - I called him on the phone every other day from wherever I was working and we talked for half an hour (in the days before Skype and Facetime can you imagine my phone bill?). A few months later I invited him to stay with me in the UK for a few weeks - and I had to jump through hoops to get him a holiday visa. Generally the area where I lived had quite mild winters but that year we had heavy snow. He didn't even own a coat because in Grenada the temperature never dropped below 25°C so, on the way back from the airport, we had to take a detour to buy an anorak, boots, scarf... etc. I'll never forget how his face lit up in a huge boyish grin the first time he stepped out into the snow. All part of the magic.

Apart from a few hiccups we had a great couple of weeks and when he went back I knew I had to find a way for us to be together. Note: I had to find a way. In contrast HE was quite happy to return to his beautiful island, the job he loved, his friends and his kids. Oops, did I forget to mention that? He had two small children who were abroad with his ex while I was on the island, but reappeared a few weeks later. I genuinely believed they were separated at the time we met, but she definitely wasn't out of the picture, as I was to find out later.

It didn't make sense for me to move to Grenada – on an island where everything was expensive, his earnings were less than \$5000 US dollars a year and I wouldn't be able to find work there, whereas I had a thriving business in the UK that could easily support us both.

So I ploughed on with my madness, applying for what was called a 'Fiancé Visa' which would allow him to come to the UK for six months, giving us the opportunity to get to know each other and either get married or, I guess, call it a day. I had even found a lovely place for the (possible) wedding, and sent a copy of the provisional booking with the visa application. But despite the fact that we met all the requirements, fate 'helped us along' once again and he was denied the visa. I guess the woman from the consulate who interviewed him could tell his heart wasn't in it. I was distraught... but then fate stepped in again.

A week later I was speaking at a conference and afterwards I got chatting to a woman from Trinidad (the next Caribbean island along) who was married to a British citizen. She listened to my story and told me that, once someone is denied a visa, he would never be allowed to visit me again because they'd worry he'd try to stay in the country illegally. I listened with horror. So what could I do? I'll never forget what she said next:

"You have no choice. If you want to be together you'll have to marry him."

So I did! A few months later I flew to the Caribbean and we got married. Just like that!



Well, it wasn't quite that easy. In fact it took me a while to persuade him to marry me. He was happy with his life in Grenada and was about to be promoted at work. He didn't want to come to England at all and thought marriage was too important to rush into. Wise words. But I cajoled and pleaded and eventually I wore him down. I think he needed to be needed as much as I needed someone to love. Our respective **Emotional Baggage*** (I'll explain what I mean by this in Chapter 11) made us fit together. How sad is that?

After a couple of weeks in St Lucia we reapplied for a visa and this time we were successful. The whole escapade had cost me a fortune in flights, wedding clothes, luxury villa, jeep hire (I discovered this guy had expensive taste), but as we finally arrived back in the UK I couldn't have felt happier (though my sad expression on that wedding photo doesn't look too convincing, does it?).

The honeymoon period lasted a few weeks and then the reality of what I'd done began to sink in. I had a massive hole in my bank account after the wedding so I had to go back to work, which meant being away from home several nights a week. This poor guy had left a small town on a tiny island where he knew almost everyone and a life he loved. Now he had no job, no friends, no support network and not a clue about how things worked in the UK.

He really depended on me for everything. One day in the middle of winter there was a cloudless sky and the sun appeared to be cracking the flagstones, but it was only 3°C. He came bounding into the kitchen in t-shirt and shorts saying he was going out into the garden and when I reminded him to take a coat he said, "No need, it's really sunny". Bless. A few weeks later, while I was away working, he fell asleep with the bath running and flooded the apartment downstairs. I had to pay for it to be redecorated – and it was a big place.

His dependence on me was bad news for both of us. So in those first few months I worked very hard to get him qualified to teach fitness and set him up with work in various gyms. The pay was terrible but he loved the work. And those women in his classes really loved him... far too much as it turned out.

His Grenada driving licence wasn't valid in the UK, so we burned the midnight oil studying the Highway Code and he passed his driving test on the second attempt. He had very clear ideas about the kind of car I should buy him, and I was like those guilty parents who don't have time to spend with their kids so they buy them presents instead... I found it hard to deny him anything he asked for. It was especially tough because he was great at emotional blackmail: *"I've given up everything to be with you"* being his favourite line.

Unfortunately the car brought lots of problems. After a few months he crashed into someone and wrote the car off, which gave me a huge fright. I got a call at a hotel four hours away at 11 pm, and drove back through the night to pick him up from the hospital. Fortunately his injuries were minor. But then he ran up a big legal bill fighting an unwinnable case against the guy he ran into, whose insurance company blamed my husband (correctly) for the crash. The first thing I knew about that was when the bill landed in my lap (he couldn't pay because he spent all his modest wages on petrol and 'stuff' for himself). Then he got caught speeding twice, in the same spot, and lost his driving licence, so he had to take his driving test again... twice more. It was like having an irresponsible teenager in the house.



But the worst thing about him having a car (yes, I bought him another one after he crashed the first) was that it enabled him to stay out late after his classes finished, while I sat home and waited for him, or phoned from whichever hotel I was staying in, wondering where he was. And, as you've probably guessed, he wasn't short of female company.

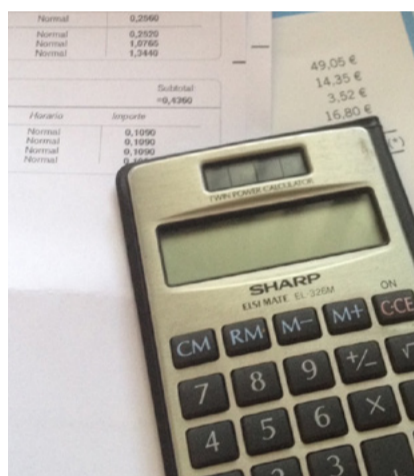
We'd only been together a few months when all that started. Women were always calling him up. At first I believed his reassurances that they were colleagues who were phoning to arrange cover for their classes. I wanted to believe it. But after a while I looked at his mobile phone bill (which I was paying) and found lots of long phone calls to one particular phone number – mostly late at night and always when I was away. I asked him about it and he got really angry at me for checking up on him. *"She's just a friend from work. What do you expect when you leave me here alone so much?"*.



It got worse. One day he answered his phone while we were together and I clearly heard a woman ask, *"Can you talk?"*. He gave me a sideways look and said, *"Yes, no problem"*, then walked into another room and closed the door. After a few minutes he swaggered back into the room and I was furious. Who the hell was this woman and what were they discussing? This 'friendship' continued for a while. Then her phone number was replaced by another 'work colleague' who needed to talk to him late at night. Soon he started paying for his own mobile phone and hiding the bills.

Looking back I expected too much of him too quickly, and I put a lot of pressure on him to get up to speed. I could see his potential and wanted him to realise it. I even persuaded a millionaire philanthropist I met on a train to lend him money (interest free) to set up his own personal training gym. Yes, honestly! But even with my support he didn't seize this opportunity because he didn't have the self-confidence or the ambition. I felt really stressed and angry to be supporting us both and responsible for everything and I suppose I took it out on him because I didn't feel he was stepping up. I even compared him negatively to other Caribbean guys we knew who had married English women and were pulling their weight – which I now know was a terrible thing to do. Making a man feel ashamed is one of the worst things a woman can do.

So why did I do it? I think I focused on his professional failings to avoid facing up to something far worse... the fact that he didn't love me - or even care about me. If we'd been close, the romance would have compensated for the big differences between us, as it had at the beginning. If we'd taken care of each other emotionally, maybe I would have coped with his lack of ambition and even his irresponsible spending. But instead his emotional distance, which hooked me in at the start, got more marked over time despite - or maybe because of - my inept efforts to bring him closer.



I became more and more controlling because I felt things spiralling out of control. We had a joint bank account because he couldn't get one alone and one day I got a call from a debt collection agency saying he hadn't paid an important bill for over a year and they were about to take us to court - which would lead to a charge against our home and a black mark on my credit record. I found the threatening letters hidden, unopened on his desk and paid immediately. After that I regularly checked all his correspondence to avoid any other nasty surprises. I monitored our joint bank statements closely, trying to work out what he was up to and where he'd been. When he was out really late I was always afraid something bad had happened to him (e.g. another car crash). So I kept calling his mobile phone to ask where he was, but he rarely answered except to tell me to leave him in peace.

He was spending less and less time at home - eventually only dropping in to eat, change his clothes or sleep. When he was around we argued horribly. It took a while for me to realise that he would often provoke an argument at night to give himself an excuse to go out alone, presumably to see other women. I accused him of being unfaithful, but he always turned things around and blamed me for being jealous and imagining things. Or worse, he said I had a suspicious mind, which must mean I had something to hide. I didn't. He even started accusing me when I met up with my friends and family, so I stopped seeing them because

the arguments wore me down. Now I was not only working alone but I'd lost touch with anyone who might have supported me. I was completely isolated.

After we argued he would refuse to speak to me for days, despite my attempts to make the peace by apologising. This was horribly reminiscent of my childhood and teenage years at home, though I didn't make the connection at the time... and it made me utterly miserable. So I ended up walking on eggshells and bending myself more and more out of shape... anything to avoid conflict and try to have some kind of relationship.

This is how we reached a point where he had a very nice standard of living and almost total freedom to do whatever he wanted, while I shouldered the burden of responsibility and protected him from the consequences of his actions. I pleaded with him to stop spending money and leaving me to pick up the bills but it made no difference. I was working harder and harder to pay for everything while he continued to spend almost everything he earned on things for himself (such as jewellery, bass speakers and alloy wheels for his car). By now I'd bought a house (because he didn't like living in an apartment, poor lamb) and I was paying the mortgage and all the bills, and even sending money, clothes and gifts to his kids in Grenada. But the harder I tried, the worse he behaved...



I remember the sickening feeling when he opened a huge birthday card from his ex-girlfriend (the mother of his children) in front of me... and out fell a tiny pair of (her) bright red briefs. Inside the card she'd drawn a big red heart, which confirmed what I'd known for ages - their relationship wasn't over, at least from her point of view. It wasn't rocket science: when we visited the island together and he went to see his children, he never wanted me around. And he used to come back to the hotel really late, even though I knew the kids were in bed by 7pm. No prizes for guessing what was going on.

The final straw came when he told me he was going away on a two-day fitness conference with a friend and a female colleague, and on the morning of the second day the same friend phoned to speak to him at home. As it turned out, the conference had been just one day but my husband had stayed on overnight with the colleague. By the time he got home I was in a terrible state. A mixture of hurt, jealousy, impotence and rage had been eating me up all day. I screamed my accusations at him, and then broke down in floods of tears... but he just shrugged and looked at me with irritation. He didn't even try to deny what he'd done because it was clear he didn't care how I felt.

The relationship was long over and although I'd threatened to break up with him many times, he knew they were empty threats. The old emotional blackmail always stopped me kicking him out. I felt guilty for creating this situation and I kept thinking to myself:

I'm a psychologist, there must be something I can do to turn this around

when what I *should* have been doing was to get as far away from him as possible.

The next day I was parked on the 15th floor of a multi storey car park and I remember looking over the wall and down onto the road below and thinking, "*What's the point of carrying on living?*" and that really scared me. I realised I couldn't go on that way but I didn't know how to get out of this horrible mess. I felt trapped.

Looking back it was all SO humiliating. So why am I telling you all this stuff? I wanted to share just how bad things were and how much I put up with in that relationship for three reasons:

1. I'm hoping you're asking the question, **WHY?** Why did an intelligent, successful woman put up with such disrespectful, hurtful treatment for so long, from a man who obviously didn't care about her? Why didn't I just walk away?
2. When you reflect on someone else's circumstances, it sometimes gets you thinking about your own. Is there anything about this hideous relationship that resonates with you? How did you feel when you were reading it? If you'd met me back then what advice might you have given me? Would any of that advice be relevant to you too?
3. I wanted you to realise how far I've come since then. That relationship ended over sixteen years ago and I don't recognise myself as the same woman. As a result of the changes I've made in myself I'd NEVER put up with a man like that, even for five minutes. And that transformation is due to the powerful techniques I've discovered that enabled me to 'fix' myself.

Part of the answer to the first question above is that my ex-husband's behaviour and attitude towards me had chipped away at my self-esteem over time and twisted my thinking. I'd started to believe him when he said that everything was my fault. And because I'd isolated myself from my friends, there wasn't anyone else around to challenge my faulty thinking. But that's only part of the story.

The real reason goes back long, long before I met him, to the **Emotional Baggage** I'd been carrying around since childhood. This had a profound effect on how I perceived my own value and what I thought was reasonable treatment in a relationship. Remember, we're going to come back to this theme in Chapter 11. And then later in the book I'll tell you how I managed to fix myself so this kind of painful situation could never happen again... and how YOU can do the same.

But for now, let me tell you how I broke free from that awful relationship... in case you're wondering. It really was quite dramatic and scary at times... but I ended up feeling very proud of myself and after that everything started to change.

The turning point was when the Sleeping Beauty style 'magic spell' suddenly wore off. It wasn't a kiss from a handsome prince that did the trick, but a simple question:

"What are you going to do about it?"

So who asked me the question and how did it come about?

It wasn't a friend. None of my friends had a clue about what was happening in my life because I'd pretty much lost touch with them. Nor was it a family member. Instead it was someone I'd known for just a few hours...

I was running a training course and, after dinner, one of the participants asked me about a topic we had covered that day – a fascinating personality model called the *Myers Briggs Type Indicator* (one of many tools I've included in my online programme). It's one of the most useful approaches I've ever discovered for understanding oneself and other people, but it's complex and often used incorrectly. He was really interested and, as we got into an in-depth discussion, the other participants gradually drifted away. To help him analyse his own profile I gave some examples of how different people behave, including my then husband. My client listened with empathy and this encouraged me to tell him more – including some of the details I have written about above. Normally I would never discuss personal problems with a client but I guess I was relieved to finally share my story, and somehow it was easier to tell a complete stranger.

As I described some of the things that were happening and how I was feeling, I realised how bad they sounded. He listened calmly and kindly and when I

finally drew breath he asked the magic question, *“What are you going to do about it?”*. I was confused and asked, *“What do you mean?”* and he followed up with:

*“Well, you’re obviously really unhappy...
what are you going to do about it?”*

I stopped in my tracks looking at him in bewilderment and feeling as though a bolt of lightning had run through me. Then my eyes opened wide as I realised: I DIDN'T HAVE TO PUT UP WITH IT. There WAS something I could do about this terrible relationship - I could end it! I'd spent so long trying to make the relationship work that I'd never seriously thought about walking away for good... until now.

And that's the moment when the magic spell vanished. I stopped being a victim and took charge of my own destiny.

The next day I made an appointment to meet a divorce lawyer as soon as the training course ended. At the meeting I found out my legal position, which wasn't as bad as I'd feared. And that night, feeling nervous but resolute, I told my soon-to-be-ex-husband that our relationship was over and I'd started divorce proceedings. I would help him find a new place to live and pay him some money to help establish his new life, but it was definitely over between us.

Now it was his turn to look stunned. When I'd threatened to leave before, he knew I wouldn't go through with it. But this time was different - he could tell I meant it. He crumpled and pleaded and promised to change (too late). Then he ramped up the emotional blackmail - reminding me of his unhappy childhood and everything he'd given up to be with me. But, with the magic spell lifted, it didn't stick. I felt terrible for him, but I knew this was the right decision. Finally I was focusing on taking care of myself instead of him.

Over the next few weeks things turned nasty. I moved into the spare bedroom and shivered my way through the winter nights, not only because the radiator was broken but also because I was scared around him. He didn't do much but I scare easily. For example, he used to come home late at night, fling open my bedroom door and just stare at me for ages, smouldering with rage. So I started sleeping with headphones, turning the music up loudly when I heard the front door and hiding under the duvet till he got bored and left me alone. Then, late one night he kicked the bathroom door in while I was in the bath. I ran out into the street in my dressing gown and eventually called the police because I was too scared to go back in alone.

At Christmas he went away to Grenada (clearing out the joint bank account I had set up for our expenses there). I felt so relieved to have the house to myself – at last I could breath easily and sleep the night through. I dreaded his return. The divorce was progressing but it was going to take months and the permanent state of fear and tension was taking its toll. I had dark shadows round my eyes, I'd lost weight and I wasn't sleeping. So I spent the holidays looking for suitable apartments for him to rent and found some lovely ones, details of which I left on



his desk, together with an offer to pay. The first thing he did on his return was to throw them in the bin in front of me saying, *"I've got a home, why don't you move out?"* – which should have been pretty laughable given that I was paying all the bills. But it just scared and depressed me because I realised he wasn't going to leave quietly. How much longer could I bear it?

Then fate threw me another life-line. I got a call from a woman I barely knew saying she'd heard that I was going through a tough time with my divorce and she had some information I ought to hear. Intrigued and nervous I met her the next evening. She told me that a mutual friend had heard from his new girlfriend that my husband was planning to bring his children over from Grenada, believing that the courts would let him keep the house if there were children involved.

I didn't know this 'new girlfriend' but I got hold of her phone number and called her the next day. She vaguely knew my husband from the gym and claimed she'd heard him bragging about how he was going to do well out of the divorce... and that made her angry. She was a tough, street-wise woman (everything I wasn't at the time) and she told me I had to take action right away. I asked her what I could do and she replied:

"You have to change the locks and throw him out"

WHAT??? This was so not my style. I've always played by the rules and been a 'good girl'... but this strategy wasn't doing me any favours in the current situation. I phoned my divorce lawyer and he advised against this course of action, telling me I should wait for the divorce settlement. Deflated I called the girlfriend back and she put me in touch with another lawyer who had helped her out of some difficult situations. His advice was more pragmatic: *"What your lawyer has told you is correct technically, but your divorce is going through and you're offering to pay the guy's rent so, in practice, no judge will make you take him back if you throw him out"*.

To this day I can't be sure whether this woman really overheard my ex talking about his divorce (though why would a complete stranger invent such a story?). I can't even be sure the lawyer she recommended really was a lawyer as we only spoke briefly by phone. But that doesn't matter because what she said next gave me the courage to do what I had to do:

"If you're scared to throw him out, I'll come and help you, I'm not scared of him."

At these words I felt a rush of relief, followed by a surge of excitement. Finally I didn't have to confront my soon-to-be-ex-husband's threats and emotional blackmail on my own. The reinforcements were here. Now remember, I still

hadn't met this woman face-to-face. But something about her courage and certainty gave me confidence. So I decided to go for it.

At 11.55 a.m. the following Saturday I was standing on my driveway in the surprisingly warm January sunshine, looking at a huge, neatly stacked pile of boxes and bags. While my soon-to-be-ex-husband was at work I had carefully



packed up his not inconsiderable worldly goods, with the help of a wonderful friend who I'd finally brought back into the loop. He was appalled to hear what I'd been through and delighted to join the reinforcements! I also changed the locks... and the locksmith had obviously been through this drama many times before.

On the dot of 12.00, 'the girlfriend' arrived as promised and we met in person for the first time. She was a bit taller than me but really slight and I had a bit of a wobble. I'd seen my soon-to-be-ex-husband's temper and I wondered how two complete wusses (my friend and I) plus a skinny girl would cope if things kicked off. She reassured me that she knew how to take care of herself, and I have to say I believed her. But, just in case, she had a couple of guys waiting round the corner in a car. *"What kind of guys?"* I asked. *"Just Wayne and Bez – two nightclub bouncers I used to work with"*. Seeing my eyes widen she grinned and made a call, then handed me her mobile phone telling me to, *"Say hello to Wayne"*. The deepest, gruffest, roughest male voice said *"Hullo"*, and I knew we had the cavalry standing by. Finally able to smile (a bit) I suggested we go inside for a cup of tea... my soon-to-be-ex would be back from work any time.

Actually I felt in need of a large brandy because my heart was pounding, but I resisted the temptation as I needed to keep a clear head. Fifteen minutes later I watched through the living room window as my soon-to-be-ex pulled up outside the house and stared at the pile of bags and boxes on the driveway.