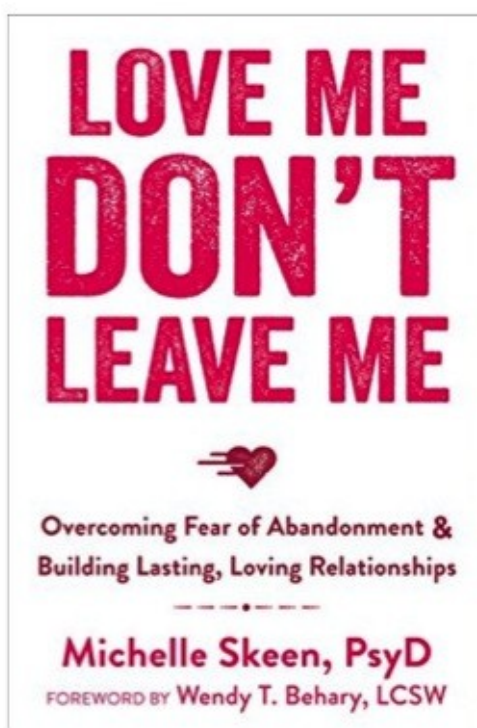


Psychologist Breaks Down Relationship Fears in New Book, 'Love Me, Don't Leave Me'



Interview by [Whitney Johnson](#). Written by [Sarah Batcheller](#).

It's safe to say that psychologist and author Michelle Skeen is an expert when it comes to addressing fears. In her new book, *Love Me, Don't Leave Me: Overcoming Fear of Abandonment*

and Building Lasting, Loving Relationships, she provides readers with powerful, enticing tools to handle a multitude of relationship fears, specifically that of abandonment, and details the ways in which these fears stem from early experiences. Thought-provoking and inspiring, Skeen encourages readers to realize what's holding them back in order to reach their full potential as a partner.

Why did you focus on the fear of abandonment?

I chose to focus on the fear of abandonment because it's a primary fear that affects a lot of relationships. I think it exists in multiple scenarios: women stay in relationships that aren't healthy for them because they're afraid of being alone, they avoid getting into relationships because they fear being abandoned, or they behave in ways that cause them to be abandoned.

Related Link: [Are You Dating Someone with Narcissistic Personality Disorder?](#)

Do you think that every individual carries a little bit of this fear with them in some way?

Absolutely – we're born with it! If we're abandoned when we're babies, we die. I think it's hardwired in us, and I think that it can get reinforced with early childhood or adolescent experiences or trauma, like the death of a parent, a traumatic divorce, or the death of a sibling or a friend. I think that the groundwork is laid in the beginning of our lives for our fear to either be increased or maintained at a lower level. One of the primary purposes of the book is to develop the awareness of what's going on. With awareness you can make change, so it's about identifying the problem.

You know, we all have a story, and most of the time, when people are having difficulties in relationships, it's related to them being stuck in their story, their story being their

past experiences. If they're not in the moment and evaluating their present experience based on what's going on in the now, they are making predictions based on their story. So part of it is identifying your story and then distancing yourself from it.

How should someone react if their partner begins to push them away out of fear?

Well, I think that a lot of times what's happening when we push people away is that we've already predicted what's going to happen, so we're taking control of it. We're having a difficult time dealing with the uncertainty and ambiguity of whatever is going on in the relationship at the time, so rather than sitting with that and feeling really uncomfortable, we would rather take control and reject it before we can be rejected.

As a partner, if you have the ability to identify the reasoning behind your significant other's behavior – for example, "You're doing this because you're afraid that I'm going to do it to you" – then I would suggest you make the effort to move *toward* the person. Try to bring them into the present moment, what is truly happening between the two people and not the memory of something that's happened before that's getting in the way.

Something we all need to work on is mindfulness. Mindfulness is such a game changer. It allows us to recognize, "I'm having these painful thoughts and emotions, and I need to get rid of them because this feels horrible."

How can our readers work on mindfulness?

Well, there are so many great mindfulness resources. What I found is a lot of people are intimidated by the idea of mindfulness. They think they need to sit with their legs crossed and keep their mind completely clear. That's not what you need to do at all.

Mindfulness is about recognizing that every experience, thought, and emotion you're having is a temporary state. It's going to pass through you. You just need to *be* and think, "Oh, I'm having this thought that I'm going to be left, and I'm letting that go." You've got to accept all of your thoughts, whether they're helpful or unhelpful. There are a lot of great mindfulness exercises which I introduce in my book, like a mindful walk or adding this mindfulness piece to your morning cup of coffee or tea.

Related Link: [Top 3 Mistakes Women Make in Relationships](#)

What are some long-lasting skills and insights that people are left with once they discover and address their fear?

Well, I think it's important to identify the behavior that isn't working. Behavior is one thing we do have control over. In a world where we're constantly looking for control, we can't really control our thoughts or minds; they just happen. We can control our behavior. We can't control anyone else's behavior, but if you're engaged in helpful behavior, it will result in the other person adjusting their behavior.

So I think identifying unhelpful behavior, recognizing what situations trigger these thoughts of abandonment and fear, and looking at your typical reaction to that fear is where you have to start. Then, you have to stop reacting that way and look at ways that *will* be helpful in getting you closer to what you want.

Pick up a copy of *Love Me, Don't Leave Me: Overcoming Fear of Abandonment and Building Lasting, Loving Relationships* today!