



# Fix Your Picker

A Guided Workbook for Moving Beyond Unhealthy Relationship Patterns to Find the Love You Really Want

# Introduction

From the first girl I kissed in fifth grade to the crazy relationship that brought me to my knees at the age of thirty, I was chronically attracted to unhealthy partners. I adopted this as a way of life and made jokes about having a “broken picker.” It became my story that I retold, recreated and perpetuated for years... until the pain of not changing far surpassed the comfort I got from remaining a victim. I had to take 100% responsibility for my life and the results I was getting.

So I committed to staying single for a year and started my soul surgery. I saw a fantastic therapist, joined support groups, went to workshops, studies and conferences. All the while, I read books about shame, emotional neglect, codependency, love addiction, intimacy, relationships, love languages, etc. I took an honest inventory of my relationships - what worked, what didn't work, what were my patterns, beliefs and habits. Then I had to ask myself, *Why I was recreating the same kind of relationship over and over again?* What were my fears and why did I have them? What was driving my behaviors? Where did I learn to act this way and what was my payoff for staying stuck in my story?

After a tremendous amount of introspection, therapy, reading and writing, a means of recovery emerged from the rubble. Having claimed to have a broken picker for most of my life, I decided to call it... “Fix Your Picker.”

In the following pages, I will lead you through a detailed inventory process. It doesn't matter if you're single, dating, married, polyamorous, gay, non-binary, transgender, young, old, rich, poor, black, white, shy, outgoing, or anything else. Your story doesn't need to be like mine. You simply need to be a human being who is committed to improving the quality and sustainability of your relationships. Even if you haven't had many relationships at all or if most of them have been entirely in your head, this process is still just as effective in guiding you towards a healthier future.

Please know that this work (and it *is* work) is intended to call into question your deep-seated beliefs about love, sex and relationships that you've likely held since you were a child (my relationship skills were already torched by fifth grade). Questioning these beliefs will threaten to overturn your very identity, so beware of various forms of pride, fear, ego, low self-esteem, shame, vanity, denial and delusion that will surely arise to pull you back down and encourage you to stay stuck in unhealthy, unsatisfying, unsustainable (but familiar!) relationship patterns. Remember, if nothing changes, nothing changes. To get what you've never had you must do what you've never done. Are you ready to make a change? If the answer is yes, read and write on the following pages like your life depends on it - because it does.

Here is what to expect:

- Diagnosis - What symptoms of a broken picker do you exhibit?
- What Are You Afraid Of? - Discover the fears that are driving your behaviors.
- What Kind of Love Did You Learn? - Question your beliefs about love.
- What Kind of Love Do You Want? - Rewrite your beliefs about love.
- Designing Your Future Relationship - Six part process to bring clarity to a vision of your future love.
- Conclusion / Additional Help / Reminders / Recommended Reading

# Diagnosis

Being rigorously honest with yourself, place a check next to each question or statement you can relate to. There are various symptoms and different kinds of broken pickers. You may not relate to them all.

Do you...

- Aim low?
- Settle for less?
- Pursue anyone and everyone?
- Simply take what you can get?
- Ignore red flags, your instincts and warnings from friends?
- Aim for only models, movie stars, rockstars, pro athletes, etc?
- Compromise your own values and integrity just to be with someone?
- Lie to yourself about how fantastic they are?
- Give them a free pass for unacceptable behavior?
- Create a story in your head about how they don't really like you?
- Fall in love with the idea of them - not the actual person?
- Feel attracted to unavailable people? (mentally, emotionally, physically)
- Remain aloof, avoidant and unavailable yourself? (mentally, emotionally, physically)
- Go from zero to marriage in 60 seconds?
- Lose yourself in a relationship?
- Take on your partner's feelings, beliefs, hobbies, etc?
- Do things solely for approval or validation? (especially things you wouldn't normally do)
- Place unrealistic demands and expectations on your partner?
- Feel like you have to earn your keep, prove your worth or win your partner?
- Stay busy so you don't have time for a healthy relationship?
- Cling to your partner or become very needy?
- Try to orchestrate, plan, figure out or control your relationships?
- Lose interest in your partners after a short time? (a week to 6 months)
- Mistake sex for love?
- Use sex to gain power or approval or manipulate your partner?
- Stay in harmful/unsatisfying relationships for way too long?
- Jump from relationship to relationship? (hardly staying single for long)
- Try to change your partner?
- Pretend to be something that you're not so they'll like you?

- Shower your partner with gifts and favors to impress or keep them?
- Demand that they do things for you that you could easily do yourself?
- Place your partner on a pedestal? (they can do no wrong)
- Find fault with everyone that you date?
- Try SO hard to make relationships work but they keep failing?
- Avoid commitment because you don't feel capable of being in a healthy relationship?
- Literally just want sex?
- Feel undeserving of a healthy relationship?
- Withhold feelings and concerns to avoid arguments, conflict or confrontation?
- Reject others before they reject you?
- Believe that you "missed your chance" or that "all the good ones are taken?"
- Blame them or blame yourself for everything?
- Give up easily because it's too much work?
- Feel safer being alone?
- Overshare with them immediately and chase them away?
- Only date people whose broken pieces match your broken pieces? (trauma-bonding)
- Do everything for your partner... until you just stop completely? (the brick wall method)
- Treat someone like a spouse who is clearly not spouse material?
- Try to save people with tons of problems? (fixer-uppers)
- Trust people who are not trustworthy?
- Believe in them more than they believe in themselves?
- Recreate parental relationships? (way more common than you may realize)
- Keep telling yourself that it's going to get better?
- Make excuses for their poor behavior?
- Envision your entire future together as soon as you start dating?
- Base your whole relationship on how they look? ("Mmmmmmm... shiny objects...")
- Need to be needed?
- Hide all your deep, dark secrets for as long as possible, but they inevitably lurch out of the closet?
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

If you checked more than zero of these items, your picker may require servicing. Some of these behaviors result from the false belief that you are "less than" (making others your God) and some result from fancying yourself as "better than" (thinking you are God). One-down or one-up. Neither belief has you in the right place (equal to others). And beliefs, FYI, are what drive your every action. So, if your behavior is undesirable, there is a faulty belief lurking behind it, guaranteed. Take a look at your beliefs, which are simply thoughts that you think over and over again. And by far the number-one most recurrent thoughts for human beings are fear-based thoughts. Let's examine those....

# What Are You Afraid Of?

- |  |  |                                      |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being alone             | <input type="checkbox"/> Not being good enough     | <input type="checkbox"/> Abandonment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being wrong             | <input type="checkbox"/> Not having enough money   | <input type="checkbox"/> Enmeshment  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being hurt              | <input type="checkbox"/> Dating a pedophile        | <input type="checkbox"/> Missing out |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being misunderstood     | <input type="checkbox"/> Running out of time       | <input type="checkbox"/> Intimacy    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being controlled        | <input type="checkbox"/> Asking for my wants/needs | <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being unhealthy         | <input type="checkbox"/> Abandoning myself         | <input type="checkbox"/> Commitment  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being trapped           | <input type="checkbox"/> Abandoning others I love  | <input type="checkbox"/> Settling    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being responsible       | <input type="checkbox"/> Giving up my alone time   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sacrifice   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being in danger         | <input type="checkbox"/> My family's disapproval   | <input type="checkbox"/> Compromise  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being forgotten/ignored | <input type="checkbox"/> Repeating my pattern      | <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being smothered         | <input type="checkbox"/> Societal expectations     | <input type="checkbox"/> Love        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being stalked           | <input type="checkbox"/> Pain of breaking up       | <input type="checkbox"/> Shame       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being terminally unique | <input type="checkbox"/> Losing good sex           | <input type="checkbox"/> Jealousy    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being single            | <input type="checkbox"/> Hurting others            | <input type="checkbox"/> Infidelity  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being obsessed          | <input type="checkbox"/> Manipulation              | <input type="checkbox"/> Boredom     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being rejected          | <input type="checkbox"/> Disappointment            | <input type="checkbox"/> Abuse       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being unloveable        | <input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability             | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

If you didn't check any of those fears, it's because you're an inanimate object. Everyone experiences fear. Just like everyone poops. It's an unsavory part of the human condition. But how is fear affecting you and what can you do about it?

When you live in fear and make fear-based decisions, you are not actually living your life purposefully. You are a victim of your own negative thoughts. You are simply reacting to a hypothetical future in which everything sucks - your own personal dystopia. Feeding into your fears essentially manufactures misery out of thin air. Ninety-nine percent of your fears never actually happen. And the one percent that does happen is because you were thinking about it all day and you manifested it. Cut it out. Fear isn't helping. In a fear-based life, you are not going towards your dreams, you are running away from your nightmares. Do you want to live your life running away from something? Or do you want to be growing towards something? You can't do both.

You can run your life on fear or love. You can make decisions out of fear or love. You can get into a relationship because of fear or love. You can stay in a relationship because of fear or love. I think you get the picture. You have to choose one: fear or love. Living in fear produces anxiety, depression, chaos, guilt, shame, remorse, resentment, regret and poor life choices. Living in love produces joy, love, harmony, gratitude, freedom, growth and good life choices. It brings you closer to your highest self, enriches your life and the lives of everyone around you. Ok. Choose love over fear. Got it. But what is love? Well...

# What Kind of Love Did You Learn?

Take a close look at the relationships you learned from - your parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings... even teachers, employers, television, media and other influential figures in your life. What did *their* version of love look like?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unconditional | <input type="checkbox"/> Attentive                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conditional   | <input type="checkbox"/> Neglectful                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Warm          | <input type="checkbox"/> Indifferent                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cold          | <input type="checkbox"/> Love / Hate                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Controlling   | <input type="checkbox"/> Black and White            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accepting     | <input type="checkbox"/> Obligatory                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Erratic       | <input type="checkbox"/> Business-like              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calculated    | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud / Tumultuous          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needy         | <input type="checkbox"/> Purely Physical            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needless      | <input type="checkbox"/> Judgmental                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private       | <input type="checkbox"/> Shameful                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boundary-less | <input type="checkbox"/> Violent                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enmeshed      | <input type="checkbox"/> Walking on eggshells       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoidant      | <input type="checkbox"/> Romanticized / Fantasy     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volatile      | <input type="checkbox"/> Affectionate               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Embarrassing  | <input type="checkbox"/> Affirming                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dependent     | <input type="checkbox"/> Spending Time              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unpredictable | <input type="checkbox"/> Spending Money             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ownership     | <input type="checkbox"/> Care-Taking                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quid pro quo  | <input type="checkbox"/> Like a chess game          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> One-sided     | <input type="checkbox"/> Pretend everything is fine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Orchestrated  | <input type="checkbox"/> Soul-Sucking               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Abusive       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other_____                 |

This is not a blame-game. You are not a victim. You cannot change the past. But you *can* identify the subconscious belief systems that have been driving your relationships all these years. Shining the light of awareness on these beliefs is the first step towards changing them. And changing your beliefs is the first step towards changing your actions. You don't have to live like this or love like this ever again if you don't want to! Every day is an opportunity to learn, grow and add to your new ideal for present and future relationships.

## What Kind of Love Do You Want?

Chances are that you are seeking love on a daily basis whether you know it or not. That's what humans do. If your idea of love is unhealthy, then you will be seeking unhealthy love on a daily basis. And, unfortunately, you will find it. Maybe you think "I don't actively pick bad partners - they are just drawn to me. I attract them." False. You are finding these people. You just don't realize it because you haven't taken a look at the unhealthy belief systems that are running your life. So... let's update your operating system. List all of the new, warm, fuzzy, happy things you would prefer to believe about love. Below are some examples to get your creative juices flowing, but ultimately you should write your own list. Fill this page with everything you think love should be (and cross out the ones you disagree with).

- Love is forgiving
- Love is for giving
- Love is patient
- Love is kind
- Love is home
- Love is infinite
- Love is intimate
- Love is vulnerable
- Love is freedom
- Love is beautiful
- Love is selfless
- Love is strength
- Love is an action
- Love is a journey
- Love is a decision
- Love is acceptance
- Love is compassionate
- Love is a marathon (not a sprint)
- Love is complete in and of itself  
(it doesn't demand reciprocity)

## Designing Your Future Relationship

If you don't know what you're aiming for, you'll never hit your mark. That's a fact. Get really clear about what you want in a partner so you can stop settling for less and wasting your time with icky people. This is your chance to place a custom order with the universe to deliver your soul mate and perfect partner. Don't hold back. Let your imagination run wild. The more detailed the better!

## Deal Breakers

First, list nonnegotiables - characteristics that you find absolutely unacceptable in a partner. This should be a short list of major, flaming, red flags (for example: active drug addict, racist, abusive, etc). If these show up on a first date, there will be no second date. Period.

## Ideal Partner (Part 1)

List characteristics and qualities of your ideal partner - every possible thing you can think of: age, income, education, personality, pet preference, body type, emotional intelligence, shoe size, parenting beliefs, political affiliation, eye color... ALLLLL the details. Anything goes. And if you can't fill this page top to bottom, it's probably because you have never asked yourself the question "What do I want in a partner?" This may be a big part of why you're having difficulty in the first place.

## Ideal Partner (Part 2)

Referring to your ideal partner list, transfer your top ten, most important qualities or characteristics to this page. These are the qualities that you really, really want in a partner. You may find it difficult to pick only ten, but in this process you will discover your core relationship values.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Now, from your top ten list, rewrite the five most important qualities you are seeking in a partner:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

And now... you have to be those five things. Every. Single. Day. You must become the person you want to be in a relationship with. When you strive to embody these five qualities, you will start operating on the same frequency as other people who are also striving to embody these five qualities. You will notice each other. You will find each other. You will be attracted to each other. It's science. You don't have to like it, believe it or understand it. Just do it and get the results. Many people hang that list on their bathroom mirror, make it the lock-screen on their phone or place multiple copies in places where they will see it often to remind themselves (mental reprogramming takes a little effort).

## To Don't

You may have checked a whole bunch of things on the diagnostic list at the beginning of this inventory. That's ok. Now, decide which are your five most detrimental and recurrent patterns. Which five behaviors either set you up for failure or destroy your relationships every time? Which five unhealthy patterns, if you could eliminate them, would change your life completely? It can be terribly overwhelming to try to combat fifty relational shortcomings at the same time, but focusing on your main five is totally doable. List the top five unhealthy behaviors that you need to stop doing below.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

## To Do

Now, what is the healthy behavior that you will replace each of these five things with? You can't just remove these things from your life and leave a vacuum. You have to replace them with something better. Ask yourself, "If I was being the best version of myself and all my thoughts and actions were healthy and loving, what would I do instead of this pattern?" If you don't know what the healthy alternative is, ask around. Ask people who are in healthy and loving relationships. Rewrite your "To Don't" list below as healthy behaviors that you want to practice instead.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Make a commitment to stop living in the To Don't list and to start living in the To Do list. Pay attention to your thoughts and actions on a daily basis, and when you catch yourself backsliding, gently remind yourself of the commitment you made and take corrective action. This may not be easy - change usually isn't - but you *must* change your beliefs and your actions if you want to change your life. The same, unchanged person will recreate the same relationship over and over again. Break the cycle! You can do it!

## My Preferences

Love looks and feels different for everybody. Do you know how you best experience love? Do you crave physical affection regularly? Do you want cards, gifts and flowers? Constant communication? Acknowledgment? Quality time together? What makes you feel loved? List these things below.

Also, what are the things that a partner may do that make you feel unloved, smothered, unappreciated or otherwise upset? Questioning you all the time? Criticizing you? Not listening? Micromanaging? Talking about their exes? Being sarcastic? Bossing you around? List these things below.

Chances are that you're not going to just meet someone who does everything right all the time and makes you feel super loved and cherished every moment of the day. It may feel that way for the first six months to a year of dating, but then the warm and fuzzy, magical miracle of falling in love dissipates. Then you have two options - rely on healthy, adult communication and the effort necessary to maintain a lasting and fulfilling relationship, or run away and go find another unicorn to ride for six months.

Deep down, the reason people get into relationships is to love and to be loved, but they may not always know how to accomplish that, no matter how strong their desire to do so. This is why you must help each other by sharing openly what your wants, needs and preferences are. Share your preference list with your partner soon and periodically as a reminder. It should be done lovingly and tactfully as an intimate and vulnerable conversation - not as a list of demands. This conversation will bring you closer together. You will learn more about yourself and your partner and how to love each other in a sustainable and fulfilling way that can last a lifetime.

## Conclusion

Now that you have decided what you want, need and deserve, you have an obligation to yourself to not settle for less than what you want, need and deserve! You also have an obligation to become the ideal partner. No one will ever be the right person if *you* are not the right person. This will require work on your part - practicing new thoughts and behaviors, reading helpful books and seeking outside professional help if necessary. You must be willing to be single. If you stay in unsatisfying relationships 1) you are reinforcing a message to yourself that it is acceptable to be treated poorly and to be in an unsatisfying relationship and 2) you will not be available when the right person comes along. You can be alone without being lonely. You must be willing to go on a few dates and say, "It has been nice getting to know you and you are a lovely person, but I don't think that we have long-term compatibility. Thank you and goodbye." Keep this inventory where you can see it, read it and reference it often. Revisit it frequently during the beginning of a new relationship or periodically to re-evaluate your current relationship. You are good enough. You deserve to be in a healthy and loving relationship. You only get one life. Don't waste your time being unhappy.

## Additional Help

If you have suffered from post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, mania, bipolar disorder, abuse (sexual or otherwise), abandonment, incest, eating disorders, codependency, addiction, deep shame or any other traumatic or uncommon circumstances, it is advisable to seek professional help. Unfortunately, most people who are ashamed of their problems are equally as ashamed to ask for help. This is why shame is so toxic and keeps millions of people from ever seeing a therapist, counselor, doctor or psychiatrist. You are not terminally unique. Someone has gone through what you've gone through before. Go get help. The sooner you get help, the sooner you can recover from what ails you and start living the life you've always wanted.

## Reminders

These little sayings may be helpful reminders to you:

If this happened on the first date, would there be a second?

You will continue to get what you tolerate.

Nothing changes if nothing changes.

If you have to earn it, it's not love.

Choose love over fear.

Feel free to cut them out and tape them to your bathroom mirror, your fridge or your dashboard; put them in your wallet, purse or your cubicle; make copies of them; tattoo them on your body if you have to - just put them where you will see them often and be reminded of your commitment to yourself to stop participating in unhealthy relationships and to start nurturing healthy and loving relationships.

## Recommended Reading

Here is a list of books that you may find helpful. There are many excellent books out there and this is by no means an exhaustive list, but it is a great place to start.

### Recovery:

[Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents](#) by Lindsay C Gibson  
*How to Heal from Distant, Rejecting, or Self-Involved Parents*

[Running on Empty](#) by Jonice Webb  
*Overcome Your Childhood Emotional Neglect*

[It Didn't Start with You](#) by Mark Wolynn  
*How inherited family trauma shapes who we are and how to end the cycle*

[Facing Love Addiction](#) by Pia Mellody  
*Giving Yourself the Power to Change the Way You Love*

[Facing Codependence](#) by Pia Mellody  
*What It Is, Where It Comes From, How It Sabotages Our Lives*

[Letting Go Of Shame](#) by Ronald and Patricia Potter-Efron  
*Understanding How Shame Affects Your Life*

[Daring Greatly](#) by Brené Brown  
*How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*

[No More Mr. Nice Guy](#) by Robert A Glover  
*A Proven Plan for Getting What You Want in Love, Sex, and Life*

### Relationship Skills:

[The Five Love Languages](#) by Gary D Chapman  
*How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*

[Getting the Love You Want](#) by Harville Hendrix and Helen LaKelly Hunt  
*A Guide for Couples*

[The Intimacy Factor](#) by Pia Mellody  
*Ground Rules for Overcoming the Obstacles to Truth, Respect and Lasting Love*

[Mating in Captivity](#) by Esther Perel  
*Unlocking Erotic Intelligence*

[How To Be an Adult in Relationships](#) by David Richo  
*The Five Keys to Mindful Loving*

[Attached](#) by Amir Levine and Rachel Heller  
*The New Science of Adult Attachment and How It Can Help You Find - and Keep - Love*