



How to Get and Keep

A GOOD MAN



ALEX B. WRIGHT

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From Successfully Single
to Happily Married

Alex B. Wright

iUniverse, Inc.
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I want to take the time to dedicate this book to my awesome and wonderful mom who I love more than I can express with words. Also my twin sisters; Norma who bought me my first laptop as a kid so I could begin writing, and Norine who continually encouraged as well as held me responsible for being a good man. I have to also thank my four other sisters who continually bless my life with love and support in so many different ways. My two daughters, and of course my beautiful wife who I love very much. Although I can't name every name, I do want to take the time to thank every woman that has been a part of my life in a great or a small way, because they all have effected me and have been a part of making me who I am to this day. To everyone I named and did not name I want say thank you, and I love you.

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Preface

If you truly desire a deep, meaningful relationship filled with love, trust, and companionship, you can have one. That comment sounds pretty simple, right? If life was that easy, I guess I would have never been inspired to share this book with you. Building a quality relationship is much like other experiences in our lives. The experience will be great, but getting there can be frustrating and difficult.

You may have dreamed of discovering a secret list of how-tos for developing the right relationship and finding the right man. But, unlike the printed instructions you can use to put together a new desk that you have just bought, relationship instructions do not come with each individual man. To make things finding your perfect man even more difficult, there are different types of men, and no two relationships are alike.

So let's get the truth of this book out in the open very early. *How to Get and Keep a Good Man* will not perpetuate myths about dating rules or successful dating strategies or anything along those lines. Such myths may be fun to read, but the results of reading material that simplifies the most important elements of life and of relationships are usually far from ideal. People are individuals with feelings, emotions, backgrounds, and issues. If all we needed was a

set of steps or rules for a successful relationship, then bad relationships probably wouldn't exist.

Relationships are a part of life, and they can be complex and have many levels that are not always clear to us. Just like all excellent parts of life, a successful relationship takes a certain amount of hard work, dedication, and sacrifice. If you desire a successful relationship and are willing to confront some of the most important, delicate emotions and situations in your life, then this book was written specifically for you. You will be able to fulfill the desires of your heart, and move forward in creating the best reality for your life long after you have forgotten you ever read this book. The ability to get and keep a good man lies within you. What we will do together as you read on is uncover the wonderful qualities you already have.

Introduction

“Always have enough money for carfare.” My mother would repeat this sentence like a broken record any time one of my six sisters was getting ready to go out of our house on a date. My mother’s reason for giving that advice was that if ever a date went wrong, my sisters could leave and get home safely on her own. This advice makes sense enough for me to tell my daughters when they start dating.

The inspiration to write this book came from a number of sources, all of them female. My experience with six sisters, two daughters, a wife, and a mother have shown me the importance of good relationships with good men, and those women are some of the most important reasons that I am willing to reveal many of the delicate secrets and issues that I have faced over the years. My family has always included a large number of females, and as a young man growing up in New York City; I also had a hefty portion of dealing with women from many different cultures and backgrounds.

One of my favorite experiences was working for a chain of stores called Lonny’s, which sold stylish, very expensive women’s clothing. Celebrities and models frequented our stores, which were located in the best neighborhoods in the city. On my way to or from work, I would bump into celebrities such as Madonna and Sean Penn,

or I would sometimes have coffee standing with Sigourney Weaver near Gray's Papaya (a famous NYC hot dog spot).

Working at Lonny's for six years was a valuable experience, but the best part of the job was spending time with all the women I worked with. I was the only male, surrounded by women all day. It was great. For six years, I must have read every woman's magazine published and heard every form of complaint that a woman could make about men—husbands, ex-husbands, boyfriends, brothers-in-law, fathers, fathers new girlfriends etc ... These complaints came not just from my female co-workers, but also from the female customers. After hearing those complaints all day, I went home to my six sisters (at times I thought I was living a cursed existence.). "All Girls: All the Time" was my life's radio station.

Yet after meeting a wonderful woman, getting married to her, and having two lovely daughters, I realized that those experiences of being around women were all a gift to me. Growing up surrounded by women was part of my life's purpose. I was born to write this book and to share my experiences and understanding with my readers. When my inspirations and experience meet your expectations, part of my purpose in life will be fulfilled. So as you read this book, you and I together will be participating in each other's destiny. I am looking forward to sharing parts of my life and experiences with you.

Although I'm sure that many ideas in this book will encourage and inspire you, I am equally sure that many of the book's concepts will challenge you and make you quite uncomfortable, even upset. Those negative feelings are part of the growth you can experience. Some parts of life are not pleasant, but if we're going to make the most of life, we have to experience those parts.

In writing this book, one commitment that I made to myself was that I would be honest with myself and honest with you. At times, though, being honest is like telling someone they have an unpleasant item in their nose. You don't want to tell the person that truth, but telling the person is a whole lot better than letting the person walk around looking like that. Being honest is a little easier for me because when you're reading this book, only you and I are involved in it. No one is around listening to what is going on inside you while you're experiencing the ideas I've written about. Reading this book can be a perfect opportunity for you to deal with some emotional issues that you may never have confronted with your friends, your family, or other people in your life. I'm glad you chose to take this journey with me. So now that you have been prepared, get ready for the adventure of a lifetime, and turn the page.

1

Relational Shadows

SHADOWS ARE DARK AREAS THAT TRAIL BEHIND OR beside us when we are blocking the light. Shadows may or may not be as spooky as they can be in the movies, but shadows can hold weight in our lives. If we don't shed light on our shadows, they will follow us around and haunt us forever. We'll start our journey by looking at a few shadows that previous relationships may have left behind in our lives.

It wouldn't be fair for you to embark on this journey completely alone, so I'll go with you. I won't have a chance to read any of your painful experiences, but you will have a chance to read a few of

mine. I don't want to ask you to open up and share your experiences without sharing some of my own experiences first.

My story begins with my mom and dad. During all of my years growing up, I never saw my parent's kiss, hug, or show any type of affection toward one another. I am the youngest of eight children. Being the last child of six girls and two boys (my brother is 13 years older than I am) was not easy. When I was four years old, my older brother left for the Army, so I was left in the house with seven women and my dad. That sounds like a nightmare for a young boy, but I had a very strong and strict mother who instilled values in me and gave me the space to learn to be a man.

My dad was also an integral part of my life. He was the role model and the provider. I grew up in a four-bedroom house with a second floor and an *almost* finished basement. There were three bedrooms upstairs, and my parents slept in the bedroom downstairs. One day when I was about five years old, my mom and dad were arguing loudly while my sisters and I were upstairs. We listened intently as their argument seemed to be much worse than usual. As the youngest, I understood the least about what was going on.

At last my dad in anger and frustration vowed to leave the house. He had packed his bags and was on his way out. Suddenly, as I realized that my dad—the only other male in my house—was really

leaving, I rushed down the stairs in fear and panic. My dad was not only the only man in my life, but my dad was my hero, my world. He wasn't just a man to me, but; he was "The Man". The man that every man should be, the man that I was going to be but only better, and now he was leaving forever. My heart was racing as I ran downstairs, desperately trying to catch him before he left. With the vision in my mind of the door slamming in my face and my father being gone, I reached the bottom of the stairs and saw my father carrying his bags on the way to the front door.

There was no way he was going to leave now, I thought to myself. I ran to him, grabbed his legs, and squeezed them as tightly as I could. I began screaming, "Daddy, please don't go! Daddy, please don't go!"

As I despondently squeezed the legs of the most important man in my life, I cried like never before. You see, as a five year old my father was my world, and there's no greater feeling than when the world is in your hands. Unfortunately, although fairy tales have happy endings, my story was no fairy tale, and my father peeled me off his leg and left me there crying on the floor.

In all my life, I had never felt emotional pain like that. I stayed on the floor, crying after the door closed, before I began to realize that my dad wasn't going to turn around and walk back inside. To

make the experience worse, when I finally pulled myself up from the floor to go back upstairs to my room, I was met by two of my sisters, who began to make fun of me. Imitating my cries and desperate pleas, they heckled me all the way upstairs until I reached my room. When I was a five-year-old child, my parents made decisions that created emotional scars and anger that tumbles around in my heart until this very day.

My father's departure was one of the dark places in my life, one of my Shadows of Life. Such life events that create our personal Shadows of life are the memories we must visit in order to prepare ourselves for successful relationships. We must visit these dark places that are hidden deep inside our minds and expose them to the light of truth and reality. Only then will the scabs fall from our emotional wounds to reveal us as brand-new, healed, and unscarred persons.

Now that I've told you about one of my Shadows of Life, it's your turn to revisit your Shadows of Life. I have shared one of my stories with you, and now we can walk through your stories together. Tell the story of the first extremely painful experience in your life that pertains to your father. If you have never known your father, then speak about some of the thoughts you have had concerning him as an absent parent. Describe how you may have felt neglected or alone. Explain your feelings of being unwanted or your conclusions

that men can't be trusted. Take the time to write about any and every feeling you've had concerning your father or your father figure. This first opportunity for sharing also doesn't just have to be about your father. It can be another male family member that may have hurt you somehow as well.

I'd like for you to grab your companion diary or journal, and let those painful memories inside of you flow out onto the pages. Write and share your experiences with the two most important people in your life, yourself and God. Speak to yourself and to him as you share the most painful experiences and disappointments in your life concerning your father. Don't procrastinate; start writing right away. When you're done, come back to the next paragraph.

Now that you've written about your feelings and thoughts, take a moment to pray or meditate, or do what it is that you do that can help you. If you don't have anything that you do, I suggest that you pray and talk to God as though he is your best friend. It is important that you express yourself spiritually after dealing with important issues in your life. This will help you as you make the transition from dealing with pain from the past to present every day life. Take a few moments to do so, and then go on to the next paragraph.

That painful experience that I shared with you caused me to make a very important decision. At the age of five, I decided that

no matter what happened in my life or my marriage, I would never leave my children, no matter what the circumstances. Even though I didn't know what it meant to be married and have children, I knew that whatever it meant I wasn't going to leave.

Many times we underestimate the will and the understanding of a child. As you visit your painful memories and begin to discover who you really are, you are likely to find that much of who you are as a person has been shaped and molded by the experiences you had and the decisions you made during your childhood and adolescent years.

Fortunately, the decision I made never to leave my children was a positive result of a negative circumstance, and that decision has stuck with me for the rest of my life. From this painful experience I was able to pull out positive results that committed me forever to my children as a father. What is a positive decision that you have made, or would like to make, as a result of the experience you just shared? Don't write the first decision you remember making, but try to find a positive decision that you may have made as a result of your experience. You can share the way you try to treat people in a certain situation, or you can write about how you try to approach a certain issue or situation. Or you may choose to write about a concrete, positive decision that you made after your experience. Take a moment to think about this subject, and write your decisions down. Knowing

the choices and the decisions you have made will help you a great deal as we go through our shadows together. Take a moment to visit your decisions, and see what you come up with. If you are comfortable with it then feel free to write them down in your companion journal or diary. If not take a few moments and then move on.

My decision to be a committed father was unfortunately not the only decision I made on the day my father left. In addition to the one positive decision I made, I made many more conscious and unconscious decisions as a result of that painful event. Some of my decisions that resulted from my father's departure were very negative.

That day I also decided that I was going to hate forever those two sisters who teased me. I vowed never to be like them or anyone else in my family. I also decided that I would always keep my feelings to myself forever. I believed those feelings would never be valuable to anyone and that no one would ever appreciate them. The honest expression of my true feelings had failed at that moment when my father left. I felt it was obvious that my dad didn't appreciate my feelings and that my sisters didn't either, so why would anybody else care about me if my own flesh and blood didn't care?

I hurt inside the day my father left, and all of my decisions stayed with me like a heavy ball and chain. I carried that weight for years, dragging down my heart and my life. I felt miserable about my

father and my family for many years before I was finally set free from the weight of my decisions.

Many people walk around carrying weights like mine. Many books, magazine articles, and people encourage others to keep their heavy weights clanging about them and to accept them. Over time, I have realized that life is not meant to be spent carrying huge emotional weights that can negatively affect our everyday relationships. Those weights can be detrimental to successful living, for they are an unconscious and unpleasant form of bondage.

Can you feel heavy weights on your heart from your past experiences and feelings? Feelings of bitterness, fear, anger? The positive decision or decisions that you wrote down are probably not the only ones you made as a result of experience that you have shared. What are some of the poor decisions that you made as a result of that experience? Take a few minutes to pray or do what it is you do, and then share those poor decisions by writing them in your journal or diary. Also, share the feelings that still stir inside you when you think about those poor decisions. If you don't pray or meditate, I suggest that now may be a good time to give these activities a try.



Your willingness to share your thoughts and experiences in your journal or diary during this journey is very important to you.

We all have shadows in our lives that we need to shed some light on, and it's important we know that we are not the only ones with baggage. If you like, you may want to take a few minutes or maybe a day before you continue to the next part of your journey. Rest your heart before we move on to the next turn on our journey.

