

IS EVERYONE HANGING OUT WITHOUT ME?

(AND OTHER CONCERNS)

From the
creator of
*The
Mindy
Project*

MINDY KALING

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

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Acknowledgments

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About the Book

Mindy Kaling has lived many lives: comedienne, actress, obedient child of immigrant professionals and, now, writer. With a blend of witty confessions and unscientific observations, Mindy writes about everything from being a timid young chubster afraid of her own bike to living the Hollywood life, dating, friendships and planning her own funeral - all executed with several conveniently placed stopping points for you to run errands and make phone calls.

About the Author

MINDY KALING is an Emmy-nominated writer and actress on NBC's *The Office*. She is also the creator and star of a new show, *The Mindy Project*. You can find her on Twitter ([@mindykalining](https://twitter.com/mindykalining)), or at her desk pretending to be writing a screenplay but actually online shopping with a memorized credit card number. She resides in Los Angeles. Her billing zip code is 90067.

Is Everyone Hanging Out
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(And Other Concerns)

Mindy Kaling



EBURY
PRESS

For my parents



Hello

Introduction

THANK YOU for buying this book. Or, if my publisher's research analytics are correct, thank you, Aunts of America, for buying this for your niece you don't know that well but really want to connect with more. There are many teenage vampire books you could have purchased instead. I'm grateful you made this choice.

I thought I'd take a minute to answer some questions:

What is this book about?

In this book I write a lot about romance, female friendships, unfair situations that now seem funny in retrospect, unfair situations that I still don't think are funny, Hollywood, heartache, and my childhood. Just that really hard-core, masculine stuff men love to read about. I wrote this book in a way that reflects how I think. Sometimes it's an essay or story, and sometimes it's a *pliest*, which is a piece with a list-y quality, a term I've just made up.

Is this one of those guide books celebrities write for girls?

Oh, hell no. I'm only marginally qualified to be giving advice at all. My body mass index is certainly not ideal, I frequently use my debit card to buy things that cost less than three dollars, because I never have cash on me, and my bedroom is so untidy it looks like vandals ransacked the Anthropologie Sale section. I'm kind of a mess. I did, however, fulfill a childhood dream of writing and acting in television and movies. Armed with that confidence,

alongside a lifelong love of the sound of my own voice, yes, I've put some advice in this book.

However, you should know I disagree with a lot of traditional advice. For instance, they say the best revenge is living well. I say it's acid in the face—who will love them now? Another old saying is that revenge is a dish best served cold. But it *feels* best served piping hot, straight out of the oven of outrage. My opinion? Take care of revenge right away. Push, shove, scratch that person while they're still within arm's reach. Don't let them get away! Who knows when you'll get this opportunity again?

Do you offer up a lot of opinions in this book?

A little bit. I do lay in some opinions here and there. For example, I don't think it should be socially acceptable for people to say they are "bad with names." No one is bad with names. That is not a real thing. Not knowing people's names isn't a neurological condition; it's a choice. You *choose* not to make learning people's names a priority. It's like saying, "Hey, a disclaimer about me: I'm rude." For heaven's sake, if you don't know someone's name, just pretend you do. Do that thing everyone else does, where you vaguely say, "Nice to see you!" and make weak eye contact.

So, is this book like a women's magazine?

Not really, but if it reads like a really funny magazine, I'll be psyched. I love magazines. You can't walk by a magazine and not sit down and read it. You try to throw away a magazine and if you don't push it down in the trash enough, it somehow resurfaces on the floor of your TV room. I know this because I swear my house has been haunted by the same December 2004 issue of *Glamour* magazine for the past seven years.

I'm buying this book for my daughter, whom I'm trying to reconnect with after my acrimonious divorce from her mother. Will this help me seem like a cool, understanding dad?

Honestly, I think you should buy her some kind of SUV. This is what all the divorced dads did for their kids in my high school. A Land Rover, something like that. If you don't have that kind of money, I would just suggest reconciling with the mom.

I don't know. I have a lot of books already. I wanted to finish those Girl with the Dragon Tattoo books before the movies come out.

This book will take you two days to read. Did you even see the cover? It's mostly pink. If you're reading this book every night for months, something is not right.

This sounds okay, but not as good as Tina Fey's book. Why isn't this more like Tina Fey's book?

I know, man. Tina's awesome. I think she may have every major international trophy for excellence except a Heisman. (She might actually have an honorary Heisman, I should check.) Unfortunately, I can't be Tina, because it's very difficult to lure her into a *Freaky Friday*-type situation where we could switch bodies, even though in the movies they make it look so easy. Believe me, I've tried.

What else should I know?

- (1) There is no sunrise so beautiful that it is worth waking me up to see it.
- (2) I would like to be friends with Beyoncé Knowles.

Well, I think I've covered everything and have still maintained an air of sexy mystery about myself. I feel good about this.

Love,
Mindy

Alternate Titles for This Book

HERE WERE some titles for my book that I really liked but was advised strongly not to use.

The Girl with No Tattoo

When Your Boyfriend Fits into Your Jeans and Other Atrocities

The Book That Was Never a Blog

Always Wear Flats and Have Your Friends Sleep Over: A Step-by-Step How-To Guide for Avoiding Getting Murdered

Harry Potter Secret Book #8

Sometimes You Just Have to Put on Lip Gloss and Pretend to Be Psyched

I Want Dirk Nowitzki to Host *Saturday Night Live* So Much That I'm Making It the Title of My Book

Barf Me to Death and Other Things I've Been Known to Say

The Last Mango in Paris (*this would work best if "Mango" were the cheeky nickname for an Indian woman, and if I'd spent any time in Paris*)

So You've Just Finished Chelsea Handler's Book, Now What?

Deep-Dish Pizza in Kabul (a touching novel about a brave girl enjoying Chicago-style pizza in secret Taliban-ruled Afghanistan)

There Has Ceased to Be a Difference Between My Awake Clothes and My Asleep Clothes

I Don't Know How She Does It, But I Suspect She Gets Help from Illegal Immigrants

I Forget Nothing: A Sensitive Kid Looks Back



Chubby for Life

I DON'T REMEMBER a time when I wasn't chubby. Like being Indian, being chubby feels like it is just part of my permanent deal. I remember being in first grade, in Mrs. Gilmore's class at Fiske Elementary School, and seeing that Ashley Kemp, the most popular girl in our class, weighed only thirty-seven pounds. We knew this because we weighed her on the industrial postal scale they kept in the teacher's supply closet. I was so envious. I snuck into the supply closet later that same day to weigh myself. I was a whopping sixty-eight pounds.

Some of the first math I understood was that I was closer to twice Ashley's weight than to her weight.

"Don't be closer to *twice* a friend's weight than to her actual weight," I told myself. This little mantra has helped me stave off obesity for more than two decades.

My mom's a doctor, but because she came from India and then Africa, where childhood obesity was not a problem, she put no premium on having skinny kids. In fact, she and my dad didn't mind having a chubby daughter. Part of me wonders if it even made them feel a little prosperous, like *Have you seen our overweight Indian child? Do you know how statistically rare this is?* It will then not come as a surprise to you that I've never been thin in my life—except the day I was born, when I was six pounds.

It's a small point of pride that I was a six-pound baby, because from my limited understanding of baby weights, that's on the skinnier side. I flaunt my low baby weight the

way really obese people must flaunt their dainty, small feet. It's my sole claim to skinny fame.



My older brother Vijay, and me, interrupted as I was plotting to eat him.

As you can see, from then on, however, it was full-speed-ahead food paradise! In grade school, I would vacillate along the spectrum from chubby to full-on fat until I was about fourteen. Being overweight is so common in America and comes in so many forms that you can't just call someone "fat" and have the reasonable expectation anyone will understand you. Here's the breakdown:

Chubby: A regular-size person who could lose a few, for whom you feel affection.

Chubster: An overweight, adorable child. That kid from *Two and a Half Men* for the first couple of years.

Fatso: An antiquated term, really. In the 1970s, mean sorority girls would call a pledge this. Probably most often used on people who aren't even really fat, but who fear being fat.

Fatass: Not usually used to describe weight, actually. This deceptive term is more a reflection of one's laziness. In the writers' room of *The Office*, an upper-level writer might get impatient and yell, "Eric, take your fat ass and those six fatasses and go write this B-story! I don't want to hear any more excuses why the plot doesn't make sense!"

Jabba the Hutt: *Star Wars* villain. Also, something you can call yourself after a particularly filling Thanksgiving dinner that your aunts and uncles will all laugh really hard at.

Obese: A serious, nonpejorative way to describe someone who is unhealthily overweight.

Obeseotron: A nickname you give to someone you adore who has just stepped on your foot accidentally, and it hurts. Alternatively, a fat robot.

Overweight: When someone is roughly thirty pounds too heavy for his or her frame.

Pudgy: See "Chubby."

Pudgo: See "Chubster."

Tub o' Lard: A huge compliment given by Depression-era people to other, less skinny people.

Whale: A really, really mean way that teen boys target teen girls. See the following anecdote.

DUANTE DIALLO

There have been two times in my life—ages fourteen and nineteen—when I lost a ton of weight over a short period of time. At fourteen, I lost the weight because of Duante Diallo.

In ninth grade, my class was made up mostly of the same kids with whom I had gone to middle school, with the exception of about twenty splashy new students. One of those students was Duante.

Duante Diallo was a handsome kid from Senegal who'd moved to Boston to play basketball for our school. He was immediately the star forward of our varsity basketball team. We had a not-great artsy-private-school basketball team, the kind made up of slender boys whose primary goal was to seem well-rounded for college applications. But you could tell Duante would've been the star of even a really good team. He was beloved by teachers because he was a brave kid for being so far away from his parents, and beloved by students because he was good-looking, a jock, and had an interesting African accent. Also, people couldn't believe the stuff he had done in Senegal, like smoke, drive a car, have sex, live in a village, and hold a gun. When he was introduced at a student assembly, he chose to give a short speech where he taught us a sports cheer in Senegalese. In the hallways, small crowds would form around Duante as he shared stories from his past. Once he shot a cow with an AK-47. He was so popular you could barely look at him without being blinded by cool.

Duante was also, unfortunately, a tyrannical asshole. Maybe I should have gleaned this from the joy with which he told the story about murdering a cow with a massive gun. He fixated on me early in the year as being overweight and was open with his observations. At first it had the veneer of niceness. For example, once I was getting a drink of water in the hallway where he and his friends were standing.

DUANTE: You would actually be really pretty if you lost weight.

His face was gentle and earnest, as though what he had really said was, “You remind me of a sunset in my native Senegal.” It was confusing. All I could muster as a reply to this insulting comment was “thank you.” I was hurt, but I rationalized that maybe Duante had been around only extremely thin African girls his whole third-world life and didn’t know American girls had access to refrigeration, and that we didn’t have to divide up UN food parcels with our neighbors. (This may have been a tad racist an assumption on my part. Look, we were both in the wrong.)

By winter, I had not lost any weight, and in fact had gained about ten more pounds. This really bothered Duante. I think he felt he had gone out of his way to give me some valuable advice and I had chosen not to follow it, therefore insulting him. One day in February, I walked into the freshmen center, he stopped mid-conversation with his friends and gestured to me.

DUANTE: Speaking of whales ...

I don’t even think they’d been talking about whales. The guys all laughed, but even I could tell some felt guilty doing it. I had been friends with most of them since we were kids. Danny Feinstein, who was my Latin study buddy, came up to me later that afternoon and told me that “What Duante said wasn’t cool.” He had a stoic look of noble do-gooder, although he had said nothing at the time of the insult. Again, I was forced to say thank you. How I continually found myself in situations where I felt I had to say thank you to mean guys, I’m not sure.

It was a tough winter. I had gone from competitive, bookish nerd to nervous target. If this was *Heathers*, I was Martha Dumptruck and this mean African kid was all three Heathers. I turned my obsessive teenage energy away from reading *Mad* magazine and focused on my diet. I didn’t have access to a lot of weight-loss resources, because this

was pre-Internet. There was one Weight Watchers near us, but it shared a mini-mall parking lot with a sketchy Salvation Army, and my parents didn't like the idea of taking me there for meetings. So I invented a makeshift diet formula: I would eat exactly half of what was put in front of me, and no dessert. Without exercising, I lost thirty pounds in about two months. A janitor at school whom I liked, Mrs. Carrington, would see me and say, "Damn, you've got a metabolism on you, don't you girl?" The janitors were always in my corner.

I remember waking up in the morning and looking down at my fingers and seeing they had shrunk overnight. Suddenly I was freezing all the time, like those skinny girls in movie theaters are always complaining about, and needed to sleep with an extra wool blanket. My face thinned out, and my belly went away. I stopped wearing oversize college sweatshirts and corduroy pants with elastic waists. Light brown lines appeared on my upper inner arms that looked like little rivers headed to my shoulder blades. I actually thought they looked pretty, until my mom told me they were stretch marks from losing so much weight so fast. It was like a Disney sci-fi movie. Mom was impressed but didn't want me to go overboard, which was impossible, because I was still eating a lot. I just had taken a break from eating like a professional football player. I loved all the side effects of losing the weight, but the reason I did it was so that Duante would stop making fun of me, so I could hang out in the freshmen center again, and not where I had been: across the street in the Fairy Woods.[fn1](#)

I thought Duante would finally leave me alone, but he didn't. One day I was walking down the hallway to class and passed Duante and his group of friends.

DUANTE: Remember when Mindy was like (blowing out his cheeks to make a fat face) a whale?