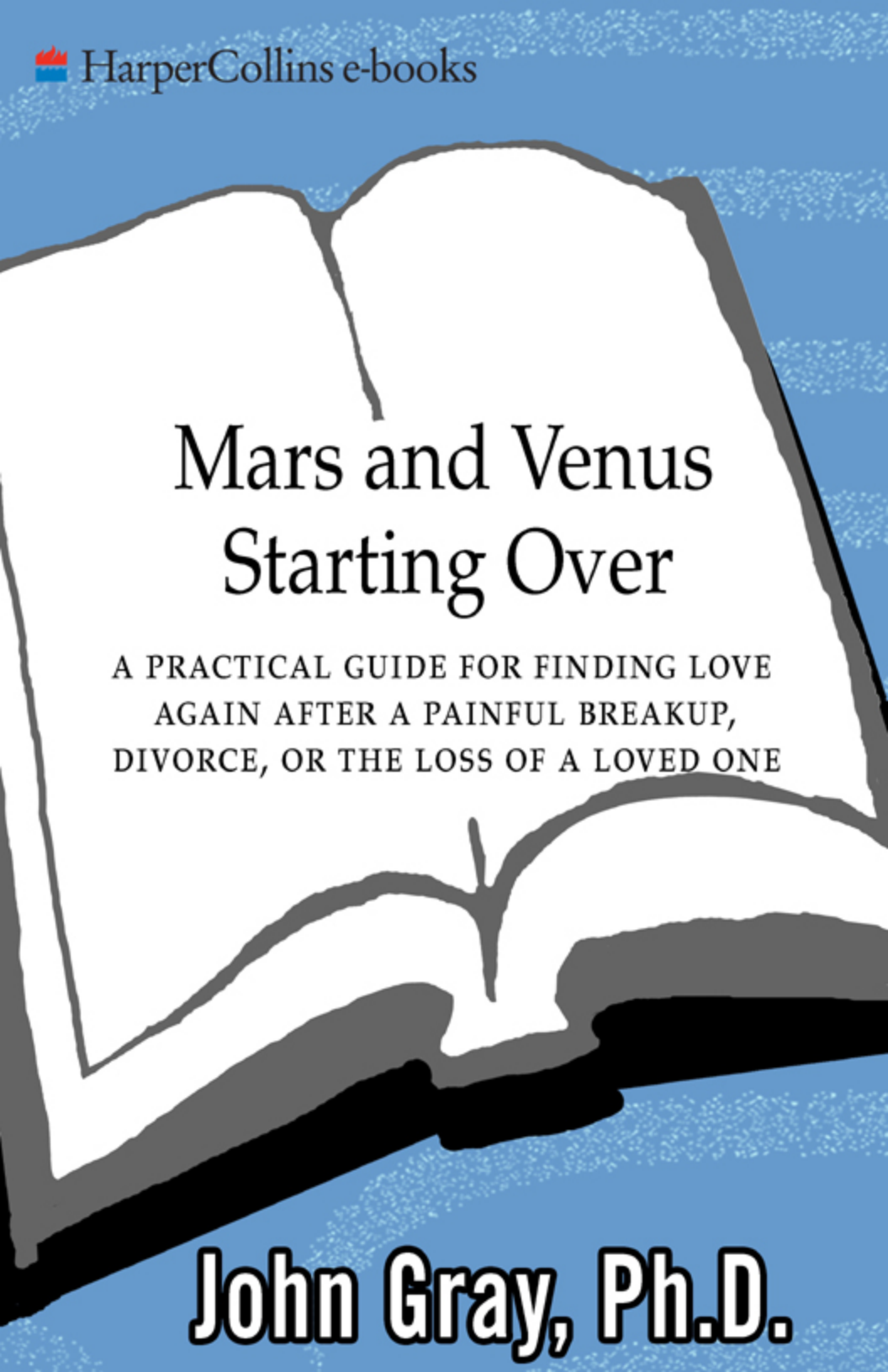




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Mars and Venus Starting Over

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR FINDING LOVE
AGAIN AFTER A PAINFUL BREAKUP,
DIVORCE, OR THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

John Gray, Ph.D.

MARS AND VENUS STARTING OVER

A Practical Guide for Finding Love Again
After a Painful Breakup, Divorce,
or the Loss of a Loved One

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*This book is dedicated with deepest love and affection
to my soul mate and wife, Bonnie Gray.
Her radiant love continues to bring out the best in me.*

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INTRODUCTION

With the loss of love, our lives are immediately transformed. Starting over, we are suddenly faced with the rest of our lives, and we have no idea what to do. We are stripped of what is most familiar to us with little knowledge of what comes next. Facing this new challenge, we have practically no experience to guide us. Our minds are filled with questions and our hearts with pain. By taking this time to read *Mars and Venus Starting Over*, you will find an abundance of insight and direction. You will know exactly what you need to do and where you are going.

Facing the challenge of starting over, we
have no experience to guide us.

The insights in this book come from twenty-eight years of counseling men and women to make wise choices in the process of healing their hearts after a painful breakup, a divorce, or the loss of a loved one. Although their circumstances were unique and widely varied, the pain they felt was the same: the pain of a broken heart. Through counseling and teaching workshops, I have directly assisted thousands of people in the process of healing their hearts.

The insights and processes described in this book have worked repeatedly for them and will work for you. They have also worked for me. In my own life, I have had to start over after a divorce, and I have suffered the loss of my father and my younger brother. I know how devastating a loss can

be, and I know the many gifts that come from healing a loss.

After healing the pain from the ending of my first marriage, I was able to learn from my mistakes and go on to create a new and more successful life. Although I would never have thought it then, I am so grateful my first marriage ended. I would have never moved on to marry my wife Bonnie and create the wonderful life and family we now share.

You will look back to this painful time and be grateful for the gifts it brings.

From healing my pain, I was able to create a new life filled with love and success. As my heart opened more fully than ever before, I was able to see things much more clearly. On my healing journey, each day brought new insights and discoveries that prepared me to recognize Bonnie as my soul mate. Successfully giving and receiving love in my marriage and with the encouragement of increasing success in counseling others, I was able to develop the ideas in *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*.

Through healing my own heart, I became a much better counselor and teacher, but even more important, a better husband and father to my children. Having made the journey from personal experience, I know the incredible rewards of starting over and finding love again.

Even a painful divorce can open the door for you to experience a rich and fulfilling lifetime of love.

This process is not an easy one. To give birth to a new you, to a new life, there are labor pains. It takes hard work. Though at times painful, going through the process is also

incredibly rich and fulfilling. After the initial adjustment, it will become much easier. Soon you will be looking back, and all this pain will be just a memory.

Soon all this pain will be just a memory.

Although the death of a loved one is very different from a painful breakup or a divorce, the process of healing our pain is the same. In this book, you will discover how to heal a broken heart regardless of what kind of loss you are suffering. Although you will read stories and examples that are not exactly the same as your situation, you will still probably discover some part of you that relates.

THE THREE PARTS

Mars and Venus Starting Over is divided into three parts. The first part, *Mars and Venus Starting Over*, addresses the part of the healing process that is basically the same for men and women. Although the healing process is the same, men and women often have to confront different challenges. A strategy that is productive for a man is not necessarily productive for a woman, and vice versa.

The second part, *Starting Over on Venus*, addresses the particular challenges that women face in the process of starting over. The third part, *Starting Over on Mars*, addresses the unique challenges that men often face. In reading *Mars and Venus Starting Over*, a man may choose to skip part two and then come back to it after reading part three. Both parts contain vital information for both men and women, because there is always some overlap.

Although the process of healing our pain is the same, each of us has many unique challenges to face with our experience of loss. By exploring the insights required to

overcome a variety of different situations, you will be able to determine clearly what approach is best for you. Not only will your choices become clearer, but you will find comfort knowing that you are not alone. Others have stood where you stand now, and they have gone forward to find relief and permanent healing.

HEALING OUR HEARTS

On my honeymoon with Bonnie, I received a call informing me of tragic news. My father had been found dead in the trunk of his car. He had been robbed by a hitchhiker and left in the trunk of his car, abandoned by the side of the highway. After a few hours under the hot Texas sun, he died of heat stroke. I, like many others who have lost a loved one, felt the almost unbearable pain and grief of loss. There was no way I could bring him back.

As I continued to grieve, I assumed that this pain could never go away. Fortunately, I was blessed with the support I needed to heal my pain. Now when I think about my father, instead of feeling pain, I feel the sweetness of my love for him and his love for me. Although I wish he were here to enjoy my achievements and to see his grandchildren, there is no pain. As I remember him now, while writing about him, it brings up warm feelings of love and some tears, tears of gratitude for the special times we did spend together.

Even the pain of a tragic loss can eventually
go away.

Two years later, I received another call with more tragic news. My younger brother Jimmy had committed suicide. This world was too cold and harsh for his sensitive soul, and he chose to take his life. Without the knowledge of how to

heal his heart after an encounter with drugs and a painful breakup, his life spiraled downward. He became manic-depressive and needed to take medication just to cope. In those days, the medications were not as sophisticated as they are today. The side effects made his life unbearable.

The loss of my brother was devastating. As children, we had been very close. His death was as painful as the loss of my father, but in a different way. Besides missing him, I was so sad that I couldn't help him. I have helped many people, but I could not save him. In grieving his loss, though, I learned to forgive myself.

A big part of our grief is feeling powerless to
save or bring back our loved one.

Trying to help my brother with his problems was what motivated me to study psychology in the first place. When traditional methods didn't work, I continued searching and expanding my understanding of the healing process.

In facing my feelings of guilt and shame for not saving my brother, I healed my heart once again. This time I discovered a deeper sense of innocence and worthiness. I was able to release the idea that I had to be perfect to be worthy of love. Through healing my pain, I was eventually able to distinguish clearly between feeling responsive to the needs of others and the mistake of feeling responsible for them. These are just a few examples of the gifts I have received from healing my heart after the loss of my brother.

The best gift is that I can continue to feel my love for my brother without a pain in my chest. Instead of feeling pain, I feel grateful that he is no longer in pain. Although I was not able to save him, I have gone on to help many people save themselves. He lives on in my heart, inspiring me to make this world a better place.

MAKING YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE

Millions of people in all walks of life, rich and poor, healthy and sick, continue to suffer from the loss of love. Instead of finding love and making their dreams come true, they are just coping with life. They are trying to get through the day. In most cases, they are not even aware of what they are missing. They don't even know that they have a choice. They don't know that there is a way to heal their hearts and find love again. They don't realize that they can heal their pain.

After reading *Mars and Venus Starting Over*, you will know that you do have a choice. Although the pain of loss is an inevitable part of life, suffering is not. You can heal the pain of your past, and you can grow from this experience in a positive way. Instead of getting worse, your life can and will get better.

Mars and Venus Starting Over is a labor of love. It is my gift to the world and the result of twenty-eight years of serving others like you. I hope it serves you as well during this dark night of the soul. Let it be a little candle in the darkness of your despair. A wise teacher to guide you on your way. An understanding friend to soothe your loneliness. Let it be your companion during this most painful time. Read it again and again and remember you are not alone. Others have been down this road, and they have survived. They have lived to love again. And you will too!

PART ONE

MARS AND VENUS
STARTING OVER

1

MARS AND VENUS STARTING OVER

When single again, men and women face different challenges. Just as we think, feel, and communicate differently, we also respond differently to the loss of love. During a crisis of the heart, a woman's instinctive and automatic reactions are not the same as a man's. Her issues are different as well as her mistakes. What is good for her is not necessarily good for him. In a variety of ways, their needs are worlds apart. It is as if men were from Mars and women were from Venus.

Although we cope differently, both men and women can experience equally agonizing feelings. Starting over after a divorce, a painful breakup, or the death of a loved one can be the most challenging experience of a lifetime. For most people devastated by the loss of love, it is beyond anything we could have expected, predicted, or imagined.

Starting over after a divorce, a painful
breakup, or the death of a loved one can be
the most challenging experience of a
lifetime.

Our hearts ache as they cry out in loneliness and confusion. We are stunned by our helplessness. We fight inside

with our inability to change what has happened. We become distraught as we sink into the depths of despair and hopelessness. We feel lost and abandoned in a sea of emptiness and darkness. Time slows down and the passing of each moment seems like eternity.

After a loss, we fight inside ourselves with our inability to change what has happened.

It is a struggle simply to fill each empty moment and get through the day. At times the bittersweet pain of loss is replaced by a dull numbness, but then something reminds us of our loss, and once again we long to feel and love again. Never before have we experienced our need for love and connection so agonizingly. As we are forced to face and feel the raw pain in our hearts, we realize our lives will never again be the same.

Eventually, when the healing process is complete, we fully let go. In our minds and hearts, we surrender and accept that we can't change what has happened. Being single again, we start to rebuild our lives. Once more, we begin to reach out to give and receive love. Although we could not have imagined it, our lives come back to a sense of normalcy. After the darkness of despair, the warm, comforting, and soothing sunshine of love reveals itself once again. Although this happy ending is possible, it is not guaranteed.

UNDERSTANDING THE HEALING PROCESS

To heal a broken heart, we must be able to complete the healing process. This requires new insight and understanding, but most people are not aware of what is necessary. We are not taught how to heal a broken heart in school, nor is it something with which we have a lot of practice. Being in the dark and vulnerable, we either blindly follow the advice of friends and family, or