

**SERVING BAIT  
TO  
RICH PEOPLE**

A Bartender's Guide to Happiness

By Alexa Fitzpatrick

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## THE BOOK

*Serving Bait to Rich People: a bartender's guide to happiness*

Ten thousand hours of bartending. From the quirky dive bar on NYC's Upper East Side (way up, beyond the Nanny Diaries...this was where the doormen went to drink until they forgot having lived those Nanny Diary stories) to Chef Nobu's showpiece for the rich and famous in Aspen, Colorado. I walked away from the business with killer biceps, chiropractic bills that were expensive enough to have put myself through medical school, and stories...hundreds and hundreds of stories.

I started telling those stories to anyone who would listen, and eventually I got onto a stage and spoke them into a microphone. What developed was a 60-minute stand up comedy show about my adventures in the sushi trade and beyond called *Serving Bait to Rich People*. I toured around North America, and *The New York Times* called the show "bound to get noticed." *The Orlando Sentinel* said, "Fitzpatrick is the bartender you want to find at the end of the day. But with her keen sensibilities and wit, she's primed for more curtain calls than last calls."

Then, as is frequently the case with missed fame, I met a guy. I moved to San Francisco and convinced the people of Stanford University to hire me to produce speaking events for their professors. At Stanford, I worked with some of the smartest people in the world, and I can't tell you how many times I looked at some brainiac with thousands of degrees on their walls and thought, "wow, if only you'd worked in the restaurant industry, you'd understand this basic life hack that makes everything easier."

So I set about figuring out what was different when I was behind the bar. Certainly planks of wood with taps running through them can't have magical powers that make life easier, can they?

I went back to all those stories, now written down on backs of envelopes and bar napkins, and realized that those 10,000 hours hadn't just made me an expert in making drinks - though I would love to make you a cocktail sometime (a Green-Grape-Basil-Mojito is the drink that won me Aspen's Cocktail Competition, years ago). In all those hours, I'd also earned my expertise in listening to and reading people. I'd learned:

- how to connect with just about anyone by registering what they value;
- how to achieve my ultimate goal by letting go of being right;
- and how to effectively make myself trigger proof.<sup>1</sup>

And with all the craziness going on in our world today, couldn't we all benefit from a few trigger-proofing tricks? Especially when they are wrapped in the funny stories of the bartender's confidential rant.

Throughout this book, I will offer stories, tools, and techniques, through the lens of the bartender, on how to build yourself up. Through a deep look into your values, both perceived and innate, we will identify your buttons and show how and why you are the only one who has the power to push them. You'll find that, rather than turning you into a doormat, you will have a much stronger sense of yourself and what really matters to you. You will be better equipped to lay out healthy boundaries and to create change in your world.

So let down your hair, pour yourself a glass of wine, and keep reading for the loving, judgment-free, straight-talk, advice and tools from a bartender on how to turn off your buttons. Along the way we might throw in a few drink recipes and some stories from celebrities who were bartenders on their way to fame and celebrity bartenders who are using their fame behind the bar for good.

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<sup>1</sup> Trigger proof person - one who doesn't get "triggered" (or made crazy) by the idiotic, offensive, or down-right-wrong comments made by others.

It's cheaper than therapy and the hangover isn't half as bad as the one that comes from a night of CarBombs.

## THE AUTHOR

*Alexa Fitzpatrick*

As a writer and performer, Alexa Fitzpatrick's standup comedy show about Chef Nobu's sushi restaurant, *Serving Bait to Rich People*, sold out Fringe Festivals across North America and was called "bound to get noticed" by the *New York Times*.

With a teaching, speaking, and facilitating background, Alexa is invited each year as the Mandela Teacher to the Aspen Institute's Resnick Aspen Action Forum to teach creative problem solving to high school students from around the world. She also teaches entrepreneurship and online branding to high school and college students through the Startup Experience (most recently at Gettysburg College). At Stanford University, she created and facilitated educational programming for the 200,000+ members of the domestic and international alumni community.

But, it was while working behind the bars of Reif's Tavern, Zane's Tavern, and Chef Nobu's Matsuhisa that Alexa learned the most important lessons about life. And, after leaving the bar and standup worlds to work in more corporate environs, Alexa began to notice that her new, "very well-educated" colleagues were lacking those basic life-skills that good bartenders master in their first few weeks. Simple hacks that change everything, and were sorely missing in corporate-land.

As a result, she built a webpage ([www.alexafitzpatrick.com](http://www.alexafitzpatrick.com)), began offering 60-minute corporate team building workshops on values and acceptance through the framework of bartending (with or without cocktails - how close do you want your team to get?), and started researching this book about her experiences in the sushi trade and what they taught her about getting along.

She is currently marketing to her 871 LinkedIn connections, 2,404 Facebook friends, and completely neglected 195 Twitter followers. She also just joined Instagram and is proud to have a whopping 53 followers out of the gate. She's hoping that, despite the low numbers, you will keep reading to the promotion section, because she does have a plan to build all of this up and sell the book to and beyond this online platform. (Also, she's the one writing this, even though it's in third person, which is weird, but what she's been told to do for bios, and, since it's not triggering to her, she does it.)

*Serving Bait to Rich People: A Bartender's Guide to Happiness*, will balance the comedy of Alexa's standup stories with the vital life lessons that she learned behind the bar. It's a how-to for surviving and thriving in healthy relationships, even when the people around you are actively trying to push your buttons.

Alexa currently lives in San Francisco with her husband, who bought her a fancy blender for Christmas 2020 to encourage her to keep up her mixing skills at home during covid. He credits their happy relationship to her theory about the customer (other person) always being right...a practice in which they both happily engage with each other.



*This is Alexa Fitzpatrick*

## THE AUDIENCE

This book will be found in the happiness section of the self-help department of your local bookstore. It might also be cross listed in a section on thriving in business / the workplace.

### *Preaching to the Choir*

The evangelizers for this book are the 61% of employees who are trapped in toxic workplaces where they don't feel valued<sup>2</sup>, who have looked everywhere, with no success, for a way to survive. Maybe they jump from job to job, somehow finding themselves the target of the biggest bully in each office. Maybe they shrink into a corner until the suppressed rage builds a cancer in their bodies. Eventually they wonder if maybe they aren't cut out for corporate life.

Their friends and family give them books on toxic workplaces (or relationships) and don't understand why they can't "just ignore" the person who is making them crazy. The individuals are even more frustrated after reading the books because these books all feel like they are written for those who have agency in the workplace. The choir doesn't feel like they have the power to change anything, and they're tired of being told that it is their fault for being so sensitive, or not a good fit, or that they must be attracting it, etc.

This book shows them they have the power to change the most important thing...themselves. And that there is a significant difference between being "at fault" and being "empowered to make a change." Is it their fault they haven't made the change yet? Of course not. They haven't had the tools to shut down their intellectual minds...the same minds that keep attracting the "lack of."

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<sup>2</sup> [https://emtrain.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021-Workplace-Culture-Report\\_Respect.pdf](https://emtrain.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021-Workplace-Culture-Report_Respect.pdf)

Over 43 million women and 38 million men have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner in their lifetime.<sup>3</sup> What motivates those who choose to stay in abusive relationships? Frequently, they don't believe they deserve better.

The rest of the choir is made up of people, largely women, who are settling for less than they want. Who play small to not trigger the more dominant relationships in their lives. Who can't even touch the idea of the law of attraction, because the possibility that they could have attracted their life circumstances, even unconsciously, is crushing.

I was one of them.

This book covers, and I say this with the utmost respect, the missing piece in the works of so many of my favorite authors. The foundational piece that supports us in trusting that it is safe to believe in ourselves and that we are worthy of the spoils of the Law of Attraction. The instructional piece that shows us how to use our intellectual minds to shift our psyches through inquiry, rather than trying to "fake it (with toxic positivity), till we make it." The bartender piece that says "You Are Right," even when you're incorrect, no matter who you are, what your circumstances, or what you value, and creates a safe space to explore who we are and who we have been with no judgement.

The choir will eventually be helped by the works of Louise Hay, Byron Katie, Wayne Dyer, Esther Hicks / Abraham, A Course in Miracles, and so many more, and this book is designed to lead them there. It's a gateway drug for valuing yourself, loving what is, and accepting that the law of attraction is always at work.

But don't tell them that...we're going to use bartender speak and funny stories to

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/fastfact.html>

ease them into believing in themselves and turning off their triggers so they can let go of being “right” about everything that doesn’t work for them, and focus on attracting what they want most in the world.

The members of the choir are going to be visibly changed by this book. They are the ones who, when someone asks them what’s different (Have you lost weight? New haircut? I can’t put my finger on it, but something has changed!), will smile, hand their friend a dogeared copy, and go buy themselves a new one...because they are now confident and self-loving enough to understand that their world improves when they are surrounded by other confident and self-loving people.

### *Preaching to the Congregation*

The congregation has already bought-in to the law of attraction, but they still have some questions and they show up each week hoping to hear the final piece that makes it all click. They might jump back and forth between Joe Dispenza retreats and Abraham cruises, all amazing content, and they believe with all their hearts that positivity is the right way. But, like Charlotte in season five, episode two<sup>4</sup> of *Sex & The City*, when she drags Carrie to the ‘How To Find Your Soulmate Through Affirmations’ workshop, they’re tired. And they don’t understand why it only works sometimes...and only on the things they don’t care as much about.

It’s also starting to sound a little too convenient when people say, “you just don’t want it enough,” or “with the right kind of energy.”

“You’re not on your high flying disc.”

Please know that I absolutely LOVE Esther, Jerry, and Abraham, and none of this is meant to contradict anything any of these wonderful authors and speakers preach. This book is offered as the first step, and written in the cadence of a

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czKizGap4Yo>

casual bar conversation. Because, if you don't believe you are worthy of having what it is that you want, the "high flying disc" is going to throw you right off, and all of those beautiful affirmations are only going to push you farther away.

The congregation might know that they *should* look themselves in the mirror every morning and say "I love you," but there are dishes to be done, and kids to get to school, and it's just so hard...harder than not doing it...they'll try again tomorrow...maybe...and now they feel guilty that they didn't do it, and they're going to spend the rest of the day beating themselves up about it because, really, if they had more focus and will-power, they'd be able to heal themselves. But they don't. And that's one more thing wrong with them.

If Louis Hay's mirror work is the PhD, and I truly believe it is, these tools are the 101. They release the guilt and help us get to a place where we believe we are worthy of the work that all these wonderful authors recommend.

For the congregation, this book is meant as a companion to the great works already out there. It doesn't say anything new for this group, because Truth isn't new and they've already heard it, but it does say it in a new way and with new tools. Tools designed to lay a foundation that sets us up for success as we grapple with the ideas of happiness and inner peace and learn not just how to achieve them, but that we are worthy of achieving them.

### *Inviting in the Curious*

Before covid-19, they said that burnout cost corporations up to \$190 billion annually<sup>5</sup> and affected as much as 78% of the workforce<sup>6</sup>. With the recent pandemic increasing isolation and decreasing economic and political security, the American Psychology Association suggests that the next global crisis will revolve

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/insights/why-your-workplace-might-be-killing-you>

<sup>6</sup> Gallup Institute: State of the Global Workplace 2021

around mental health<sup>7</sup>.

The curious, those who wander by, listen to a bit of the service and hopefully take something with them on their way to other weekend errands, is made up of those on the way to burnout, be it at work or in life. They pride themselves on working hard, not aware that workaholism is a key indicator of a tendency towards burnout, and they keep wondering when that sense of satisfaction at having accomplished X task will feel like enough.

This group may or may not already be in the Hay House sphere. They might have an old copy of *Your Erroneous Zones* on their shelves, with the 1977 photo of Wayne Dyer on the cover (with full mustache and long-ish hair) or someone could have given them a copy of *Ask And It Is Given* as a gift somewhere along the way.

Or maybe not. Maybe all that stuff seems like woo-woo to them and they know it's not their thing...but they do have a sneaking suspicion that life could be a little better.

They'll buy the book for the funny title and stories. Maybe they flip past or maybe they pause to do one or two of the exercises and then they'll move on, but something will subtly click in their brain. A week or so later, they'll see a post on LinkedIn or overhear someone in their office talking about Psychological Safety in our organizations and it will occur to them that, without a psyche, an organization can't be psychologically anything. The key to happiness in companies lies in supporting people to become psychologically safe in themselves; to stop being triggered everywhere they turn.

Now, where did they read that?

The curious will go back and flip through the pages again. They'll do the

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/04/numbers-national-crisis>

exercises and this time they'll go even deeper. If they like their jobs and their companies, they'll share the book with their co-workers. If they don't, it will inspire them to start looking for something more satisfying, because, after all, they now know that they deserve it.

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The community around this book (choir, congregation, and curious) are all people who want to be happy. They're drawn in by the humorous cadence and bar stories, but they also know that there's something missing in their lives and they want more.

## THE PROMOTION

I realize that publicizing my book is primarily my responsibility. To learn more about what that entails, I recently attended the National Publicity Summit put on by Steve Harrison of the *Radio-TV Interview Report*.

I pitched my book to 75 members of the media and received an overwhelmingly positive response. I was a guest twice, and then I realized that I wasn't using the publicity to my best advantage, so I put the invitations on hold to finish writing.

The following people have expressed interest in me/my book...

### *Television*

Mary Pflum, producer at *The Today Show*, said "you had me at hello, it sounds like the Nanny Diaries of bartending." She suggested I follow up with her as the pandemic wanes and work on how it is relevant to a news story of the moment.

Cheryl Crowley, producer of the *Dr. Oz Show*, said that she wanted me to send the book as soon as it is published. Brooke Jacobson, the integration producer, asked me to follow up because they "always need a bartender for the show."

Leslie Marcus, senior investigative producer from *The Doctors*, was interested in my pitch on 'how and when to 86<sup>8</sup> a frenemy' as a possible segment for their show on how the people around us affect our mental health.

Alan Weiss, Emmy award-winning executive producer of *Teen Kids News* on the American Forces Network, said that my "great personality" made him open to my pitching something for teens (no bartending/alcohol allowed). We talked about the value of summer jobs in the restaurant industry and everything you

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<sup>8</sup> Bartender speak for get rid of or remove from your life.

can learn from them.

Dana Fisher, a producer at *ABC's The View*, asked me to stay in touch. They aren't doing comedy at the moment, but she loved the topic and hopes their tone will change as things begin to open up post-pandemic.

Erica Latrice of *Be Inspired! TV* (has reached 17 million households, with a primarily female audience) suggested a piece about pivoting from bartending to other jobs and what skills we should highlight.

Peter Schweitzer, senior producer of *CBS News/48 Hours*, said "I just want to keep listening," even though I am clearly not the right content for his show... unless someone mysteriously murders a bartender (which we are all hoping doesn't happen!)

Stefanie Javorsky of *GMA3* was very interested in the topic and asked that I contact her when the book comes out and I have more press.

#### *Podcasts & Radio*

I was a guest on Shep Cohen's *The World of Work with Shep Cohen*<sup>9</sup>, where we talked about why bartenders make better employees.

On akaRadioRed's *Read My Lips*, we discussed the connection between creativity and bartending.<sup>10</sup>

Neil Scott, the host of *Recovery: Coast to Coast* on iHeart Radio for 15 years and now a national podcast on the platform, has invited me to speak on the benefits of having a bartender in your life without the alcohol, the emotional connections

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.wdvrvolunteers.org/the-world-of-work> on Feb 12, 2021

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.voiceamerica.com/episode/128217/a-creativity-bucket-list-bartending-comedy-writing-travel>

you lose when choosing sobriety, and how to find that within yourself.

Rob Kall, host of the *Rob Kall Bottom-Up Radio Show* (previous interviews include Arianna Huffington, Bernie Saunders, Craig Newmark of Craig's List) has invited me to join him in a conversation about how to navigate politics through bartending. How to put your ego aside and find a way to get along with the Trump (or non-Trump) members of your family.

Marc Guberti of *Breakthrough Success* invited me to be a guest on his show.

Frankie Boyer, host of *The Frankie Boyer Lifestyle Show*, nationally syndicated on 35 radio stations and live-streamed on biztalkradio.com, has asked me to contact her to set up a date to be a guest on her show.

Indy Smith hosts two shows on *WBLS 107.5*, a NYC urban adult contemporary radio station with 2.3 million listeners. She is interested in my take on getting rid of toxic relationships with a piece on 'how and when to 86 a frenemy.'

Clarissa Burt, host and producer of *In The Limelight with Clarissa Burt*, said that she would like to work me into her rotation of guests.

Lane Kawaoka, host of the *Simple Passive Cashflow Podcast* aimed at high net worth professionals, would like a comedic segment from me on 5 jokes, tips, or tricks for waiting on rich people.

Dorci Hill, host of *The Healthy Happy Fun Hour* podcast, would like to do a segment with me for her 40+ female audience on Healthy Happy Fun through Bartending.

Jennifer Hammond, host of *The Jennifer J. Hammond Show* on Sirius XM and now livestreamed as a podcast, focuses on real estate. The idea we are pursuing is about how and why to set up your home bar for long-term happiness.

*Print*

Hara Estroff Marano, editor-at-large for *Psychology Today*, suggested a column on the Bartender's View of Life.

Wayne Barrett, publisher and editor -in-chief of *USA Today Magazine*, would also like a column on life through the lens of a bartender.

Meryl Perlstein, a freelance writer who wrote one of the last profile pieces on Anthony Bourdain before his death (Bourdain Confidential<sup>11</sup>), has said to contact her about writing a profile piece on what I am doing once the book is ready.

Emily Rems, managing editor of *BUST* magazine (demographic: women 18 - 34), has suggested I write an article on "Are You Sushi or Bait?" (i.e. Are you worth \$20 a bite, or do you think you belong on the end of a hook, thrown back into the water to catch something better?) Including a simple tool I use to look at how much you value yourself and your time.

Barby and Ken Ingle of *iPain Living Magazine* are interested in a 700-1200 word piece on getting toxic people out of your life (How and When to 86 a Frenemy).

Victoria Pericon, editor-in-chief of *Savvy Mommy*, asked for articles on mocktails for the expecting mommy or bartending and motherhood.

I'm registered as a source on bartending and happiness on HARO ([helpareporter.com](http://helpareporter.com)).

*Other Interesting People Who Are Excited About This Book*

Donna Gould, from *You, The Owner's Manual Radio Show*, and I connected over

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.wheretraveler.com/new-york-city/eat/bourdain-confidential>

our mutual love of Wayne Dyer (*I've never met him, but she told me that she was credited in his books and "on his bucket list"*). Her final words in our conversation were, "I don't know how I can help you, but I'll find a way."

Steven McCain, development producer of *48 Hours*, said that I reminded him of Erma Bombeck...which is one of my most favorite compliments ever, (*which is why I included this - completely irrelevant to my promotion - detail...but, also, thank you to you for still reading to this point*).

### *Social Media*

Between the various social media networks, I have just over 3,000 people who engage with what I post. I get good responses to comments that I make when I join conversations, but I'm aware that the algorithms, even if I had 10,000 or 100,000 contacts, aren't in my favor without ad buys. I don't believe that social media is my strongest option for getting the word out to the masses so I intend to put my focus into print, television, radio and podcasts.

## THE COMPETITIVE MARKETPLACE

When searching “trigger proof” on Amazon, very few books come up that are relevant to this take on the topic.

*Becoming Toxic Person Proof (TM)* by Sarah K. Ramsey, M.S. (LionHead Publishing, February 2021 - self published, but with 114 ratings on Amazon and 4.8 stars) is the closest and most successful. While she has some lovely advice in the book, and has clearly helped a number of people (as seen in the reviews), it was written as a how-to for identifying toxic people and removing them from your life. If her book is the keto or paleo diet of getting rid of toxic people in your life (filled with rules to follow about what and whom to cut out of your life), *Serving Bait to Rich People* is the crowding out approach; our hacks center around making you feel so good about where you are, that even some of the toxic people around you start to feel like agents for making your life better.

*Stress-Proof: The Ultimate Guide to Living a Stress-Free Life* by Mithu Storoni (Yellow Kite Publishing, February 2019) wonderfully tackles stress from a physical standpoint, with tips to change our diets, exercise, and other daily habits to reduce our stress. It’s great advice, and certainly the less physically stressed we are the easier it is to control our reactions, but it doesn’t get to the heart of how we got stressed in the first place and why certain people make us crazy.

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Expanding the search to books on “toxic workplace” or “toxic people” offers more variety, with 473 and “over 3000” results, respectively. One of my favorites, (and not just because I worked with him at Stanford and frequently like his LinkedIn posts) was *The Asshole Survival Guide* by Robert I. Sutton (Mariner Books, September 2017). Bob talks about how to deal with a seemingly delicate

genius or high producer whose bad behavior has gone unchecked by the company leaders. It happens in offices (and certainly at Stanford) all the time.

*Serving Bait to Rich People* compliments this style of book by looking at the problem from another angle. How do you keep their bad behavior from twirling you so much that you can't focus on doing your part to enact the ***No Asshole Rule*** (also by Robert I. Sutton, **Business Plus, February 2007**)? How do you stay calm and look at the situation rationally, without being triggered, so you can make the best decision for your future (i.e. stay and work to change, or move on to something better)?

There might be truly evil people in the world. Arsonists out to burn down your career out of spite (there's even a book titled: ***The Arsonist in the Office: Fireproofing your life against toxic coworkers, bosses, employees, and cultures*** by Pete Havel, **Clovercroft Publishing, March 2019**). Or it might just feel that way. Regardless, fighting, or putting up boundaries against a person who is "bad" or "toxic" out of anger is only going to attract the lack of what you truly want (that person to stop making you crazy). In *Serving Bait to Rich People*, we make these people irrelevant by solving the inconsistencies within ourselves.

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Finally, a quick search for 'happiness' on Amazon offers over 60,000 results. On Google, a search for 'books on happiness' reveals "about 1,690,000,000" entries. There's even an article on bookriot.com listing the **100 "must read" books** on happiness<sup>12</sup>. Even top universities are noticing a demand for how to live a happier, better life.

At Harvard the third most popular class on campus is on Chinese philosophers

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<sup>12</sup> I can see one must-read, or 10 must-read, but 100 must-read? They clearly believe this subject deserves a lot of our time. <https://bookriot.com/must-read-books-about-happiness/>

and what they can teach us about “the good life.” This seemingly esoteric course has been turned into a fantastic and accessible book by Michael Puett titled, *The Path: What Chinese Philosophers Can Teach Us About the Good Life* (Simon and Shuster, April 2016). He talks about how we are the ones standing in our own way, but, while his writing is conversational and engaging, to get to the “good life” you still need to sit through the history of ancient Chinese philosophers. *Serving Bait to Rich People* will touch on many of the same Truths, but in a more colloquial way using modern examples from your local watering hole.

At Yale the most popular class is called *The Science of Well-Being* and taught by Laurie Santos. She’s also made it available for free on Coursera and over 3,525,999 people have already signed up. Dr. Santos’ class is wonderful, if you like to approach things from an academic perspective. She talks about mental health like a diet, some things are good for you (think: meditation = salad) and some things (binging TV shows) are more like a hot fudge sundae for your psyche, in that they taste like a good idea, but don’t provide the results you hope to achieve (a bikini ready body, for example). Her approach, as entertaining and knowledgeable as she is, still classifies behavior as “right” and “wrong” for moving you towards happiness.

The bartender’s way will never tell you that you are wrong, because there is no wrong. In the brilliant words of Byron Katie, “love what is.” Instead, the tact is to survey what you are doing and with whom, and look deeper into the reasons those actions and people feel right for you. What belief do they serve? Does that belief serve you and the life you want to live? Did the actions get you there? By taking stock of where we are and how we feel about it, we get back in touch with our instincts and lean not into things that are “right,” but into the direction that our intuition is telling us we need to go.

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**Dr. Nima Rahnamy** is a chiropractor who does a podcast called *The Trigger Proof Show*. His work is quite interesting, but more medical in nature. “Learn how to regulate your nervous system and become Trigger Proof by watching.”

## THE OUTLINE

Each chapter will include the basic concept, outlined below, the experiences from the bar that taught me the lesson, the frustrating experiences from the corporate world where it was missed, fun drink recipes to keep things light, and an interview with a famous person who was once a bartender (on what they learned from their experience) or a current bartender who is using their bar platform in an interesting way or for a good cause.

### *The Table of Contents*

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- 5. Serve Yourself
- 6. I Like That I Don't Like You
- 7. How And When To 86 A Frenemy
- 8. Be Careful The Stories You Tell About Yourself (or how standup comedy almost ruined my life)
- 9. Make It Easy To Say Yes
- 10. Leave the Table Better Than You Found It
- 11. You Are What You Drink
- 12. A Work in Progress (or, that time I threw a beer bottle at a bartender)
- Conclusion: Serving Bait to Rich People

## *The Flow of the Book*

The most important takeaway from this book is that the key to happiness is inside each and every one of us. I could say that it's as simple as deciding to be happy, and maybe that's true, but sometimes simple and easy are completely different things. Sometimes they are straight-up opposites. This book is designed to lay out the steps to make that simple challenge a little bit easier.

The **Introduction** explains how I stumbled my way through keg fridges and recycling dumpsters to a happier life through a few simple hacks that I learned while bartending. Why did I need the tricks? Like many of us, I've gone through much of my life being triggered AF<sup>13</sup>. The rules started as a way to pull myself back from the constant state of outrage that was sucking all of my energy and make myself **Trigger Proof**. You might think of being triggered as brain spinning (replaying all the things you should have said, frequently as you are trying to go to sleep), monologging (i.e. "I just have to tell you this story about what he/she/they did..."), or consensus building (calling all of your friends or posting on social media to make sure everyone agrees with you that the other person - in the story you are telling from your point of view - was WRONG!)

Are you smiling a little bit in recognition? I'm definitely "guilty" of all three.

Why is it that, when we think someone else is wrong, it makes us crazy? They *should* be doing it differently. The first step to getting happier involves taking our Capital-S-Shoulds off of other people. When we let go of our frustration that other people are doing something other than what we want them to be doing, we move one giant step towards happiness. In the service industry, we say, "**The Customer is Always Right.**" In the self-help world, it's called "Loving What

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<sup>13</sup> Meaning: as fuck, but it's also my initials, which triggered the hell out of me for a long time...don't even get me started on Amazon's Alexa. For the most part, with these tools, I've learned to accept and embrace it. Maybe even like it, based on my current t-shirt collection, which includes 'Vaccinated AF', 'Feminist AF', and 'Pumpkin Spice AF'. My husband has one that reads 'Married AF', because he did.

Is.”<sup>14</sup> Either way, we get a lot of time and energy back when we give others the benefit of the doubt and start from a place of them being “right;” for them, for us, for the circumstance, or in the moment.

Once we stop worrying about other people’s lives, we have a lot more time to focus on our own. This is actually scarier than it sounds, which is why we need to **Be A Values Ninja**: brave, stealth, and resourceful. What we value can be more complicated to figure out than we think, with all of the programming we’ve been given in our lives (some helpful, some not), so we work backwards through a survey of how we spend our time to determine, **Are You Sushi or Bait?** The results of the test and the next steps will show you how to **Serve Yourself**, which isn’t only not-selfish, it’s vital for achieving happiness.

What happens when, after all of this work, someone is still making us crazy? This is the time to smile to ourselves and acknowledge that **I Like That I Don’t Like You**. The people around us are mirrors<sup>15</sup> and we can learn vital information about ourselves from the ones who trigger us. If you’ve ever noticed that you attract a certain type of romantic relationship or co-worker or friend, time and again, (and you’d like to break that pattern) this section is especially for you.

The trickiest people to navigate are the ones we trigger, frequently without even realizing it. **How And When to 86 a Frenemy** shows us how to kindly release the toxic people in our lives, while still leaving space for them to grow and change and come back healthier (maybe give them a copy of this book...or, if they are really triggered by you, leave it somewhere they will stumble upon it).

Once we’ve let go of the people who trigger us, and the people whom we trigger,

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<sup>14</sup> Byron Katie wrote the definitive books on this subject (my favorite with this as the title). She also created a series of questions that she calls “The Work” to help catch yourself when you’re spinning on something you can’t change. Her writing will absolutely blow your mind and I highly recommend reading her book.

<sup>15</sup> This is explained really well in the second of *The Four Agreements* (Don’t Take Anything Personally) by don Miguel Ruiz.

the next step toward happiness is to focus back on ourselves and what we are drawing into our lives. We know where we *are* from the Values Ninja activity. To take control of where we *are going* **Be Careful The Stories You Tell About Yourself**; because the Law of Attraction<sup>16</sup> doesn't know when we are joking, and a laugh at the bar isn't worth the hangover the next morning when we wake up living in our comedic tales of woe.

Happiness is on the horizon and the easiest way to find traveling companions to join you is to **Make It Easy to Say Yes**. Be clear. Be concise. Say what you mean. Only offer what you are willing to give. Setting healthy boundaries doesn't need to be as hard as we make it, because people mostly want to say yes. In the bartending world we set our customers up for success by only suggesting what we are happy and able to provide. For example, if I only have red wine, I'm not going to ask what you want to drink; I'm going to ask, "Do you want Pinot Noir or Merlot?"

If you've come this far, you may have realized, like the Tin Man, the Scarecrow, and the Lion, that you've had access to happiness all along. You just needed a few simple shifts in your thinking. The final hack is about spreading happiness around to others, which, spoiler alert, makes you happier, too. **Leave the Table Better Than You Found It** is about shifting from a place of what can I get out of these people (a good tip) to a place of what do I have to offer them (an amazing meal and experience that makes them want to be regulars and maybe even friends)?

**You Are What You Drink** covers the external factors at play that affect our resilience. Diet, exercise, how much sleep we had the night before, all contribute to how far our buttons can be pushed before we react. This isn't so much a lecture on self-care as it is a reminder to be gentle with ourselves and look at the

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<sup>16</sup> Many people have written about the Law of Attraction. Most of my reading has involved *A Course in Miracles*, Louise Hay, Wayne Dyer and Esther, Jerry, & Abraham Hicks. *You'll See It When You Believe It* by Wayne Dyer and *Ask And It Is Given* by Abraham are my favorites to recommend, if you want more.

whole picture when we snap.

We are all going to snap at times, and we're all going to have moments when we trigger others because we are all **A Work In Progress**. We go back to the skills we learned in the beginning as we forgive not only others for acting differently than we hoped, but, most importantly, forgive ourselves.

When it all comes down to it, whether we are a superhero out saving the world or just another bartender **Serving Bait to Rich People**, our best chances at creating the worlds we want to live in start with becoming trigger proof.

### ***Introduction: Serving Bait to Rich People***

*After years of bartending, I applied to work at a juice place. They made me go through three interviews...to sell juice...in bottles. I learned from the experience that I definitely prefer alcoholics to health nuts.*

The introduction of the book explains my background from tending bar at the little dive bar on the Upper East Side of Manhattan to serving bait to Aspen's elite at Chef Nobu's signature restaurant to partnering with professors to create programming for the graduates of the only Ivy+ university on the West Coast. It shows how my experiences along the way opened my eyes to the life-hacks of bartending, how these simple hacks led me to a happier place, and what it means to be a "good" bartender. It also lays out the journey of the book and how the hacks fit together to move anyone toward a happier life.

### ***1. Trigger Proof***

*I have a best friend who married one of my ex-boyfriends and I was not one bit jealous...*

*especially when I looked at the groom. They asked me to give a toast, what do you say? "I am so glad you cheated on me with such a great woman. I'm not losing a friend, I'm, I'm trying really hard to though...Congrats!"*

While there will always be some people who are out to stir up trouble, and some instances where we can't avoid taking the bait, a good bartender is almost impossible to trigger. And it wasn't until I spent a few years in the corporate world that I realized that, in the rest of our society, we are all so worried about who might set us off with their micro-aggressions (intended or inadvertent), that we forget that we have the ultimate power to make ourselves trigger proof.

This chapter talks about what it means to be triggered, how and why it happens to all of us, why it doesn't serve us (even when we have the moral high ground or are "right") and what we can do about it.

## ***2. The Customer is Always Right***<sup>17</sup>

*My parents were worried that when I moved to New York I would turn my back on God. I don't think they knew it would happen in the subway while he was yelling at me.*

The world doesn't need us to keep it spinning and the sun doesn't need us to make sure everyone is behaving before it will agree to come up. This chapter looks at how truly leaning into someone else's reality makes a huge difference in our own, and how our happiness is directly related to our acceptance and appreciation of those around us. We examine the idea of what is real, how we can change the past (it's possible!), and ways to start giving the people around us the benefit of the belief that they are doing their best...even when they aren't...so we can take the best from it.

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<sup>17</sup> To be clear: making the customer (or other people in your lives) always right isn't about accepting bad behavior or being a doormat and we will cover that more deeply in *Chapter 7: How And When to 86 a Frenemy*.

### **3. Be A Values Ninja**

*I bumped into the mom of a friend I hadn't seen in years and, when I asked about her son she said, "Doctah. Mahrried. Two Kids. And you?" I said, "Comedian. Single. No kids." Without missing a beat she said, "Well, I tell him how pretty you are."*

Becoming a values ninja involves the stealth application of what matters most to you, but most of us have no idea what that means or how to figure it out. Sure, we can all rattle off the things that are *supposed* to be on our values list, but to find where we are truly putting our energy, our unconscious values hierarchy, we need to look deeper into how we spend our time and why.

This chapter goes into the differences between our perceived values and our actual values, how our lists are hierarchical and constantly shifting, and the frustrations of being told to *find your purpose* when you don't even know where to begin. It introduces the law of attraction and how you create more of whatever you are focusing on, regardless of whether you are focusing on wanting it or not wanting it, or even conscious of focusing on it at all. It starts the inquiry into why we do what we do and how our behavior serves our underlying beliefs, even when we know it's not going to achieve the goal we think we want.

We've made values into a complicated thing, but they don't have to be.

### **4. Are You Sushi or Bait?**

*I like working in bars. I love martini's. But I don't get the magic of the martini glass. You take pure alcohol, put it into a triangle shaped glass, you're hip, you're cool. I take that same drink, put it into my Starbucks mug. How come I'm the only one with the problem?*

If you've ever been hungry while you are fishing, you know that the difference between sushi and bait is really just attitude and presentation. This chapter is about evaluating how much and how you value yourself through how you spend your time.

We all talk about our “values,” but to what extent do we actually live them? A bartender can read you with a few questions, but one simple exercise can help you read yourself and test if the values you think matter to you are the ones you are prioritizing with your time and attention.

The first step is to make a list of all of the things you think you value and all of the things you think you want to be on the far left side of your page. It can range from “happy” to “computer programmer” and there’s nothing wrong to add to the list. If you want to be a badass, add it. If being good in bed matters to you, put it on the list. (No judgment, it definitely matters to me. ;-)

Next, across the top, you add all of the people with whom you spend your time. Include best friends, coworkers (both those you choose to spend time with and those you spend time with only because of the proximity of your work), family members (if they live with you or you see/talk to them regularly), roommates, even ex-romantic partners if they were a big part of your life.

As you fill in the grid, you give each person a +1, 0, or -1 on each value...if you don’t know if it’s true or not true about them, default to 0. (For example, if you value a healthy sex life and you spend most of your time with a coworker with whom it has never been appropriate to talk about sex, they get a zero. Even if you secretly suspect/hope they might have some mad skills, if it’s not a part of your relationship with them it’s better for your survey to stick with the goose egg). Finally, you add up the columns by person and you add up the rows by value, taking note of the total number of values and the total number of people.

### **5. Serve Yourself**

*I went to my high school reunion. It was an interesting experience and, by the end of the night, I was really touched. I won “most improved.” There wasn’t an official contest, I just looked around at the crowd and crowned myself.*

It's all there on your grid and the best part is, you get to decide what to do with it. Once you have a number for each person and each value, things start to get interesting. If you have 30 values on your list, the highest possible score for someone with whom you spend your time is +30 and the lowest score is -30. How did your friends do? How about your coworkers? Exes? The current squeeze? Human beings tend to evolve to be like the people around them, are you surrounding yourself with people who are going to inspire you in the right direction?

In this chapter we will go through all of the learnings on your grid, from the people who scored highest to those who scored the lowest, and offer next steps for each group.

For example, if there is someone on your list who scored really low, the next step isn't necessarily to stop spending time with them. The next step is to start to pay attention to how you feel when you are around them. It's not as simple as high = good, low = bad, because some values hold more weight than others and most people come into our lives for a reason.

We will also look at it from the perspective of the values. Is something missing on your grid, like happiness was missing from my circle of friends when I was doing standup comedy full-time? It's important to remember that not all values are created equally, and only you can decide how to make adjustments from where you are to where you hope to be. The rest of this chapter will include a discussion on how to make those choices for yourself.

## **6. *I Like That I Don't Like You***

*There's a celebrity who has her people call a restaurant in advance and tell the staff that they aren't allowed to look directly at her or talk directly to her. Interesting point: They don't mention anything about not spitting in her food.*

Maya Angelou famously said that “people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” That’s true in both the positive and the negative. We don’t get truly triggered by the content of what someone says, as much as we get triggered by the way it makes us feel.

The next time someone makes you feel triggered ask yourself the following three questions:

How are we the same? (Do I like that about myself? Is it making me feel guilty about my own behavior?)

How are we different? (Am I jealous? Is it making me feel inadequate?)

Can I find compassion for the circumstances that led to their behavior? (Am I uncomfortable because their behavior is making me feel judgemental?)

When we know why someone is triggering us, we can learn from it, and even get to a place where we are grateful for them showing us a piece of ourselves.

## ***7. How And When To 86 A Frenemy***

*I’m in the middle of a break up, which is sad, but the couple was having trouble before I got involved.*

Even worse than someone triggering us, is interacting with someone whom we are triggering. And yes, even non-racist, non-sexist, perfectly nice and kind people can be triggers for the folks around them. Remember, it’s about them, not you. This chapter covers which relationships are worth pushing up our sleeves and doing the work to learn from, and which relationships are so toxic that we need to 86 (remove) that person from our lives.

“You've got to know when to hold 'em, Know when to fold 'em, Know when to

walk away, And know when to run.” ~Kenny Rogers, lyrics from *The Gambler*

### **8. *Be Careful of The Stories You Tell About Yourself (or how standup comedy almost ruined my life)***

*I've spent a lot of years getting on stage and talking about the ridiculous dates I went on, and I've always had a steady stream of guys looking to take me on ridiculous dates. When I learned about the law of attraction, and how it works in the negative as well as the positive, I started telling jokes about winning a million dollars.*

We're all guilty of repeating our stories of woe for a laugh, especially around the bar. This chapter is about how the law of attraction made me rethink my approach to standup comedy...and the stories I tell to the people around me.

It's also about how I knew my husband was *the one*. I've never been someone who cared that much about getting married. Why bother? I needed the material. But as I got to know Jeff, and told my friends about him, I realized that my stories were changing. I wasn't going for the tragic laugh anymore. Was he the one because he was so flawless, or was I finally becoming the one because I didn't focus on the flaws that were there?

### **9. *Make It Easy To Say Yes***

*I'm not married, but I do wear a ring, 'cause if you want to pick up a low maintenance guy... it works.*

A good bartender doesn't test their customers<sup>18</sup> (and neither does a good friend,

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<sup>18</sup> Unless they look young and have handed you a potentially fake id. Then the best test is to ask their sun sign. It doesn't even matter if you know the sun signs yourself, you know they are lying if they can't give you a quick answer. Also, nobody doesn't know their sun sign, so don't fall for that. You might not know anything about astrology, but I bet you know what you are. The ones that double down the hardest on swearing that they don't know their sign are always Capricorns. If they do that and the card doesn't list their birthday as late-December or early/mid-January, they are definitely lying.

date, or spouse). You make it as easy as possible for the other person to say yes, and, if you gently lead them in the direction you are hoping they go, all the better.

A look at the science behind why humans want to say yes, and how to make it easy for the people around you to do what's natural for them. A good bartender never asks do you want a drink? We ask, what are you having? Would you like white or red?

### ***10. Leave the Table Better Than You Found It***

*My husband and I have one rule in our house. It's that everybody does their own dishes, unless nobody saw you eat.*

The best advice I ever got about bartending was to never leave a table without improving it. That meant picking up an empty plate, refilling a water glass, or taking an order for dessert. It's a magical rule that works in the office culture, dating, and friendships, too.

This section is about how to take the final and most important step toward lasting happiness: the mental shift from 'what can I get' to 'how can I serve?'

### ***11. You Are What You Drink***

*I rolled through a stop sign and there is nothing like those red and blue lights flashing in your rearview mirror to really sober you up.*

I'm not going to preach to you about diet and sleep and meditation and exercise and self-care, but I am going to tell you a story about how I went completely blank on stage one night because I had chosen to drink coffee all day instead of sleeping or eating.

There are a lot of physical things that reduce our resilience and the hardest part about trigger-proofing ourselves is letting go of the addiction we all have to that self-righteous outrage. It's a chemical addiction, the same one that comes from eating too much sugar or trying to survive on just a few hours of sleep. It's called adrenaline and it's right up there with heroin in terms of difficulty in breaking its hold on us.

As a bartender, I understand addiction better than most, and I want to remind you to be patient with yourself as you make this effort to turn off your buttons. When you snap at someone who makes you crazy, and you will (we all do), this chapter will be there to remind you to take stock of the other things that can push your buttons from the inside. And to be understanding with yourself, as well as the other person.

### ***12. Work in Progress (or, that time I threw a beer bottle at a bartender)***

*I had my identity stolen. It's okay though; I was done with her anyway.*

Have you ever noticed that blessings rarely show up in party dresses? Actually, they're almost always in disguise...which is how we got that expression.

We are all works in progress and sometimes we get it wrong. This chapter is about how the worst experience of my life became the best thing that ever happened to me. I'm hoping that Steve (the other bartender in question) will write a section of this chapter about how we were both triggered, and, after much chaos and a few police interventions, we sat down together, truly listened to each other, and worked it out.

### ***Conclusion: Serving Bait to Rich People***

*Sushi is pretty controversial these days. I sometimes get asked about the Bluefin Tuna and, I get it. Calling them by the Japanese term, hon maguro, doesn't change the fact that*

*they're over-fished. Look, I'm not crazy about the way animals are treated for our food, but I'm not crazy about getting yelled at by overzealous customers, either. And, you can complain all you want, people, but we're not going to stop selling it until you stop buying it. Besides, do you really think that Yellowtail or Kampachi you're eating had any better of a life than the Bluefin? They're all dead on your plate. And, seriously? I'm your server. I brought you some drinks and ordered you some food in a restaurant that serves dead, semi-endangered species...it's not like I've got a bunch of 12 year olds locked in warehouse somewhere sewing gloves out of clubbed baby seal-skin*

Outrage is relative, isn't it? And in this day and age, even buying an apple at a farmer's market can be complicated. Is it organic? Local? Is the farm sustainable? How about diverse? Are the workers treated well?

We wrap up with a look at the state of the world and how this all fits in...because we're getting to a place, largely through the increased connectivity of the internet, where, when we spend the majority of our day interacting only with people like us, with our same ideology, we don't learn compromise or compassion. And, when we stop having compassion for others, we also stop having compassion for ourselves.

Compassion is a dying art in politics and corporations, but it's also the key to the way of the bartender. We will go back through the bartending hacks and how they will make our lives happier and more successful.

## THE SAMPLE

### *From Chapter One: Trigger Proof*

One night I was working late at Zane's Tavern when a dear friend rolled in. Casey was a marine who had lost both his legs in Iraq after his vehicle struck an anti-tank mine. After being released from the military, he moved to Aspen to ski. He had robotic legs that he used, but they itched and sometimes got infected, so most of his time was spent in his wheelchair or his sit-ski. He was an incredible guy, who testified about the bureaucratic maze of the VA before the United States House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations,<sup>19</sup> but he also had more than his share of demons and he lost his life to suicide in October 2014.

On this particular night, one of the town derelicts made his way in and started up a conversation, claiming that he had also been an enlisted Marine. Ever connected to his tribe, Casey put his arm around the guy and offered to buy him a drink. I held back on pouring the drink to see where this was going. I wasn't a fan of this other guy, and his appearance and demeanor made him more likely to be a washed out member of an 80s hair band than to be one of The Few. The Proud. Casey asked where the guy had gone to boot camp and his response was "Quantico."

Uh oh.

It was one of those rare moments where time shifts into slow motion as you watch the button get pushed and see the trigger fully ignite the rage behind someone's eyes. In Casey's world, understandably, there was nothing worse than stolen valor and the fists began to fly before I could even jump in to stop it.

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<sup>19</sup> <http://veteransforcommonsense.org/2008/03/17/congressional-committee-holds-oversight-hearing-to-examine-care-of-seriously-wounded-veterans/>

Most of us would say that this guy deserved what he got. Never, ever, ever pick a fight with a guy who spends most of his life in a wheelchair. If the don't-be-morally-vacant argument doesn't convince you, think about how much upper body strength it takes to roll a wheelchair around and what that same arm/ab muscle might do to your face.

While there will always be some people who are out to stir up trouble, and some instances where we can't avoid taking the bait, a good bartender is almost impossible to trigger. And it wasn't until after I spent a few years in the corporate world that I realized that, in the rest of our society, we are all so worried about who might trigger us with their micro-aggressions (intended or inadvertent), that we forget that we have the ultimate power to make ourselves trigger proof. In the immortal words of Viktor Frankel, "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

#### WHY TRIGGER PROOF?

I've lost count of the number of books I've read on toxic relationships or toxic workplaces that I've wanted to share with other people - hoping to educate *them*. Unfortunately, *those people* never seem to be interested in reading the books. Why should they? They don't have the problem.

In my time behind the bar, I've waited on Republican, Democrat, rich, poor, black, white, brown, green (more on that later), police officer, parolee, every gender, beyond gender. Every human being, regardless of their beliefs, their genetics, or the amount of melanin in (or makeup on) their skin, loses some level of inhibitions through alcohol. The amazing thing? No matter what crazy thing any of these people said to me after their internal edit function turned off, and they all said some crazy things, it rolled off my back when I was behind the bar.

I saw that, when not engaging emotionally with what was said, I was better

equipped to listen, have a rational conversation with someone so different from myself, and sometimes even to influence how they looked at the world.

I'm not claiming that everyone left my bar with arms around their enemies while singing spirituals about peace and love. But I am pretty sure that, in the entire history of the world, be it in a bar, a church, or an ivory / corporate tower, no one has ever said the words, "thank you for yelling at me and telling me I was wrong until I agreed with you. I see your point now."

If your goal is to change someone's mind about anything, anger never helps.

I want to be clear: Never in the course of this book do I intend to imply that the people who trigger us are right to do so. Or that it is our fault for getting upset when they do. Racism, sexism, ableism, anti-any-ism, any and all forms of marginalization are wrong. Objectively wrong. But, unfortunately, if most of our energy is focused on being angry, we have less to focus on making our world better.

The negativity (or hatred) of others becomes something that we just have to endure, and through the process we harden. Closing ourselves down takes a toll on our mental health. Studies are finding that it's also pretty hard on our physical health, though that can take longer to manifest and many of us don't connect the cause and effect.

We are always going to have people who make us crazy. People (sometimes from our families of origin, sometimes from our "work families," sometimes total strangers) who push our buttons, no matter how hard we try to ignore them. People who do things that are so absolutely wrong that we wonder how they've survived in society to this point. Seriously, why isn't somebody picking up a pie and pushing it into this person's face at every turn?

We can't avoid them all. Trust me. I've tried.

These people are everywhere, and it's fair that they make us mad. It happens to all of us. Some people even lean into it and use it to fuel the fight when they post on social media, "if you aren't mad, you aren't paying attention." While I emotionally understand the point they are making, there is an inconvenient truth that we are going to explore throughout this book: when you are blinded by your rage, you can't see a path to change.

Also, social media is its own problem, and I'll touch on that, too.

So, how to get rid of the righteous rage that is taking its toll on our mental and physical health and preventing us from being constructively heard by the people whose minds we most hope to change?

The rage is an involuntary response, so it's not as simple as "let it go," or "just ignore them." Which you know, if you've ever been about to lose your mind and some well meaning (or not) person tells you that you should "calm down." (If you think the words "calm down" are helpful, find someone who seems relaxed and tell them to calm down 8-10 times in a row.)

And it's deeper than meditation.

Confession: I think meditation is great, and that, if it is working for you, there is no "wrong" way to do it. I also think, unfortunately, that there are some meditation teachers who have been caught up in the hype and become more invested in the process than the result. Also, if your brain is truly spinning with anger, meditation can turn into a dangerous echo chamber as you internally yell at yourself for not being able to let go of the thoughts about yelling at yourself.

So, before you run off and pay a week's salary to some self-proclaimed guru who spent a week in India and now uses metaphors like, "meditation is the wash cycle for when the people around you throw emotional chocolate cake on the

white shirt of your psyche” (like I did), just take a deep breath. You can do this. You can calm yourself down and take stock of where you are now, with love and acceptance, so you find your own peaceful state. One that will open the door and make meditation (the way you want to do it) feel like a good thing.

If you want to.

Not for the crazy people around you. For you.

“The beauty you see in me is a reflection of you.” - Rumi

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## WHAT IS A VALUES NINJA?

A values ninja is someone adept in the stealth application of what matters the most to them.

Stealth because the word values has been weaponized. Even if you believe that there was a master list handed down by Allah, Yahweh, Jehovah, God, or the Allstate Guy in his role on the show Lucifer (before he followed his wife into her own dimension and *finally* started supporting *her* career), it’s clear that we don’t all need to have the exact same values to get along. In fact, the world is more interesting and successful when we value different things, as long as we are respectful of one another.

Ninja because defining our values can involve getting in and out of some tricky places. Sure, we can all rattle off the list of things that we are supposed to value. A list that’s frequently designed to makes us look good, or represent our ideal - which completely misses the point.

If you work for a company that’s trying to show you how much they care about

you as a person by spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on corporate mindfulness experts (likely in place of a raise or more time off for you), you might have even recently brainstormed such a list as part of a team building exercise. Popular answers include: family, inclusion, friends, diversity, education, health, equality, sustainability, hard work...autonomy.

But, these lists tend to fall short. Worse, they tend to make us think that we are falling short, because, when we look at how we spend our time, we frequently see that what we think we value and what we really value (by giving it our time and attention) don't always line up.

For example, can I really say that I value sustainability if I don't recycle? I might like the idea of it, but I don't *value* it as much as I value ease and efficiency. No judgement. Life is hard and there's a lot to be said for ease and efficiency. What makes us unhappy is putting the pressure on ourselves to live up to a value that we think we *should* have when we don't. A value that we inherited from our families of origin, our social circles, or our communities at large that no longer serves us as an individual.

What makes it worse is that the pressure to live up to these values expectations uses up our energy and can take a toll on other things in our lives. Does this mean that refusing to compost means you're going to be homeless someday? I live in the San Francisco Bay Area and that's not too much of a stretch for some of our more extreme neighbors, but the more interesting question is: what productive thing might you be able to accomplish with the extra energy you gain when you stop putting all that effort into making yourself wrong?

If you have all of the energy you can handle, and I'm talking about real, productive, joyous energy, not the caffeine-fueled, cocaine-infused, sleep-deprived, cracked-out sort, you might not need this book.

Using one of the tools from my workshops, we will look at how we choose to

spend our time and with whom. With that information, we can work backward to see where we are putting our energy, what we are unconsciously valuing, and how that aligns with the lives we want to be living.

The most important thing to remember when doing this exercise is that (just like with meditation, you may notice a theme developing here) there is no answer that is “wrong” when it comes to your values. If we’re putting time and energy into something/someone, even unconsciously, we are getting something from it/them. It might not be something that we consciously want, but it is something that, perhaps unconsciously, we believe serves us.

For example, if the exercise shows you, as it did me years ago, that everyone around you is unhappy, that’s worth examining further. If you’re a beat poet or a standup comedian (I was) and you value suffering for your art (comedy = tragedy + good story structure), that might be fine with you. But, if unhappiness isn’t your jam, you might want to rethink where you are putting your energy (I did - more on this in chapter 8).

Becoming a values ninja is the first step toward becoming trigger proof. Once you know who you are and what matters most to you, the cruel, insensitive comments of others start to mean less. As Wayne Dyer said most brilliantly in one of his podcasts on mean girls, “if someone called you a banana, you’d laugh at them. Why is it that when someone calls you something nasty, you think it must be true?”

### ***From Chapter Two: The Customer is Always Right***

I heard the grunting before I realized what was happening. Elbow deep in Lychee martinis, I was working the service side of the bar at Matsuhisa, which meant that I was responsible for all of the drinks in the 300 seat restaurant and the food service for the three people sitting in front of me. It also meant I was

covered in Lychee juice.

The tickets were flying, my partner was schmoozing with the regulars (the job of the bartender on point), and I was moving my arms at a speed that would blur on film. The hum of the restaurant was at a healthy seven, and, rhythmically underneath it, I heard, “Ugh... Ugh... Ugh...”

I looked up at the woman sitting at my bar to see that each grunted sigh was accompanied by the action of picking the onions off of her dish of king crab tempura and throwing them into a pile on a paper bar napkin.

Some backstory: The first thing you need to know is that this dish is so deliciously addictive that the Amazu Ponzu sauce might as well be laced with crack. It’s one of my favorite dishes on the menu. It’s also, for perspective, about \$50 (after tax and tip) for a plate of fried crab. Actually, at that price, it might be laced with pure, uncut cocaine.

The second thing you need to know is that this woman had sent this dish back not once, not twice, but three times because it wasn’t up to her satisfaction. First she said it was overcooked. Then the sauce was off. The third plate went back through the food runner before she even tasted it; and I’d chosen not to get involved for fear of what inappropriate comment might come out of my mouth.

I knew the first two plates were delicious, because I had dumped them into pint glasses and hid them under my bar to snack on when the rush waned (or I bent my head down into the refrigerator under the bar to get something way in the back). I assumed the food runner had done the same with the third plate in the back room. No reason to waste the perfectly delightful food of a nut job.

Now the fourth plate had come out with onions on it and I think the food runner and I both knew that, if this woman didn’t eat what was in front of her, the kitchen staff could just as easily stab either one of us. To the customer’s credit,

she *had* originally ordered the dish without onions, but, though we were usually pretty good about that sort of thing, somewhere around the second return we had truly all stopped caring.

The woman, probably late 40s or early 50s, with expensive though not necessarily good taste, looked up at me as she threw the last disgusting handful of soggy onions into her heap and said, “clearly God hates me!”

I casually smiled at her and wrinkled my brow so she wouldn’t think I was making fun. “Huh,” I said, “I didn’t know God was that subtle.”