

# **Ten Stupid Things Women Do To Mess Up Their Lives Study Guide**

**Ten Stupid Things Women Do To Mess Up Their Lives  
by Laura Schlessinger**

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# Plot Summary

*Ten Stupid Things Women Do To Mess Up Their Lives* is not a self-help book, as Dr. Laura cautions. Over the course of her time on KFI AM 640, she has seen a plethora of similar issues arise time and again. It is these issues that Dr. Laura breaks down into specific chapters and outlines their origins, and the problems that crop up as a result. Interspersed with personal stories and transcriptions of callers from her radio show, she gets into detail over the ten most common mistakes women make, and what they need to do to fix them and avoid them in the future. Her blunt manner in explaining these issues is unmistakable. She wants to make sure that she is heard loud and clear. Dr. Laura also knows that the women she makes examples of in this book need to hear her advice as simply as can be. It is important to note that while some of her words may seem harsh, she truly stands with each woman in their predicament and wants nothing more than to see them succeed and be happy. For each of the ten stupid things that women do, Dr. Laura recommends positive things that they can be replaced with.

The issues that Dr. Laura covers in this book are stupid attachment, stupid courtship, stupid devotion, stupid passion, stupid cohabitation, stupid expectations, stupid child conception, stupid subjugation, stupid helplessness, and stupid forgiving. Despite the varying topics, there are a small number of key themes throughout. Some of these are dependency, fear and lack of self-esteem. These three things are apparent in almost each of the chapters that Dr. Laura breaks down for the reader.

Dr. Laura best conveys her message through her use of stories. In each of the calls that she takes on air and even in her therapy patients, there is something that touches everyone. It is clear the issues that women need to overcome in order to straighten out their lives. Some of the examples she makes are emotionally charged, while others are laughable. However, the message comes across loud and clear. The solutions she outlines for women are to leave their bad situations. Her advice is blunt and unmistakable, though many women have a hard time accepting her answers. Overall, she encourages her callers to build back their confidence and self-esteem and, most importantly, decide what it is that they want from their lives, not what they think others want of them. Sometimes the simplest advice she gives, such as taking a class or learning a new skill, is enough to restore a woman's self-esteem. This appears to be the root of all the problems outlined.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

Dr. Laura Schlessinger starts her book off on a bold note. Women's low self-esteem and their dependence on a strong male figure set the wheels in motion. Right away, she sets the distinctions between men and women. Women, she says use an entire arsenal of excuses to avoid facing the fact that they define themselves and their role in the world exclusively through men. What she finds sadder is that her experience shows that it does not even matter what kind of man women decide to be with, as long as it is a man. Men, on the other hand approach their problems very differently. They want to solve their problems, not whine about them. The familiar saying, "Why can't a woman be more like a man" is not such a bad idea. However, women are so wrapped up by their desire to exist through men that they miss this positive aspect of their personalities.

Dr. Laura makes a point that women do not gain their identity through the man they are with. Getting married does not grant one an identity. Women need to realize that they have to get it on their own. Many women mistakenly believe that marriage gives them self-worth. If a woman brings nothing to a relationship but the belief that a man will make her whole, then the balance is thrown off, and she will be set up for disappointment.

The reason that Dr. Laura says women bring only their dependence on their man into a relationship is because of their low self-esteem. She feels that women tend to believe that having a man is the answer to all of their woes. She also sees some of the acts that women do are self-defeating. They are self-defeating, since they keep women from truly earning their own self-esteem. Only from hard work will self-esteem truly be earned. Young women can learn much from the men they date that look to hold off on marriage and family while they forge their career and independence. This is something that women need to follow.

Instead, women make stupid attachments. They do this,, because they do not believe that they are good enough for anything else. These women have not learned that gaining self-esteem and happiness takes work. Instead, many women use romantic entrapment to ensnare a man into marriage by becoming pregnant. This, they think, will solve their problems. This is one of the many roadblocks that women throw in their own way that keeps them from achieving autonomy. Finding their own destinies and committing to them are the only ways that they will be able to do so successfully. Dr. Laura says that a woman's job - any person's job really - is to be as fully realized as possible by having dreams, forging a purpose, building an identity, having courage, and making commitments to things outside themselves.



## Chapter 2

### Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

It happens far too often that women date jerks and then refuse to leave them. They agree to settle on a man, rather than select him. Women get so caught up in the attention they receive, when a man is attracted to them that they fail to consider whether or not they are attracted to him. The "female escape route" is considered the acceptable means of avoiding becoming an individual - through attachment. When they do this they continue to lose sight of who they are as people. They expect their boyfriend or husband to provide them with their life. Dr. Laura holds that this view is unfair, as it is not the man's responsibility to do this. Once again, it is up to a woman to find her own destiny and travel her own path.

Women need to take a more active role in dating. They need to be selective. They need to remember that men will not fix women's problems. Women need to do that. There is a belief among women that men validate their existence. As one caller explains it, it is as though there is nothing to her, when she does not have a boyfriend. Only when there is a man in her life does she have any meaning in her day-to-day existence. Dr. Laura is dumbfounded by this. When women are riddled with such insecurity, she can become a burden to her boyfriend and runs the risk of losing him altogether.

It is not a radical belief to think that women should be making their own choices. It is from women's inactivity that they tend to be on the losing end of things so much of the time. One idea that Dr. Laura suggests to women that may help is that there is a mandatory waiting period during an engagement. Too often, women rush into marriage and never get to know the man well enough. Then, when they see that they've made a mistake, it is too late to do anything about it. A specified period of time before the wedding gives the woman enough time to wake up and break things off, if necessary. She needs to decide if this is the man she wants to spend the rest of her life with.



# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

Another issue that Dr. Laura sees repeatedly is how women refuse to leave a situation they know is self-defeating. They go in to a relationship championing a dream, and they are hugely disappointed when faced with reality. Dr. Laura credits the Walt Disney movies as perpetuating the belief that a man will come along and sweep a woman off her feet, and she in turn will sacrifice her life to be with him. She sees this type of dream as dangerous for women to fall for.

Eventually what happens is; women still hold out for the dream. When the dream begins to fall apart, women are reluctant to leave, because they hold on to the moments that are still good. Women are settling. They are still too afraid to look beyond their man. It is a silly notion to have. Men act like jerks, and women continue to go along with it. As the case with one female caller who had been dating a man finds out that he is married, also discovers that he has no intention of leaving his wife. The caller then tells Dr. Laura that she still loves him anyway. Dr. Laura tells her that it is through her own courage that will give her the power to do what she needs to and move past this.

As Dr. Laura explains further that whatever happens in the past to make us who we are today is no excuse to make bad decisions. She says that it is necessary to take risks. It is in the risk-taking that people grow in autonomy and personal power. History is not destiny. Each person has free will to overcome, grow, and change. It takes courage however, to make any change. Through courage, self-esteem will be bolstered. If there is no courage and no self-esteem, then it will lead to a self-perpetuating bad habit of which there will be no hope of recovery.

Self-esteem and self-worth need to be earned. It becomes desperate attachment, when women think they are worthless if they are not attached. They will stay in a bad, unloving relationship, because it validates who they are. Motivation is needed to propel them to better their situation. This motivation can come from the rational thought that if they do not make the necessary changes, they will continue to feel miserable. Dependent women get their self-esteem through their attachments to other people. What happens is, they find potential in all the wrong places. As a result, they continue to settle; they sell themselves to the lowest bidder.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

Women mistake sex for love. They hope and assume that it leads to more, but they are frequently disappointed, when they find that it does not. In order to save themselves from being hurt in these situations, women need to know what they are agreeing to by having sex beforehand. Most men do not equate sex with love. However, women end up blaming men for mistreating them, when there was never any discussion of anything more in the first place. It is the woman's responsibility to straighten this out before going any further. Once again, their lack of self-esteem comes into play as they fail to do this due to fear of rejection. Sex too soon once again boils down to lack of self-esteem. If the issue is not rectified it can leave a woman feeling alone and desperate.

Women however, continue to have sex too soon in order to gain acceptance and validation. They do this to make themselves feel like they are worth something. After a while, women realize that sex by itself does not sustain a relationship. When things falter, they need to look at what is really going on. They need to face up to their insecurity and do something that will make themselves feel good. It is the only way that the cycle will end.

Many times women simply need objective feedback and a good support system. If they do not have it growing up, women seek it out in their relationships with men. Often, it is the wrong way to go and is bad for the woman. However, they sometimes feel like they have no choices available. This is never the case. Dr. Laura lets them know that they always have choices. They can be difficult choices, but they have them. Throughout it all, the underlying issue continues to stem from lack of self-esteem. This is something that rears its ugly head again and again throughout each case Dr. Laura examines and in every caller she takes on the air.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

Unmarried couples living together statistically do not stay together once married. Dr. Laura asks if this is the kiss of death for a relationship. She says that it is out of desperation that women cohabit, when they probably should not. She goes on to say that this is more often the case, when the women are younger. This is because they have not experienced enough of life yet or established their independence. Living with a man at such a young age only prolongs the maturing process that would normally take place from life experiences, or experiences gained on their own.

Women also hope that the fantasy will win out, when they move in with their boyfriends. They mistakenly believe that things will magically happen or magically heal once they live together. They are often disappointed as this fails to work in their favor. Women do not admit where their relationship is at prior to cohabitation. They believe they can change their mate's ways. This idea of denial is one that continues to haunt the women that Dr. Laura makes examples of, just as with women's lack of self-esteem. These two issues are recurrent themes throughout her book. Denial is a big factor in this living-in arrangement. The styles of this denial run the gamut from denial of one's own true needs and wants and denial of what he is about. Living-in does not mean commitment. and it is not necessarily a step in that direction.

Dr. Laura makes her callers face reality, when she asks them if their boyfriend really wants to marry them. In many of these situations, the men do not want to get married. Living together is merely a convenience for them. However, the woman tricks herself into believing that he will one day want to marry her. Moving in together does not mean he will be ready to make that important step to getting married. Sometimes women even feel guilty, when men manipulate them by making them feel bad for wanting more, when they do not want it. Women make it easy for men.

Even when women know that their guy will never commit, they stay anyway. They do this out of fear of responsibility. When the fantasy fails to occur, they stay anyway and settle for less. Women are so concerned with whether or not they are accepted that they forget to consider if they want the guy. Often, women rush into these things too. Women need to realize that they may lose their relationship in the short term but will gain long-term happiness by doing so. It will hurt them more in the long run to stay than if they give up their unhappy relationships now. Every relationship has problems; it cannot be escaped. However, the issue is whether people have the maturity and the commitment to hang in there with each other and work out the problems.





# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

Fantasies never end up being what women expect them to be. This in turn leaves them disappointed. However, this disappointment can prove to be a great opportunity for personal growth if women are ready to accept the responsibility and endure the discomforts of change. Two of Dr. Laura's patients, Maureen and Kenny, picked each other for reasons that stemmed from their childhoods. Issues deeply rooted in their past were playing themselves out in the present. They needed to recognize what they were doing and accept responsibility for it. Ultimately, they were able to work it out.

Dr. Laura indicates that even when women know that they are making a mistake, they continue to do it anyway. This, she says, will lead to disappointment every time. Women sometimes believe that they can change their man. Dr. Laura's caller Lila knows that her boyfriend does not offer the kind of intimacy that she looks for, but she hopes - and seeks - to change him. When she cannot, she is disappointed. According to Dr. Laura, she set herself up for disappointment. An important point that Dr. Laura makes is that change requires motivation. If the guy is not motivated to make a change, he simply will not do it. The sooner women know that, the better for them.

Women sometimes become disappointed with their boyfriend, because they represent something within them that is disappointing. These are not conscious issues though as women make unconscious choices, when it comes to their mates. They tend to take unresolved childhood dilemmas and attempt to resolve them through their boyfriend or husband. They get so caught up in their past that everything else gets clouded. Again, lack of self-esteem seems to be the root of the problem. Women often do not believe that they are good enough, smart enough, or worthy enough. They need to stop this line of thinking and start taking positive steps toward believing in themselves.

Women tend to make assumptions about men. For starters they think that strong men will protect them, when in fact they turn out to be controlling. Controlling does not equate to strong, it equates to manipulative behavior. Women then foolishly believe that they can change this behavior or worse yet, that the behavior will miraculously disappear once they get married. Putting aside their own feelings of inadequacy, women have to realize that no one is perfect; they are not perfect and neither is their mate. It boils down to women being able to recognize this as well as being able to accept themselves for who they are. They need to know that they are worthy and have value.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis

Dr. Laura believes that appropriate parenthood honors the child's needs first. Problems frequently arise, when this does not happen. It is unfortunate that people sometimes have children for all the wrong reasons. They procreate to heal something within themselves. They erroneously think that having children will solve their problems. When they finally see this mistake it is often too late; they are left disappointed, and the children are the ones who suffer.

In Dr. Laura's experience, women allow themselves to get pregnant, because they think that it will all work out in the end. She also finds that women fail to accept responsibility for their own bodies, and they allow themselves to get pregnant without giving it proper thought. Although she does believe that a man needs to accept responsibility for getting a woman pregnant, the onus ultimately falls on the woman since it affects her body. Dr. Laura also feels that women do not use birth control, because they are fantasizing about being in a perfect situation. They fantasize of love and commitment where the man will be the answer to their woes and a wonderful and dedicated father. However, just because a man says "I love you" does not mean that he is ready or willing to have a baby.

Women simply go into having sex without weighing the consequences. They claim outside influences as an excuse for their irresponsible behavior. No one or no influence forces a woman to make a bad decision. She needs to accept responsibility for her own actions. If a woman is going to choose sex, she needs to use a contraceptive. Again, she holds the power over her body.

A big reason that women have unprotected sex is, because they are afraid that the man will leave them if they insist on using a condom. Women need to claim control over their bodies and destinies. They whine about the problems and difficulties involved in taking control over their own lives, but then they get upset at their partners for taking over and doing that which they are unwilling to do for themselves. If they do not like it then it is within their power change it. It is a familiar theme; women fear taking control but are miserable, when their men do it. Bottom line, women are not acting responsibly which hurts their children. For them, making babies becomes a way not only of pretending things are okay, but also of trying to force things to be okay.

# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary and Analysis

Most mothers have a natural protective instinct over their babies. However, when a woman's perspective and self-worth go awry, it sometimes makes her question her own loyalties. To Dr. Laura's chagrin, there are women that call her radio show that are actually willing to put their children aside for the whims of a man. As a mother, she does not understand how this is even a choice for a woman. Women need to understand that it is better to be without a man and her children to have no father, than to have a man around who beats them. She stresses that it is never better - for anyone - to be beaten, terrorized, humiliated, demoralized, or violated than to be alone. Some women are absolutely paralyzed into fear over autonomy that they would sacrifice their children's well being in order not to be alone.

Dr. Laura acknowledges that there are reasons or excuses that women get trapped, however, she holds that there is never an excuse for jeopardizing children. She sees children getting caught in the middle of the parents' mess. They become pawns. Dr. Laura had female callers who knowingly put their daughters in danger with men who might or who have molested them, because they think the man involved might change. In some cases, they do not even believe their daughters, when they have stepped forward. Their fears are so great that they are willing to go to extremes and make awful excuses for men's behaviors. They are completely deluded into believing what they want, because their sense of self is completely lost. This type of denial is dangerous.

Occasionally women overcome these issues and make the right choices. This is yet another big self-esteem issue. Many of these women that make the excuses for their man's terrible behavior have yet to deal with issues of aloneness and self-worth. They need to face these to get over it. Although evil cannot be completely eradicated, women can certainly avoid it from entering their homes and hurting their children.



# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary and Analysis

Women tend to beat around the bush, when they get angry. They do not say it until they are pressed to do so. If they are unhappy, they prefer to feel hurt first. They are slow to give in to anger. It happens frequently that women experience hurt, when they should be expressing anger. As long as they are hurt, they do not take any active steps in redressing, improving or escaping from a bad situation. However, women would rather invalidate their own feelings of disgust and anger over their man's selfishness instead of confronting them.

There is a big difference between anger and hurt. Hurt is injury or damage. It is an emotional pain. Hurt indicates a significant degree of emotional involvement and highlights a need for the other person. Anger is about extreme displeasure, hostility, and indignation. Depression is also different. It occurs in the absence of self-defense. Dr. Laura says that it is far healthier to rise up against the injustice and demand redress or change. Although healthier, it is not necessarily typical female behavior to get in touch with their strongest feelings.

Dr. Laura feels the ultimate sadness is when people refuse to stop trying to get love and approval from those that cause offense to them. She also says that women need to get out of the defensive position and into the offensive position more often. Only through more practice in self-assertiveness, the more natural it will become to them. Not only that, it will enable them to become more selective so they will be less inclined to merely settle on a relationship.

One of the reasons that women feel hurt over anger is because women get afraid of hurting people. They think that if they get angry, people will get mad in return. If people get mad, people will reject or punish. When women are afraid of losing their relationship, it is almost too late. This goes for relationships with parents as well. Incidentally, Dr. Laura says that it all begins in the formative years within the family unit.

Dr. Laura cautions however, that anger does not always belong. Sometimes it is inappropriate or misdirected. Women need to know exactly why they are angry and then deal with it directly. If a man is being honest about his feelings and his perspective on the relationship, then a woman cannot be angry about that. If she does not agree with his viewpoint, she can feel disappointment, but anger would be an inappropriate emotion. Misplaced anger is a mask for something else. In one case with a pregnant female caller, anger was actually frustration. The woman feels the weight of parental responsibility and acts out over it. However, she needs to confront the issue of feeling overwhelmed and frustrated over the shifted responsibilities. It is not anger that she feels.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary and Analysis

Women use the "any dad will do" excuse to stay with bad men in bad situations. They feel that it is better for their children to have any dad than no dad; even if that dad is abusive or uses drugs. Dr. Laura says that this is a terrible excuse for women to not change. Women that use this excuse have an irrational fear about not facing the fear of the unknown and autonomy. It is this fear that makes women unwilling to change. They choose instead to whine over their lousy situations all the while refusing to do anything about it. Dr. Laura emphatically stresses that they get over their fear.

Not only do women need to change their predicament by leaving a bad relationship, but they need to replace the void with something positive so that they do not go back to the same problem. If they have nothing positive to replace the man with, they will go right back; they will be unable to see why they left in the first place. They need to recognize that this is an opportunity for them to grow. Women that are plagued by issues of self-worth would do best in these situations to do things for themselves such as learning a new hobby or taking a class. When they see that they are good at something else which gives them pleasure, it will make them stronger against going back to their old situation.

Women come up with various reasons not to leave their boyfriends or husbands. Since they refuse to admit to their fear, they will give in to another excuse that Dr. Laura calls the typical female response. This excuse is that "they don't want to cause any more hurt" to the man. When she hears this, it really gets her angry. It especially upsets her to hear this remark, when the man they are involved with is guilty of atrocious behavior. She says that just because a woman feels like she is a victim does not make her so. It is up to the woman - every time - to stay or go. Many times, the callers need to hear the words from someone else in order to solidify their resolve over ending a relationship. Women need that extra boost, for their self-esteem which, in so many cases is lagging to begin with.

Over and over, Dr. Laura drives the point home that dependency is not a good thing. Dependency does not offer love, mutual regard, admiration, or respect. Healing and building self-esteem will not come simply by having a man at a woman's side. Being in a relationship is not a free ticket to happiness. When women enter into relationships for the wrong reasons, it always leads to problems. Dr. Laura sends a strong message out to women that it is okay to leave. The world will not come crashing to a halt if the relationship ends. The woman will continue to pursue her goals and work on building her self-esteem independently. Only when a woman is content on her own she will realize that she does not need to be with a man to be complete.

# **Characters**

**Dr.Laura Schlessinger**

**The Callers**



## Objects/Places

### "Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Man"

Men are not defined through their relationship with a woman. They tend to hold off on marriage and family in pursuit of other interests, such as a career. Dr. Laura says that women would be smart to employ certain male traits.

### Fear

Fear is the largest obstacle women face when deciding to make changes. It stands in the way of women making positive changes in their life, because they are simply afraid.

### KFI AM 640

KFI AM is the L.A. radio station that hosts Dr. Laura's on-air talk show.

### Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is another stumbling block women have to overcome in order to take advantage of growth opportunities. Feelings of worthlessness hold women back from new experiences and sometimes keep them from moving out of bad relationships.

### Bad Choices

Over and over again, women choose to go into relationships for all of the wrong reasons. Many times this stems from issues that developed during childhood that they are attempting to resolve in their adult life. These tend to be things that make women unhappy.

### "Female Escape Route"

This is a term that one of Dr. Laura's patients coined. It is defined as a socially acceptable means of avoiding becoming an individual through attachment.

### Goals

Goals are the positive things that women can look for when they emerge from bad relationships. Having goals offers growth opportunities that keep women from returning to their bad situations.



## **Catch-22 Syndrome of Women**

Women are miserable, so they make kids. Then, they have kids and cannot get out for the sake of the kids, even though they are miserable with their partner.

## **Attachment**

Attachment usually stems from a dependency issue. Women tend to feel defined through their relationships with men. If they have a man, then they have self-worth. If they do not have a man, they feel it tells the world that they have nothing to offer.

## **Fantasies**

In relationships, women believe that the fantasy is real, or they try to make the fantasy real. They do not understand that fantasy is not reality.

## **Living-in**

Living-in is cohabitation prior to marriage.

## **"It Must Be Me"**

This is the syndrome of handling someone else's inappropriate behaviors. That means that a man's actions are inexorably connected to her self-worth.

## **"I Am Attached, Therefore I Must Exist"**

According to Dr. Laura, this is an "utterly nutty" romantic concept, where women set themselves up for hurt and anger in their relationships with men.





# Themes

## Women and Self-Esteem

One of the biggest themes that run throughout this book is that of women, and their relationship with self-esteem. Many, if not all of the problems that Dr. Laura outlines, are the result of a lack of self-esteem suffered by women. Whether it stems from childhood or later, women carry it closely with them and are often reluctant to let it go. As a result, women go into relationships with men for all of the wrong decisions. Not only that, if they do not make the necessary changes, the path they choose will continue to repeat itself over time. They lack the courage to do better for themselves, because they do not feel worthy. This is what leads them to settle on a man rather than be more selective in finding one.

Issues of dependency emerge from a lack of self-esteem. Women tend to feel complete, only when they have a boyfriend or a husband. They think that if they are attached to a man, all of their troubles will go away. They often do not think that they are better for anything else. What they do not realize is that they need to restore their self-esteem in order to repair the hurts. Only a woman who believes in herself can truly be happy. However, gaining self-esteem may not be that easy to do for many women. It is gained by earning it. It comes only through sincere efforts to make changes. It takes work.

## Women and Fear

One of the reasons that women have a hard time making the right choices for themselves is out of fear. This is part of the reason that women have a hard time gaining self-esteem; they fear making the changes needed to improve their lives. Not only that, but women fear many things. They fear independence, and they fear responsibility. They have a fear of being alone, a fear of rejection, as well as a fear of worthlessness. Women also tend to stay in bad relationships out of fear. It is common for people to fear change, however, when women fear change, it often propels them to continue making the same mistakes over and over as Dr. Laura explains. Sometimes even just facing reality causes fear for women.

Mostly, women seem to have a fear of autonomy. They do not believe in themselves enough to think that they can succeed. They fear the unknown too much. It is this fear that makes women unwilling to change. It paralyzes them into inactivity. Their fears can be so great that they willing to go to extremes, stand by their man, and make awful excuses for men's behaviors. They are completely deluded into believing what they want, because their sense of self is completely lost. In one chapter Dr. Laura actually makes an example of women who will even sacrifice their children's well-being just so they do not have to be alone.

## Women and Attachment

Women become so dependent on men that they make what Dr. Laura calls stupid attachments. They do this, because they do not believe that they are good enough for anything else. These women have not learned that gaining self-esteem and happiness takes work. Women get so lost in their attachment issues that they will use it in order to avoid becoming an individual in their own right. When they do this they continue to lose sight of who they are as people.

Dependent women get their self-esteem through their attachments to other people. Being in a relationship with a man will make everything better in their lives. They do not grasp the idea that they need to find their own destiny. They are too busy living in fear to do this. However, if they are unattached, they think that they are worthless. They will stay in a bad, unloving relationship, because it validates who they are. Dependency and attachment do not offer love, mutual regard, admiration, or respect. Healing and building self-esteem will not come simply by having a man at a woman's side. Being in a relationship is not a free ticket to happiness. When women enter into relationships for the wrong reasons, it always leads to problems.



# Style

## Perspective

Dr. Laura Schlessinger speaks from experience on many of the issues she discusses in this book. For starters, she is a family and marriage therapist with her own practice. During her twenties, she had been married for two years and then divorced. She sees her old self in many of the women that call her up for advice. From first hand experience, she knows what they are going through. Additionally, she knows how to help them. These are the individuals she seeks to work with. For twenty years, she has practiced what she preaches. Dr. Laura is living proof that it is possible for women to possess the courage and fortitude needed in order to live a happy and fulfilling life.

In the beginning of the book, Dr. Laura states that the ideas she presents will probably upset and anger many people. Her ideas are not that easy for some to hear. Much of this is due to the fact that women are living in denial over their predicaments. They feel that Dr. Laura's words are very harsh. Her approach tends to be that of tough love. However, she has seen both bad and good reactions. Sometimes women need to let these ideas sink in a little bit. Aside from that, many times people want to blame someone else for their misery. Dr. Laura helps people get past it, so that they may begin the healing process. She sometimes hears back from the callers she helps, and they all have wonderful things to say about how her advice helped them to straighten out their lives.

## Tone

Dr. Laura's style is very direct and to the point. The book's tone is clearly subjective. It happens on occasion that her listeners and her patients find her approach and advice to be rather harsh. However, it is her bluntness that helps to drive the point home. She does not beat around the bush. It is this straightforward, no-holds-barred style that makes her stand out. It has earned her both admiration and anger from others. This is what makes her so popular with her audience.

The language she uses is easy for readers to understand, just as she makes it easy for her callers and patients. Even though she speaks to women of all ages, she chooses to use such blunt words, because sometimes shocking someone into reality is the only way for someone to get what she is saying. Not only that, by being so blunt, she is also conveying a sense of urgency. Another reason she is so blunt is, because she has an interest in each of these people making a positive change in their life. She cannot baby them; she needs to be blunt for them to get the message and be inspired enough to make whatever changes they need in their lives. Her words are intended to convince women to begin standing up for themselves. If they are not motivated to do so, they will not. The more important thing to Dr. Laura is that if they do not make the needed

changes, then they will continue to make the same mistakes that have gotten them into their miserable situations in the first place.

## Structure

The book is broken down into ten chapters which detail each mistake that women make. Within each chapter, Dr. Laura alternates a series of phone conversations with callers from her radio show with bits of her advice thrown in. In addition to the callers, she uses various stories to make examples of certain issues and what people do. Dr. Laura explains the mistake that women make and then she uses a transcript of a phone conversation with a caller to give it context. The conversations have the feel of a therapy session. Beyond that, when Dr. Laura gives more advice in between these stories, it almost has the feel of a personal conversation that she is having with the reader. This helps to clarify each issue. When she highlights her callers, there is no mistaking the points that she is making.

A downside of the format is that it may not appeal to everyone. Someone who is looking for a more serious read on relationship issues may not like the lay out. Also, some who think her advice is too harsh may be completely turned off. Dr. Laura's tough love approach may be hard for some women to take in and make something positive with. Additionally, it may be a positive and a negative that Dr. Laura spotlights some of her on-air callers. A positive is that it makes her point easier to follow. A negative is that some may feel that she humiliates her listeners and hangs them out to dry.



## Quotes

"Since women do not typically define self-esteem and purpose in terms of personal accomplishment, the ways they have gone about getting some sense of identity, value, and meaning in their lives have been primarily through relationships." Chapter 1, page 7

"Expecting a boyfriend to provide you with your life is unrealistic and actually unfair, because it's simply not his job." Chapter 2, page 32

"You know, Diana, I think women have to cut out the romantic fantasy and talk turkey before they get into bed. Because if we don't clarify what it is we're doing before we do it, we can't complain about being misunderstood or used." Chapter 4, page 77

"Our inner changes happen so slowly that we sometimes don't see them - we're too into survival mode." Chapter 4, page 86

"Women have to know of their alternatives to selling themselves. And they have to be able to use their courage and creativity in ways that make them choosers, not beggars." Chapter 5, page 98

"The disappointment may be a great opportunity for personal growth and emotional healing of childhood hurts - if you are ready to assume personal responsibility and endure the discomforts of change." Chapter 6, page 111

"Nonetheless, sometimes you simply have to accept the fact that no man is going to be perfect - and that means that you don't have to be perfect, either." Chapter 6, page 130

"As women, we can't afford to keep marching for the rights without taking on the responsibilities." Chapter 7, page 137

"When needs for attachment and acceptance are so strong that rational judgment gives way to fearfully unexamined emotions, the consequences are rarely minor." Chapter 8, page 166

"Women get afraid of hurting people, because people will get mad - and if people get mad, people will reject or punish." Chapter 9, page 185

"Generally, women resent and resist the idea of acknowledging up front what you are in reality accepting and putting up with anyway!" Chapter 10, page 200

"Leaving is not enough. Happiness is not given, nor is it automatic. It is hard-earned." Chapter 10, page 202



## Topics for Discussion

How do women's relationship issues developed during childhood affect their adult relationships with men? Is it possible to avert this fate? Why or why not?

The way Dr. Laura tells it, women seem to fall very easily into relationship traps that they are in denial over. What causes this denial, and what can women do to work their way out of it?

Dr. Laura says that women find it so hard to make the necessary changes in their lives and be happy. Do you think that there is an easier way for women to change? If so, what would that way be?

Dr. Laura is praised and criticized for her advice. Some find it harsh, while others find it eye-opening. Which do you think is more accurate and why? Does it work to get her message across, or should she have used a more traditional approach?

Some advice that Dr. Laura gives is for women to find a positive outlet for their time and energy, once they leave a bad situation. Do you think that this is enough to keep women from returning to their bad situations with men and beginning new ones? Explain.

In the beginning of the book, Dr. Laura stresses that this book does not man-bash. As a matter of fact, she places almost all of the blame for women's relationship problems on the women. Do you think that this is accurate? Why or why not?

Do you think that society plays a role in the way women see their relationships? Why or why not?