

Break Up Wake Up Move On



Straight Talk from
**Everybody's
Gay Best Friend**

Randy Siegel

Praise for
Break Up, Wake Up, Move On

“*Break Up, Wake Up, Move On* will help anyone who is on the tumultuous journey through the shadow side of being in a relationship—being out of one. Drawing on personal experience, conversations with friends, and literature, Randy Siegel shows us that breakups are as transformative as the relationships that precede them. He also reminds us that transformation requires the same attention and surrender that love does. Written in a tone that is kind and honest, this is a beautiful book about a difficult time.”

Laura Hope-Gill

“Randy Siegel is so right: everyone needs a gay best friend, and I can’t think of a better one than Randy, especially when you’re going through something as difficult as a breakup. In *Break Up, Wake Up, Move On*, Randy offers readers a delicious cocktail of compassion blended with inspiration and practical ‘how-to’ advice. Most importantly, he shows us how to transform one of life’s more crummy moments into gold.”

Cheri Britton

“Randy Siegel nails it again. In this epiphany-filled work, Siegel shares his own story while offering practical how-to advice to help readers mend, grow—even thrive—during one of life’s more painful passages, the breakup of a relationship. Randy Siegel is indeed everyone’s gay best friend.”

Elizabeth Bridgers

“Randy’s willingness to explore his long-held faulty belief that he was unworthy of love will inspire readers to begin their own inner exploration of Self. The author empowers readers by wisely reminding them that true healing first begins with Self, and that as we heal within we will attract relationships that reflect the unconditional love we offer ourselves.”

David B. Robertson, MRHT

“It’s a cliché, but it’s so very true—‘breaking up is hard to do.’ And, worse, it can be devastating to get over. In a memoir-like style Randy Siegel reminds us that we always have options. To wallow in misery, self-loathing, doubt, fear, blame, self-pity, or loneliness after the dissolution of a relationship is clearly an option, but we have other choices. Randy invites us into his heart and head as he learns to be present with his feelings and to grasp the realities of the emotionally charged weeks and months following a breakup. As a reader you’ll find yourself more than an observer. Randy offers opportunities to name your own feelings and realities in the process of becoming your best self.”

Lester Laminack

“Breakups hurt, but a friend who understands and can dole out good advice always helps. With this book, Randy Siegel is every girl’s gay best friend. He understands the pain and gives solid advice that works.”

Melissa Libby

“When breakups happen, our task is to learn and grow through the pain and fear and to awaken to our own truth. (In this book) Randy Siegel charts a course through his own breakup with candor and grace and shines a light for others to see the way through their own dark times. This book is packed with insights and tools to help you find your way back to your inherent divinity. Even if you think you’re over your ex, this book can help you learn what your relationship patterns have been so you awaken into loving yourself more fully. The awakened Self is the Divine You that calls out to be a full participant in your next relationship.”

The Reverend DiAnna Ritola

“Ladies, Randy Siegel is the guy we’ve wished for since the days of *Will and Grace*, the fabulous gay best friend. He’s that guy who gets us, who loves us enough to tell the truth, and actually wants to hear our stories. Randy gives us a unique masculine perspective, and he’s not afraid to share in our breakup sorrow and frustrated nights with Ben and Jerry.”

Kathy Godfrey

“Few authors get our need for connection like Randy Siegel. He's a masterful storyteller, boldly sharing his own experiences to teach us to build better lives. Navigating a relationship split with Randy's concept of conscious parting is brilliant. Whether it's a romantic split, moving away from a 'frenemy,' or setting boundaries with a toxic family member, this book needs to be in your toolbox!”

Elizabeth Vaeth

“Randy sent me his book after I told him that my relationship had ended the week before. That Saturday morning I curled up with the book and didn't get up until I'd finished it. I saw myself on every page, in every chapter, and in every emotion. There was no part that I couldn't relate to. Randy opened his soul so that readers can look inside him and what he experienced, and recognize themselves. I was grateful to have this book when I needed it most, and now that several weeks have passed, I think I need to read it again!”

Susan Koscis

“When a relationship ends and it's time to move on, there's a way to move forward in a conscious, loving way; Randy Siegel's book will help you learn how to do this. I've known Randy for years and I've sought his advice on many occasions because he is, simultaneously, supremely practical while being spiritually wise. It is this blending of spiritual wisdom and practical step-by-step procedures that makes Randy's message in this book so wonderful.”

Tom Heck

“This is Randy Siegel's best book yet! I will read it over and over to remember the power of authenticity and presence. Thank you, Randy, for sharing your break-up and wake-up experience in an honest and humorous way that will help us move from awareness to awakening in all areas of our lives.”

Adair Cates

Break Up, Wake Up, Move On: Straight Talk from Everybody's Gay Best Friend

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my ex- and future partners.
Thank you for enriching my life.

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“What is REAL?” asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. “Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?”

“Real isn't how you are made,” said the Skin Horse. “It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.”

“Does it hurt?” asked the Rabbit.

“Sometimes,” said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. “When you are Real you don't mind being hurt.”

“Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,” he asked, “or bit by bit?”

“It doesn't happen all at once,” said the Skin Horse. “You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in your joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand.”

“I suppose you are real?” said the Rabbit. And then he wished he had not said it, for he thought the Skin Horse might be sensitive. But the Skin Horse only smiled.

“The Boy's Uncle made me Real,” he said. “That was a great many years ago; but once you are Real you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always.”

The Rabbit sighed. He thought it would be a long time before this magic called Real happened to him. He longed to become Real,

to know what it felt like; and yet the idea of growing shabby and losing his eyes and whiskers was rather sad. He wished that he could become it without these uncomfortable things happening to him.

The Velveteen Rabbit: Or How Toys Become Real
by Margery Williams

Preface

A while back, a girlfriend suggested that my next book would be on relationships. Relationships! I had to laugh. Since my divorce sixteen years ago, I've not been able to hold on to a relationship for more than three years. And yet...

Don't we often teach what we most need to learn? I am good at business, and I am socially skilled, but in the classroom of love I seem to fail.

Additionally, my life's mission is to "help people stand in their power by becoming the full expression of all they are." Love and work are where our inner challenges become most visible, and together they offer the richest soil for growing into our full potential. I've written extensively about work, but little about relationships. I've now got something to share.

Introduction

Have you recently been divorced, broken up, or are you still having trouble getting over a past relationship? Do you feel raw, vulnerable, and lonely? Do you spend more time by yourself and tear up while watching the most benign television shows? Perhaps you flinch at the most innocent comments. Do you miss him or her so much that your stomach aches, yet if you were to see him you'd feel as if you'd been sucker punched in the belly? If so, I'm Randy Siegel, and I want to help you get through this. Think of me as your new gay best friend, or GBF.

Every straight person needs one. Sure GBFs have high hip factors, but more importantly we offer a unique masculine-feminine perspective that you don't often get from your heterosexual friends.

If you're a guy, don't think for a minute that GBFs are an exclusive domain of women; men have GBFs too. Strong male heterosexual relationships even have their own name: "bromance." Bromance is a combination of the words "brother" and "romance" and is defined as "a close but nonsexual relationship between two men" by the *Collins English Dictionary*.

Guys don't have to be metrosexuals to enjoy bromance—only heterosexuals—and the more heterosexual the better. In fact, the more confident a man is in his sexuality, the more likely he is to have a GBF.

Regardless of whether you're a guy or girl, I have a good idea of what you're feeling. I've been struggling with a breakup with a man whom I lived with for three years—the first person I've lived with since my divorce. For the first time I'm going through a breakup with my eyes wide open, and I'd like to share with you what I'm learning. I hope it will help you.

I have to be honest. Trying to capture my experience is a little like trying to catch a greased pig. From week to week, I experience new feelings, thoughts, and insights. I can't say that my breakup is totally behind me, but I can see light at the end of the tunnel. I now know that you can break up, wake up, and move on.

In this book, you'll learn:

- While everyone's process is different, you are not alone. None of us gets through life without experiencing loss, but as the Skin Horse explained to the rabbit in *The Velveteen Rabbit*, "Sometimes, when you are Real you don't mind being hurt."
- You will get through this. Whether you get to the other side wiser and ready for a healthier and happier relationship, or sad, disillusioned, and bitter depends on you—and if you're willing to do your homework.
- It's during these times of transition that you have the greatest opportunities for growth. Embrace this process and you'll become more aligned with the person you were born to be and with the life you were born to live. I did, and you can too. I'll show you how.

If you are looking for a silver bullet to take away the pain and rush this process, this book is not for you. No book, program, guide,

or guru can deliver on such a promise, despite what they may tell you. To become whole and happy takes work, but you don't have to do it alone. I am with you. I hope that by sharing my experience—and the experiences of my girl and guy friends—you'll gain inspiration, insight, and tools to help you get to the other side.

I've divided this book into six parts:

Part One: Setting the Scene

Part Two: Break Up

Part Three: Wake Up

Part Four: Breakthrough

Part Five: Move On

Part Six: Move Out

In the Appendices, I've included tools that I found particularly helpful. They include: seven commandments for conscious parting; ten tools to help you navigate breaking up, waking up, and moving on; and twelve questions that will help you as you move from breakup to breakthrough. I've also included several additional resources to guide you along your journey. Oh, and one last note about the book: I've changed the names of my ex-partners and friends in order to protect their privacy.

Elizabeth Lesser writes in her wonderful book *Broken Open, How Difficult Times Can Help Us Grow*, “If we can stay awake when our lives are changing, secrets will be revealed to us—secrets about ourselves, about the nature of life, and about the eternal source of happiness and peace that is always available, renewable, already within us.”

Most breakups are awful, but with compassion, attention, introspection, and intention they can become transforming, bringing

you closer to alignment with your true self while preparing you for the next great adventure.

“A breakup can be a kind of rite of passage helping you connect to the person you are now when you consciously go through it,” my friend Ann says.

The best spiritual teacher is always the life that you are living right now. Yet sometimes in order to learn the lessons of the present, you must first revisit the past.

Setting the Scene

At the end of my sixth grade year at the Westminster Schools in Atlanta, our class published a newsletter. I remember little about the newspaper other than an article that predicted where each of our classmates would be after the year 2000. For me, they wrote, “Randy Siegel will still be trying to give away his ID bracelet.” Little did I know then just how accurate their prediction would be.

Mainstream Married Man

I met the woman I would marry at a charity ball in Atlanta. Even though we clicked instantly, it took me a month to ask her out. I feared she would say no.

I couldn't believe my luck when she agreed to go out with me. She was beautiful. I still remember the blue dress she wore on our first date. It made her eyes even bluer. I was smitten.

I broke it off several months later fearing our relationship was too superficial. While we had a lot of fun, we rarely talked about subjects with any depth. I wanted more. When I began missing her, I thought I had made a mistake. She was pretty, witty, and social. No one had it all; I could talk about spiritual matters with my friends.

About that time, one of my best friends came out admitting his homosexuality. I was supportive but was not ready to admit I too was gay. I've known I am gay for as long as I can remember, but I thought I could control, or even outgrow, it. My positive self-image depended on being a mainstream married man.

When I turned twenty-five, it was time to settle down. Most of my friends were married, and I was sure I had found "the right one." When I first proposed she said she wasn't ready. The second time I proposed she was.

Close to a hundred friends watched us marry on Kentucky Derby weekend in 1981, at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in downtown Atlanta. Our reception was on the patio of the Piedmont Driving Club. It was one heck of a party. Our friends still laugh at how much fun they had.

On our honeymoon night, my bride awoke to find I wasn't in our bed. I was staring out the window lost in thought. I was a homosexual man now trapped in a heterosexual marriage; I had made a commitment and I had to keep it. It would take every bit of discipline, control, and denial I could garner to live a "normal" married man's life.

She never asked, and I never told what I was thinking that night. It was a covenant that we would keep for the next fourteen years.

Midlife Crisis

At thirty-eight, I called it a midlife crisis. Blaming work for my unhappiness, I complained I had no purpose in my life. Securing the names of two counselors, an industrial psychologist and a psychiatrist, I made appointments with both.

After giving me the Myers-Briggs test, the industrial psychologist concluded my current job was perfect. But the psychiatrist suggested I was searching for something more. He began to ask me pointed questions, and before I knew it I told him I was gay.

My secret was out. By admitting it to someone else, I admitted it to myself. There was no going back. Sensing my panic, he assured me that my wife and I would survive.

Later when he asked how I felt about living an inauthentic life, I knew I had to do something. I had always prided myself on my honesty and integrity, and I could now see I was living a lie.

After a Memorial Day weekend trip to the Caribbean, I blurted out to my wife I was gay. It was the hardest thing I've ever done. While she had known something was wrong, she never suspected my sexuality. Suddenly it all made sense.

Fearful for the future and angry about the past, our present was

steeped in pain. Holding each other on the sofa, we experienced first-time intimacy. Pledging to help each other, we became each other's chief means of support.

Six weeks later, I moved out at her suggestion. I wanted her to feel she had some control over her life. She didn't know that I had signed a lease two days before.

Serial Monogamist

Opening the door to my new apartment, I faced my greatest fear. After fourteen years of marriage, I was single again. I had moved from a 3,500-square-foot home to an apartment so small that friends dubbed it the “penalty box.” Despite the apartment’s modest size, it was my sanctuary. It became a place of introspection, healing, and growth.

That first night, I stared into the darkness and tossed and turned. I was not used to sleeping alone. Eyes wide open, I clutched my pillow and waited for morning.

“There will be light,” my older brother advised the next day. “But you have to walk through the darkness to get to it.”

Several months later, we were divorced, and I was free to date. Dating man after man, I felt like an Atlanta debutante at her coming-out party. Fresh, not jaded, I was the belle of the ball. I cruised bars, danced at discos, and vacationed at the gay meccas of South Beach, Provincetown, and Palm Springs. At first, it was fun being single, but after a while I was bored. I was ready to settle down.

After moving to Asheville, North Carolina, in 1998, I enjoyed

a series of one- to three-year relationships, including one with a woman (she remains one of my closest friends today).

“I don’t know what’s wrong with me,” I said to a friend.

“Why can’t I find a long-term partner?”

“Maybe you’re a serial monogamist,” she suggested.

That didn’t feel like enough.

Stop the Pain!

After breaking with up with “Sean” in 2005, I hit a dry spell. I had work I loved, a home I was proud of, money in the bank, and a cadre of loving friends; still, that was not enough. Despite the rich trappings of my life, I felt like a pauper. I had no partner.

A clawing hunger consumed my soul and no matter how hard I tried to feed it—by doing, being, analyzing, bargaining, settling, repressing, and running—the pain returned.

When I was growing up, my father said, “You can be anything, do anything, or have anything you want, son, if you just want it bad enough.” Dad lied, for there is nothing in the world I wanted more than a lover, yet I was alone.

Did I want it too much? Had desire swelled into obsession, and had obsession squeezed all hope of a special someone coming into my life?

The tapes played in my head:

You will always be alone.

You're not good enough.

You don't deserve love.