

Loved: Relationship Rules for Women Who Thought They Knew the Rules

Julie Shafer

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Julie Shafer prescribes communication help for relationships in her self-help book, *Loved*. While aimed at women and their relationships with their significant others, its process is applicable to all.

Shafer's easy-to-follow, seven-rule prescription was developed over her twenty years as a therapist, and it also draws on her personal experiences. Its therapeutic work encourages self-awareness about present emotional states, regarding how the past impacts the present, and about how to work within relationships in a calm, productive manner. Its rules include "Tell the Truth," "Own Your Emotions," and "Be Kind;" all are bolstered by examples and exercises, defined in clear terms to ensure success. Whether relationships need a more gentle touch or involve serious problems, these guidelines are accessible and effective.

Fascinating in its explorations of how human brains work, the book includes topics like common assumptions, blind spots, and confirmation bias. Each highlights the role that the brain plays in people's emotional reactions, as well as the arguments that people unconsciously engage in. While these concepts are intellectual, the book's explanations are uncomplicated and easy to understand: it presents confirmation bias as "the tendency to take ambiguous information and create an explanation that fits current beliefs and expectations," because of which a person might jump to conclusions about a significant other's behavior based on past experiences, but that have nothing to do with the significant other.

Relationship examples and advice arises in every chapter. Both are relatable. The examples include spouses who feel like they have to remind their significant others to help out or do certain chores, whereafter arguments ensue. At some moments, the purposes of book's positive and negative examples are muddled, as when the traits of a helpful friend are named; a dramatic, non-helpful friend is described, though a reference after suggests that such friends are needed. Most examples, though, are clear, and followed by realistic, achievable conversation scripts. These help to show how spouses learn to work with their significant others rather than nagging them, and they make it possible to put the book's lessons to use.

The writing is straightforward and clear, and the book's psychological vocabulary is defined in everyday terms. A useful appendix includes worksheets and a glossary of emotions, helping to cement the book's lessons.

A practical, usable tool to create change, *Loved* is a valuable self-help book that encourages its audience toward improving their relationships.

JILL BEAUCHAMP (June 15, 2020)

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