

BY LISA STEINGOLD

LOOKING FOR LOVE... IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

Ask love... we crave it and desire it and it's completely natural. What isn't natural however is how we've come to crave it so badly from others as a desperate attempt to make up for the lack we feel for ourselves. Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places is a humorous, heartfelt and truthful reflection of the ways in which we deceive ourselves about love. The book also examines the ways in which we heal love within ourselves. It's a must read for anyone single, divorced, married...in fact it's a must read for all.

Do you feel like love avoids you or that you run from love at any opportunity?

Here's a book that finally:

- Allows us to understand our behavior in relationships
- What we can do to stop from running from ourselves
- Has the tools for keeping love and relationships alive
- Tells the stories of REAL people

Lisa has a refreshing and real approach to love and relationships that allows the reader to get up close and personal.

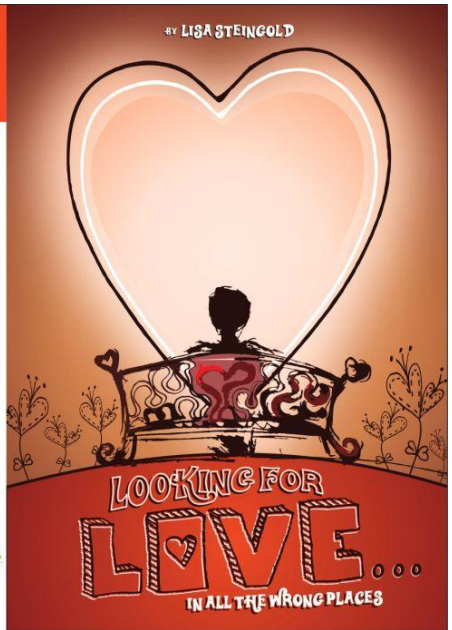


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BY LISA STEINGOLD

LifeMatters



Looking for Love in all the Wrong Places;

A guide to true love, no matter what

By Lisa Steingold

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Lisa's work is about unlocking the magic of individuals. For more information go to www.lisasteingold.com

Dedicated to all who open their hearts in love.

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Love, Lisa

Introduction

Aah the topic of love. No matter the person, the topic of love shall not escape our experience. And yet can any of us really define it? Much more than that, can any of us understand it? And there are so many different flavours to the experience of love; the love of a friend, the passionate love encounter, the love of one's family, the deep love of a partner, the love of God, the love for one's animals and, dare I say it, even the love for oneself.

I've always thought these different aspects of love separate just as one might examine a meal and yet upon pondering the subject more closely I realise that just as one's main course of roast chicken and vegetables digest in the same place as one's dessert of chocolate cake, so too does one's hunger for such things originate in one place. Yes and whilst they might manifest as different desires in different tastes, they carry the same essence. So too have I discovered this with love.

It's funny. I always considered myself ill-equipped to write on the topic of love but I had a "lightbulb" moment before I sat down and began writing when I realised this: How can you know what a subject is truly about unless you also know what it truly is not?

I've always pondered the inner workings of love. How come one day it's there and the next day it's gone? I don't think I'm alone in my pondering. So I'm pretty much talking to you; yes that 90% (okay I totally made that up but if my therapist friends and I are anything to go by, it's pretty much true) of you who've read *Eat, Pray, Love* or *Committed* and it's resonated with the depths of your soul. I'm talking to you if you once thought that life was like *Dirty Dancing*. I'm talking to you if you cried during *Titanic* in or *Pride and Prejudice* when Mr Darcy finally kissed Elizabeth Bennett. I'm talking to the rest of you who threw yourself into a relationship only to come out with clothes intact and little else... only to do give yourself that tearful experience again, countless times.

I'm talking to you if you believe in true love but usually end up settling for true love for right now. I'm talking to you if you've laid down on your bathroom floor or bed or your best friend's kitchen sobbing from the pain of love lost. I'm talking to you if you have experienced the enduring and uncompromising pain that sears away at one's heart and self-worth after having been let down yet ANOTHER time by someone who said they loved you.

Lastly, I'm talking to you if you've believed in true love all your life only for you to feel like you failed or let it down in some way and are being punished because it seemed to abandon you a long time ago. I'm talking to you if you've spent hours and weeks agonising over that someone special only to bump into them having a jolly good time with someone else. I'm speaking to you even if you've looked for it your whole life but just felt like you've never found it.

I'm talking to those of you who've been searching for true love ever since you were eight years old and believed that Adam (or insert appropriate name here) from next door and you were destined to get married and have three children... that was until he left for boarding school and returned home from university and announced he was gay.

And don't worry, I'm not talking only to you females. I'm also talking to the guys. You think I don't know that Tracy (or insert name of first girl ever loved) broke your heart. I know that when you found out she was actually dating or worse, shagging, your supposed mate George (insert appropriate name here) your heart broke and even though you know boys don't cry, you howled like a baby.

It hurt like hell and at that point both of us (boys and girls included) decided deep inside that love wasn't worth it.. We decided maybe THAT was love. We decided maybe to settle because we thought if we set our hopes too high, we'd just be let down all over again. We decided that we'd either totally avoid true love by looking for it in the places we knew we'd never find it (don't tell me you haven't looked for it at the bottom of an ice cream tub or bottle of wine) or we decided to settle for love

we knew wasn't right but at least it was safe... and safe kinda worked for a while until you began to resent your partner.

Welcome to my world! It's the reason I wrote this book... because I spent a lifetime (well thirty-something years) looking for love in all the wrong places. For a long time I thought it was just me. I thought that only I was screwed up and everyone else was happy. I delved into therapy and self-help and even decided to switch careers (from a corporate marketing exec to a life coach) to work with others in their quest for love. And that's how I came to realise it wasn't just me.

It wasn't just me who felt alone. It wasn't just me who had screwed up my marriage by mistake on purpose. It wasn't just me who'd settled for about 10% of what I believed love to be because I thought that was all I'd ever get. It wasn't just me who sabotaged my own efforts for love or looked longingly at couples who walked on the beach both loving and hating them at the same time for different reasons.

It wasn't only me who ended up dating, and I use the term loosely, the recovering cocaine addict, commitment phobe or the married man (yes, I even went there) because I thought it better to be with someone, anyone, than to be on my own. Ironically, I always ended up on my own but it took me a while to recognise that fact. Along my magnificent path I also tried looking for love in food, particularly sweet food. I looked for it in trying to achieve superhuman sporting feats and then I even looked for it in the pleasing of God.

As I worked through therapy I began to blame my complete inability to find love on my parents. You'll know if you've worked through your issues with your parents that pretty much everything dates back to them right?

It took me a long time to realise that it actually all came back to me. Now wait just a second before you get angry with me and ask how it could be possible that it was YOUR fault that Tracy shagged George at the same time she was supposed to be seeing you. Just breathe. You see the thing is that if you're going to read this book, you're going to have to get rid of that whole guilt and blame thing that's going on. Oh

don't worry, I'm not pointing fingers, it's just because I know. I've been down the guilt and blame road and the only place it leads is Tears Valley. I'm not saying it was your fault either but I AM saying that there is something you need to see from all your past interactions with love or what seemed to be love.

Don't worry, I was, without doubt, for a while, the world's greatest victim; *They always sleep with me and then leave* ("poor me" tone inserted here for dramatic effect). Um yes, that was quite possibly the case although if I wanted to be honest I had to begin to see where I was in that equation.

I began to imagine the universe conversing with me.

Perhaps they sleep with you and leave because that's all you feel worthy of?

Um yes Lisa, they sleep with you and leave perhaps because you don't take the time to date them, to actually get to know them?

Perhaps they sleep with you and leave because you keep going for the same type of guy? Yup the narcissist who's only interest is in feeling better about himself.

Perhaps they sleep with you and leave because you're afraid of what would happen if they actually stayed?

Ready to see the truth? No?

Well, says universe, or whomever it is that you converse with in times of pain or conflict, it's okay, we'll bring you another one to see how many times you'd like to play this game. We've got eternity.

I'm not saying that the recovering cocaine addict who couldn't help pay rent didn't display disagreeable behaviour. He did and if I'm completely honest, which I must be if I am to write this book, so did I! The real question is, however, why I thought I needed to live with such a character. You see, he never presented himself any

differently from the way he was at the very beginning yet my need to see him in a different manner put a slant on things. I put qualities, and more truthfully the potential of qualities that were not apparent at that point in time, in him.

I'm not saying I didn't contribute to the demise of my marriage before it had even begun. I did. The question here is why I married a man I knew couldn't be the man I needed? He was kind. He was courteous. He was quiet. He was a good man but definitely not the man for me. It was possibly because I felt I needed to prove that I could work hard and make someone love me – even if they couldn't love themselves – but we'll come to that point later on. Perhaps I didn't really believe the marriage could last so I had an affair and sabotaged it to prove I wasn't good enough.

And so in my quest, which I'm happy to say is a quest no longer because no matter what, I've decided to love myself, I found that bringing it back home isn't easy but it's really the only way. It's the only way to deal with love's disappointment and to work with developing relationships that support you. It's the only way to finally and truly let go of needing completeness from anyone else.

I'm not saying that you won't find the love you want – maybe you will or maybe you won't. Maybe you're reading this book and you've been married for thirty-five years? Maybe you're reading this book and the one you loved is no longer here. Or perhaps you're reading this book because you've never really had a real loving relationship. I'm not saying that you won't end up in a committed and loving relationship but what I do know is that you cannot make that person responsible for your life and certainly not for completing you. That, my friend, is your job. It is your job to learn to love yourself and without that the potential to love another does not exist.

One day that that person, that other in your life, will die and so will you and no one knows who's going first or when.. So while you're here, engage that relationship with everything you have and do it with all the love in your heart but don't ask someone to make you whole. It's just not fair dammit, not to you or to your partner. A relationship, a real, loving relationship is about upliftment and sharing a journey – it's not about the other person making you okay or vice-versa. It's about truth and fun

and joy and growth and caring and support and a bunch of other stuff but it's not about filling the void you feel within yourself. It's a complex yet supremely simple understanding.

Once again I'm not saying that a true and loving relationship doesn't have factors such as communication, honesty and engagement at its core, it does. All I'm saying is that those factors are what make a relationship last. They make it fun and they make it a constant source of growth. It doesn't mean, however, that the other person will not disappoint you at some stage or make mistakes. For goodness sake, we're all human and without fail, every human makes mistakes. We just do because we're not perfect, we're just imperfectly perfect as we are. It is however the ability to admit mistakes and take accountability that "maketh the man" (or woman) so to speak.

This book is not meant to be crude or harsh, just, like much of what I do, it's designed to be real. It's meant to be of assistance. I am not, for one minute, saying give up on experiencing true love. I'm not saying don't use up a box of tissues in *Prince of Tides* or even *Avatar*. I'm not saying don't engage with your heart's deepest desires, in fact you must engage with your heart's deepest desires but do so in truth, in unconditional love with yourself and with your eyes wide open!

Some may say I write this in catharsis and perhaps that is true but it is also to connect to those who live in quiet lives of desperation. I wish to speak to those who think that things will never change. To those who think that perhaps a life of wishing, hoping and praying is all it's about. I wish to say to you *it doesn't have to be that way*.

I have found that there's no other way to work with this stuff except to totally engage in it. If there were a pill to take it away or some way to make it all better, trust me, I would've found it but after looking for love in all the wrong places I now know the one place it really does exist. Within. Why? Because as much as you or many may think that God is some all powerful being that sits in the clouds and makes decisions all day, actually he/she (whatever) lives in you. God is as much you as he/she is the plants, the sky, the annoying person in the traffic and your cat or dog.

To connect with someone really and truly you must first connect with what's within you.

That's all I'm really going to say on the God issue. Firstly, I'd hate you to get the idea that this is just another religious book disguised as self-help and, secondly, the minute I said God you already started thinking outside of yourself, because that's our cultural conditioning, so bring yourself back to you and let's get on with it.

Speaking of pills, potions and recipes, I have found one, only one, which helps this whole love thing. Please read this recipe and use it as you will:

- 1 helping hand of guts
- 2 handfuls of courage
- A solid dose of honest self-appraisal
- A tablespoon full of reality
- A side plate of truth
- A large sprinkling of healthy sense of humour
- Vulnerability and compassion by the jug full.

NB: Leave out the need for perfection and the urge to get things right as such ingredients will ensure your love cake falls flat in the middle.

I've provided some exercises to work through at the end of each chapter, not that you need to work through them but they really helped me through a process of reflection and they might do the same for you.

You see when you decide to stop looking for love in all the wrong places and begin to look for the real thing, you have to start with yourself. When you wish that someone would come and tell you that you're the most amazing person in the world, you have to begin to think that about yourself first. When you wish that someone would come and cook you dinner, I want to know why you aren't cooking yourself up some romantic dinner or enjoying time with friends. When you wish for a relationship,

you've got to engage with one, a real and lasting one that puts your ability to love foremost.

If you're pondering what it means to have a relationship with yourself, well, perhaps it's time to look at what a relationship means to you? Self-care? Communication? Concern? Nurturing? You may well find some vital ingredients missing in your relationship with yourself. This would not be surprising as in our society we've become accustomed to feeling selfish and being accused of narcissism. Indeed I'm not saying selfishness and narcissism don't exist, they do and in greater proportions than ever before, but that is due to our inability to discern self-care and self-love from self-indulgence. The latter is a by-product of guilt and what I call *not enoughness*.

I hope this book brings much light to such matters and, if nothing else, that it warms your heart to the magnificence that is you and what your life has to offer. I hope it opens your eyes and speaks to your soul. This, is, I understand it, a very tall order so if it does nothing else then I hope it makes you smile and realise that we're all in this love thing together. It's the reason I've included stories and quotes from people in all walks of life.

The stories don't necessarily have relevance to the topic of the chapter but it's just fascinating to see that everyone has a story. It's the great leveller that love is. No matter how young or old, love touches us all in very human and humbling ways.

Have fun on this journey, and remember, it is a journey.

Lots of love

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa".

PS In times and places in this book, you may be taken aback somewhat at my candid approach to the manner of us humans and in particular to my own experience.

Forgive me and possibly even engage with this; it is the only way I have ever been able to truly get to the bottom of things.

To those psychologists or therapists reading this book and concerned that I may be projecting my experience onto others, let me say: We are all projecting to a certain level and furthermore I do believe that at some point we transgress our own psychology and move into an integration of the ego and subconscious in the language of connection, of the soul. My intention in writing this book is to assist in awakening and bringing wholeness for all who read it.