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How To Fall In Love With Anyone: A Memoir In Essays



Synopsis

An insightful, charming, and absolutely fascinating memoir from the author of the popular New York Times essay, “To Fall in Love with Anyone, Do This,” (one of the top five most popular New York Times pieces of 2015) explores the romantic myths we create and explains how they limit our ability to achieve and sustain intimacy. What really makes love last? Does love ever work the way we say it does in movies and books and Facebook posts? Or does obsessing over those love stories hurt our real-life relationships? When her parents divorced after a twenty-eight year marriage and her own ten-year relationship ended, those were the questions that Mandy Len Catron wanted to answer. In a series of candid, vulnerable, and wise essays that takes a closer look at what it means to love someone, be loved, and how we present our love to the world, Catron deconstructs her own personal canon of love stories. She delves all the way back to 1944, when her grandparents first met in a coal mining town in Appalachia, to her own dating life as a professor in Vancouver, drawing insights from her fascinating research into the universal psychology, biology, history, and literature of love. She uses biologists’ research into dopamine triggers to ask whether the need to love is an innate human drive. She uses literary theory to show why we prefer certain kinds of love stories. She urges us to question the unwritten scripts we follow in relationships and looks into where those scripts come from in the first place. And she tells the story of how she decided to test a psychology experiment that she’d read about where the goal was to create intimacy between strangers using a list of thirty-six questions and ended up in the surreal situation of having millions of people following her brand-new relationship. In *How to Fall in Love with Anyone* Catron flips the script on love and offers a deeply personal, and universal, investigation.

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Customer Reviews

PRAISE FOR *HOW TO FALL IN LOVE WITH ANYONE* *A beautifully written and well-researched cultural criticism as well as an honest memoir.* *—Los Angeles Review of Books* *"Personal musings and reminiscences paired with solid research provide an interesting stroll through an abstract topic."* *—Kirkus Reviews* *"Honest and well-researched, the book will teach readers plenty about love, science, and themselves. Perfect fodder for the romantic and the cynic in all of us."* *—Booklist* *Catron melds science and emotion beautifully into a thoughtful and thought-provoking meditation on the most universal topic.* *—Bookpage* *"It's hard to imagine a more timely endeavour. Clear-eyed and full of heart, How to Fall in Love With Anyone is mandatory reading for anyone coping with—or curious about—the challenges of contemporary courtship."* *—Toronto Star* *"In our age of total romantic confusion, Mandy Len Catron is a voice of good sense, warm humor and consoling wisdom. Through the lens of her own relationships, she teaches us—with a deft, convincing intelligence—some of the vital moves in the art of love."* *—Alain de Botton, author of How Proust Can Change Your Life and The Course of Love*

Originally from Appalachian Virginia, Mandy Len Catron is a writer living and working in Vancouver, British Columbia. She's writing about love and love stories at The Love Story Project (TheLoveStoryProject.ca). She teaches English and creative writing at the University of British Columbia. Her article "To Fall in Love with Anyone, Do This" was one of the most popular articles published by The New York Times in 2015.

Great read

I found this book to be a delightful read! The author's writing was sophisticated and very thoughtful. I would recommend this book to anyone looking for a fresh perspective on love.

This book is by an author who didn't grow up with good role models on what love is and proceeded to struggle when seeking love herself. A difficult relationship drives her to seek insight into her issues and reveals, to her, that the wonderful relationship she thought her parents

had really wasn't so wonderful after all. This memoir is the story of her past and her struggles to gain insight and move forward to a better life and love. This is a memoir that cites a number of authors and studies that Catron turned to in her search for insight. Having grown up in New England, but currently (and temporarily) living in the south, I can certainly attest that Catron's view of love, at least before her insights, is a very southern view and I expect that southerners will better relate to this book, in general. Since, at least at the time I am writing this, there is no "look inside" feature, here is the table of contents:

- 1 The Exploded Star: the myth of the right person
- 2 The Football Coach and The Cheerleader: what makes a good love story?
- 3 Coal Miner's Daughter: love in context
- 4 Girl Meets Boy: following love's script
- 5 The Problem of Deservingness: our American obsession with Cinderella
- 6 The Black Box: thoughts on the stories we don't tell
- 7 I'm Willing to Lie About How We Met: the tyranny of meeting cure
- 8 Okay, Honey: bad advice from good people
- 9 If You Can Fall in Love with Anyone, How Do You Choose?
- 10 The Pleasures of Ordinary Devotion: to fall in love with anyone, do this

For readers who can relate to where Catron is coming from, either literally or figuratively, this book has something to offer.

Mandy Catron's debut book is full of charming, reflective, and extremely honest essays that reflect on relationships, the fear of losing and then finding love, and how cultural stories and views shape our expectations. I loved reading about her grandparents and parents experiences in love and reflecting on how our expectations of love and marriage have changed over time. My favorite parts, however, were the brutally honest passages on dealing with the end of a relationship and moving on. Catron allows herself to be vulnerable by sharing the deep emotions that we all feel, but rarely share, in life. I highly recommend this book.

Mandy Len Catron's "How to Fall in Love with Anyone" is a fascinating book that I couldn't wait to finish, but wanted more to read when I did finish! Her memoir deftly navigates contemporary research on love with reflective writing that's curious and probing, rather than sentimental. Catron's book of essays examines the dangers of love stories by considering her own romantic relationship and looking critically, but lovingly, on the relationships of the people who helped shape her notions of romantic love. Though each essay stands alone, they are interconnected and build on each

other, to form something that is wholly lovely and enlightening. Great read!

I didn't know what to expect with Mandy's book, but I was very interested after reading her Modern Love article in the New York Times. If you enjoyed "To Fall in Love With Anyone, Do This", you'll really enjoy this book. Her style of blending her own personal and familial experience with that of other authors and scholars makes for a very easy read. Her writing is very relatable and I could see myself in many of those same experiences growing up. Mandy's book doesn't try to boil down the topic, but really expand on it and showcase so many possibilities while at the same time reassuring the reader that what is happening to them is perfectly normal. I would recommend her book to anyone who is in love, longing for love, or just curious about what others are saying about love. Great read!

This book came about after the author's successful New York Times article, where she described a study that was done that showed how answering from a list of thirty-six increasingly intimate questions can make a couple fall in love (one of the couples from the study--who did not know each other before the experiment--ended up getting married after the experiment). The experiment also seemed to work for the author (though in her case she already knew the male friend she was doing the questions with beforehand, and they were doing them in a bar rather than a laboratory as in the original experiment), who started a relationship with him afterwards (after her previous long-term relationship, which this book chronicles in depth, fell apart, and the author entered into an unsuccessful period of online dating). There were other stories of relationships mentioned in this book, such as the one by the author's parents, as well as overall thoughts on love and the unrealistic way it's depicted in hit romantic comedies. Overall, it was kind of a slow read for me at times, but what made it worthwhile was the inclusion of the study's thirty-six questions for "falling in love" at the end, which I found intriguing.

"How to Fall in Love With Anyone" is a charming, engaging and thoughtful book that exams the love stories we tell -- from the "how we met" to fairy tales to rom-coms -- and how they influence what we think about love, what we expect from it and how we act to get it and keep it. Part memoir, part research, it forces us to question the love script and challenges us to find a new way to look at love that's more expansive. Who wouldn't want that?

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