

'Love Sick: A Memoir of Searching for Mr. Good Enough' Recalls the Humorous and Insightful Journey of Looking For Love

By Brittany Stubbs and Laura Seaman

Love Sick: A Memoir of Searching for Mr. Good Enough is a sharp and irreverent memoir recalling Frances Kuffel's quest to replace her on-again, off-again lover with someone new and preferably less unstable. As Shakespeare said, the course of true love never did run smooth, but for Kuffel, it seemed like one pothole after another. Fifty-three and never married, she opens her mind to all possibilities: She goes out with an Orthodox Jew, is almost the victim of a scammer, stays out all night with a man twenty years her junior, encounters food fixations and shoe fetishes, and generally reads a lot of strange emails. Brazenly honest and insightful, the author comes through the experience with a new understanding of love and, most importantly, herself.

For starters, what inspired you to write this memoir?

I fell in love with a younger man with whom I had a friends-with-benefits situation. He did not reciprocate my feelings, although he very much wanted to remain friends. The best way to get over a broken heart is to fall in love with someone else, and as a memoirist, I could see my challenge was ripe for writing about.

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Your determination to find love is inspiring. What kept you going through the rough patches? What would your advice be to other women who are having a difficult time and thinking of giving up?

There were rough patches, and then, there were really rough patches. It took a while to go out on some decent dates, and it was my friends and their senses of humor that buoyed me through the tough times. I have always said you go out with other people, but you date your friends: It's friends you go to with the stories, and it's friends who laugh it off with you, psychoanalyze with you, tell you to get over yourself, or hand you tissues.

My advice to other women is to give yourself a certain amount of time for several days a week to read profiles and answer messages because people who are constantly logged in look a little desperate. If you see your Saturday night coming up without a date, do something with friends or on your own that you keenly enjoy. Take a break if you have a great date that doesn't lead to a second one – respect your heart. And get out in the world! One problem with online dating is that it's solitary until you meet someone. Remain a citizen. And the big one? DON'T TAKE ANYTHING PERSONALLY.

Your book mostly focuses on your search for love past age 53. What are some of the differences you noticed between dating in your twenties as opposed to dating in your fifties?

It's an entirely different activity. There was biological imperative in our twenties, pushing us to make babies. Looks mattered more then than now, to a certain extent. Dating in your fifties means forgiving weight, hair loss, hair color, etc. I did a lot of group activities in my twenties too – a gang of friends would go out for pizza and beers or to the movies or “just hang out.” We paired off within the gang. I

don't have a gang like that any more, and what social circles I move in tend to be dinner parties or the occasional outing.

We had school and new careers in our twenties, but we could also stay up all night. Now, we have positions in our careers and less energy. Many people have children or grandchildren, which entail a whole other set of obligations. We're also more entrenched in habits and hobbies. If someone announces himself to be a golfer on his personal ad, he's saying, "This is what brands me; it's where my leisure hours go." We were more amorphous in our twenties, more willing to try golfing or give it up, according to whom our partner was.

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As you wrote this book, I'm sure you learned a lot looking back at your dating experiences. If you had to pick the most valuable lesson learned about dating, what would it be?

If I'm not comfortable dating myself, I'm not ready to date anyone else. If I can't treat myself with the same care, tenderness, romance, admiration, and surprise that I would expend on someone else, I'm going to get short-shrifted by a man. And when it's all over, I'll be empty and blaming myself for the failure.

You've spoken a lot about weight loss in your books and in interviews. How has your journey with the loss and gain of weight impacted your search for love?

When I lost weight, I gained the confidence to really try dating for the first time in my life. I kept enough of that confidence to keep dating as I regained weight. My weight has turned a few men off. It's turned a few men on too – and I tend to hear about that because not many guys are going to say, "You're too fat." They'll just fade out instead of risking rudeness.

I say I kept “enough” confidence. I know I’d be a higher ticket item if I were a size 10 than a 22. But I’ve come to understand that weight is a journey – in my case, it has been one of a few journeys that define my life. If I don’t accept where I am today, I’m not going to accept myself at size 8, which as it turned out, I didn’t really.

Learn more about Frances Kuffel in her new book, Love Sick: A Memoir of Searching for Mr. Good Enough.