

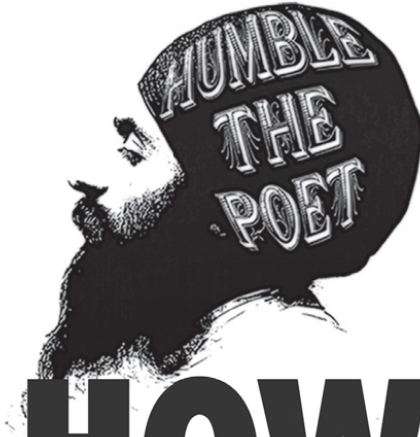


INTERNATIONAL
BEST-SELLING AUTHOR
OF *UNLEARN*

HOW TO BE

Love (d)

SIMPLE TRUTHS FOR
GOING EASIER ON YOURSELF,
EMBRACING IMPERFECTION
& LOVING YOUR WAY TO A BETTER LIFE



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DIAMONDS FOR PAPERWEIGHTS: A LOVE STORY

I was supposed to practice this, write out a full pros and cons list, and read that “How to break up better” ebook from a relationship coach I researched. I didn’t get a chance to do any of it. I had no exit plan, no one was yelling, there wasn’t going to be a storming off, no doors would be slammed, no one was lost in the heat of the moment.

Instead, all I could do was look at the patterns of the rug, but now I couldn’t describe them if I wanted to. The shapes were moving as tears filled up my face. The puppy looked at me and realized this was an opportunity to grab tissues out of my hand. She probably loved the taste of the salt of my tears, how fitting.

I didn’t go there to do anything or say anything. I hadn’t made my peace with ending it, but I had been thinking about ending it for weeks, if not months, if not years. She spoke about the lessons she was learning during our “break” and was asking if I was open to seeing a couples therapist, who could possibly provide us with the tools we needed to make it through the rough patch we were going through.

I didn’t say anything, and she knew.

She asked, “Have you made a decision?”

All I could do was keep my head down and look at the rug, skin itchy from the puppy,^{*} envious that she had no idea how horrible the

moment was. The puppy and I played tug-of-war with a bandanna as I tried to pick the right words.

My mind was playing words of wisdom on a loop:

Decency is the absence of strategy.

The goal here can't be to avoid looking like the bad guy. The goal is to be as honest and open as possible.

"I'm scared to hurt you. I'm scared I wasted your time. I'm scared of hurting my mom and letting everyone down. I'm scared to prove your sister right. I'm just scared."

I looked up at her for a second. She was crying. I saw the most gut-wrenching pain on her face. And when her eyes met mine, it got worse.

Even with the pain, she was being so kind. That's a special kind of strength.

"You have to decide and do what's right for you. Maybe we can just take more space; I feel like I've been making so much progress...." She paused and I could feel her negotiating and then stopping herself. "But then again, we've taken space, and if this is what you need to do, then decide that."

She didn't want to hear the words but wanted to hear the words.

I wanted to say, "I'm sorry, this needs to be over," and get up and walk out, but I was terrified. I still wasn't sure, and I didn't want to throw it all away.

Don't deny your future by holding on to your past Shut the fuck up! Please, just shut the fuck up. This is not a time for inspiring quotes, this is real life, real people, real consequences, real pain. Just shut the fuck up, please!

“I just don’t want to break up our family. When I see her, I see you, she is you,” she said, looking at our puppy. The puppy really was me —feisty with moments of cuteness, she walked to her own tune and played by her own rules. “I can’t look at her without seeing you.”

My heart crumpled, and my eyes continued to fill up.

She was trying her best not to guilt me into staying. She was trying her best not to make me feel bad. She wasn’t thinking about herself, she was thinking about me. She didn’t have a petty bone in her body. She told me our relationship had no deal breakers and that she would always stick with me, even when I thought I didn’t deserve it.

I tried my best to keep it about me. I wanted to tell her that although she loved me so intensely and unconditionally, I wasn’t able to receive or honor it. Instead, I had been treating her love as a free pass to do dumb shit without consequence, but there’s always consequences. I needed to work on myself so I wouldn’t do that dumb shit anymore, not so I could be in a healthy relationship, but just so I could live with myself.

“I hope at least one percent of you is relieved,” I said.

“Zero percent of me is relieved,” she replied quickly.

Tears and tissues piled up. She wasn’t mad at me, she wasn’t begging me to stay, but she was so sad. I never wanted to make her this sad. I felt like a piece of garbage for doing this to her.

“Just make your decision and go,” she said.

When I went to get up off the floor, I could see the pain in her face go from a 10 to 5,000 as she looked up at me with those eyes, and I was paralyzed.

Earlier in the year, she had looked up at me with those same eyes, tears filling them up as she awkwardly went down on a knee in the water off the beach and gave her version of a proposal: no ring, just her, in her

ultimate vulnerability. I was confused until I saw all of our friends with their phones out, excitedly recording the moment.

“I was supposed to have a necklace for you, it was my dad’s, but it wasn’t ready in time, and I don’t want you to see this as pressure, but I mean, we’re here.”

I said yes, and I meant it.

Now I’m standing over her, about to walk away from my fiancée, my partner, the one person who has consistently loved me more than I love myself.

If you knew her, or had even just met her, you would have realized how lucky I was to have such abundant love in my life, but unfortunately, no one can fill our hearts if our doors are closed.

I didn’t start writing this book because I’m an expert on love—far from it. I’m writing this because I’m desperate. Desperate to realize love, accept love, and learn how I keep fucking it up. Desperate to know why I had a rare diamond the size of my fist, but treated her like a paperweight, a placeholder, out of sight, doing nothing to encourage her to shine. I didn’t hold space for her to be her beautiful self, leaving us both exhausted, defeated, and alone. Alone not because I’m by myself, but because I don’t enjoy my own company.

I want to figure this love thing out; I want to be worthy of it. I want to appreciate and be aware of it, especially when it walks up and smacks me in the face. I don’t want to learn how to make someone fall for me, or how to craft a perfect text message to leave them wanting more, or how to get noticed. I don’t care who pays, or what not to say or wear on a first date.

I care about love, how to love, and how to be loved.

If we dig to the root reason of why we do anything in our lives, it’s because of love. We want it so bad that we’re willing to design our entire lives around chasing it. We lose ourselves in the love stories

of others, and daydream about the “what if” love stories from our pasts. There are a billion songs, books, poems, and movies about love. We assigned the most important organ in our body to it, the heart, even changing the shape of it to make our hearts more beautiful, perfect, and symmetrical to look at. It’s not the beauty of our hearts that keeps us alive, it’s that work it does. Our hearts are asymmetrical, slimy, and not nice to look at. But our hearts are consistent, hardworking, and they keep everything else going.

Our hearts aren’t perfect, and the games we play around love aren’t fun.

Something’s gotta change.

Love is simple, but not easy, and the deeper I went on this journey to better understand, practice, and realize love, the more I learned that it was about letting go of the old, outdated ideas instead of trying to gain new ones. We don’t realize how much shitty love advice has been passed down to us through media, culture, religion, and our own DNA.

Love isn’t something we just achieve, it’s something we have to do, become, practice, and explore. The more we can be a source of love, the more love will be experienced, both in and around our lives.

This book wasn’t a labor OF love, but a reminder that it’s a labor TO love. I began taking a deep dive into the world of love after getting engaged in hopes of becoming a better partner and eventual husband. Instead, the journey turned me inward and made me realize I couldn’t continue down this road without drowning and taking her with me. Many of the things I thought were love never were, and even more things I avoided confronting ended up being the only things I needed to realize more love in and around my life.

Here I am, presenting the most expensive piece of work I’ve ever created. Not expensive in terms of the price you paid to read it, but the price I paid to write it.

This book isn't full of hollow quotes and empty ideas that will look nice on social media. Instead, it's full of useful thoughts and practical tips to bring love back out into the sun.

More than showing you how to be loved, I want to show you how to *be love*.

Although I got up to walk away, I didn't end up leaving that day, but that's a story for another page.

Let's get into it.