

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

WHY
NOT
ME?

MINDY
KALING

From the
creator of
*The
Mindy
Project*





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About the Book

Mindy Kaling shares her ongoing journey to find contentment and excitement in her adult life, whether it's falling in love at work, seeking new friendships in lonely places, attempting to be the first person in history to lose weight without any behavior modification whatsoever, or more important, believing that you have a place in Hollywood when you're constantly reminded that no one looks like you.

In the chapter "How to Look Spectacular", she reveals her tongue-in-cheek solutions for guaranteed on-camera beauty; "Player" tells the story of Mindy being seduced, then dumped, by a female friend in LA, and in "Soup Snakes", she spills some secrets on her relationship with her ex-boyfriend and close friend, B. J. Novak.

Mindy turns the anxieties, the glamour, and the celebrations of her second coming-of-age into this laugh-out-loud book, to which anyone who's ever been at a turning point in their life or career can relate. And those who've never been at a turning point can skip to the parts where she talks about meeting Bradley Cooper.

About the Author

Mindy Kaling is the creator and star of the critically acclaimed series *The Mindy Project*. Her first book, *Is Everyone Hanging Out With Me? (And Other Concerns)*, was featured on the *New York Times* Best Sellers list. She also starred as Kelly Kapoor on the Emmy-winning series *The Office* and wrote twenty-four episodes of the series, including “Niagara,” which scored her an Emmy nomination. She has been named one of *Time* magazine’s 100 Most Influential People. Kaling starred as Disgust in Pixar’s *Inside Out* and made her film debut in Judd Apatow’s *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*. She lives in New Hampshire and doesn’t own a television.

ALSO BY MINDY KALING

*Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me? (And Other
Concerns)*



Why Not Me?



Mindy Kaling



EBURY
PRESS

For my mother



HELLO AGAIN



IN SEVENTH GRADE I started at a new school. On the first day, I was so anxious to make friends, I brought a family-size bag of Skittles to homeroom so I could pass them out and entice my new classmates to talk to me. "Do you like Skittles?" I asked. Kids would nod, cautiously. "Here, take some. I'm Mindy!" I said, trying to rope them into conversation. It didn't work very well. Even back then the kids thought this was suspicious behavior, like I was covering for something unseemly they couldn't quite pinpoint. Still, I persisted, striking up conversations like a middle school Hare Krishna, and cornering kids with aggressively banal chitchat. "That's so funny you like the color blue. I like turquoise. *We're so similar.*" I did this until my art teacher, Mr. Posner, pulled me aside.

Mr. Posner was soft-spoken and wouldn't let us talk about the movie *Silence of the Lambs*, because it contained violence against women. I hated him. "You don't have to give people candy to like you, Mindy," he said. "They will like you ... for *you.*" I nodded meaningfully, knowing he wanted to see that my mind had been blown by his awesome humanity. Then he took my Skittles and I thought, What a load of garbage. At twelve years old, I had experienced enough to have zero faith in the power of my looks or personality to reel in the friends I wanted so badly. I needed my Skittles. The next day I brought in more, and Mr. Posner called my parents. The Skittles stopped, and I wished that Mr. Posner was trapped in the bottom of a well, and later killed, like in *Silence of the Lambs*. My parents encouraged me to play field hockey, where I eventually did end up making a few friends. I remember that time as one of the most stressful periods of my life. Every kid wants

approval, but my desire to be well liked was central to my personality.

As I got older, I got craftier and less obvious, but I've always put a lot of energy and effort into people liking me. That's why I've never understood the compliment "effortless." People love to say: "She just walked into the party, charming people with her effortless beauty." I don't understand that at all. What's so wrong with effort, anyway? It means you care. What about the girl who "walked into the party, her determination to please apparent on her eager face"? Sure, she might seem a little crazy, and, yes, maybe everything she says sounds like conversation starters she found on a website, but at least she's trying. Let's give *her* a shot!

And these days, I find I'm caring less and less about what people think of me. Maybe it's my age, maybe it's my security in my career, maybe it's because I'm skrilla flush with that dollah-dollah-bill-y'all, but if I had to identify my overall feeling these days, it's much more "Eh, screw it. Here's how I really feel." The truth is, it's hard to get people to like you, but it's even harder to keep people liking you. You'd have to bring in Skittles every single day. The result of my not caring so much about what I say allows me to care more about *how* I say it. I think it makes my writing more personal and more enjoyable.

If you're reading this, you're probably a woman. Or perhaps you're a gay man getting a present for your even gayer friend. Maybe you accidentally bought this thinking it was the *Malala* book. However this book made its way from the "Female Humor/Brave Minority Voices/Stress-free Summer Reads!" section of your bookstore to your hands, it doesn't matter. The important thing is you are here now. Welcome. I'm excited to share my stories with you, so you can see what I'm really like. If my childhood, teens, and twenties were about wanting people to like me, now I want people to know me. So, this is a start.

Enjoy.

Mindy Kaling
Los Angeles, California

... For the Ladies ...





HOW TO LOOK SPECTACULAR: A STARLET'S CONFESSIONS



AT SOME POINT in the past few years, I transformed from Mindy Kaling, boring anonymous comedy writer who buys her bras at T.J.Maxx, to this person:



Mindy Kaling, red-carpet glamourpuss with perfect skin and shiny hair, outfitted in the latest fashion garments! Look at me, just lounging on a chair like "I'm so fancy, my torso doesn't even bend!"

Here I am again!



I am telling you, the key to looking gorgeous is to never sit up straight. It implies you have not eaten enough to have the strength to sit like a regular person, which historically is sexy to everyone.

The person above is the creation of a handful of talented people whose job it is to make me look good. I'm of course talking about the hair, makeup, costume, lighting, spackling, and hoisting departments. They all work hard, so all I have to do is show up in my sweatpants and zit cream and say the magic words: "Make me look gorgeous or you're fired."

I'm just kidding! I don't do that. In fact, I don't have to do anything. That's why I'm ~~a starlet~~ extremely grateful. Curious what I looked like before all these people worked their magic on me?



Quite a transformation, huh?

Now, usually, people privy to this kind of valuable information keep it to themselves, because an unspoken rule among actresses is: never tell any other woman the secrets of your beauty, even if she's a ninety-five-year-old background actor playing a cadaver. "Today she's a cadaver; tomorrow she's a cadaver on a CBS drama trying to balance a love life and her demanding job as a district attorney," you think suspiciously. That's why when actresses are asked in interviews about their obvious, face-altering plastic surgery, they say things like "Oh, I would *never* get any work done. Then how do I look like this? I'm just getting a lot of rest, meditating, and staying hydrated." One of the great things about women's magazines is that they accept that drinking water and sitting quietly will make your breasts huge and lips plump up to the size of two bratwursts.

Maybe it's because I'm such a rule breaker, maybe it's because I'm so down-to-earth, or maybe it's because you spent money on this book and I don't want you to return it, but I have decided to share my beauty secrets with you.

Now you too can go from looking like Gollum in *Lord of the Rings* to looking like a sexy, authentic Hollywood lady. Just read all the tricks I've learned and incorporate them into your own routine. It's easy, my precious!

GET YOUR HAIR ON *FLEEK* (IS THIS WORD STILL COOL? WAS IT EVER?)

The first thing you need to know is that the hair on your head is worthless. The color, the length, the thickness, everything. You will never see anyone on TV sporting their own God-given hair, unless it's on, like, a sad miniseries about factory workers in East Germany.

The same goes for hair color. Yes, your natural color may be appropriate for your skin tone, but this isn't the land of

appropriate—*this is Hollywood, baby*. Out here, a dark-skinned woman's traditional hair color is honey blond. A hip white woman's natural hair is gray-lavender.

The real trick to having gorgeous hair is quantity. Piles of thick, cascading, My Little Pony-style hair signifies youth, so if you don't have that, you are basically announcing that you are old and dying. To keep up with the trend, everyone has used hair extensions. And I mean *everyone*. The stenographer who doesn't speak in that judge show you watch. The Long Island Medium. Clooney. Castle. EVERYBODY on the *Today* show, but no one in the Orange Room. The entire family getting a new house on *Extreme Home Makeover*, including the kids. Charlie Rose. The obese woman on *My 600-lb Life*. There are fabled stories of what exactly is on Jeremy Piven's head. I'm not throwing shade. I would look like the Crypt Keeper if you saw me with my natural hair on TV. It's a volume game, and he or she with the most hair wins.

This is how you know you have enough hair:

- The weight of it gives you a splitting headache
- At the end of the day you find stuff in it, like receipts and wet Tic Tacs
- If you are topless, your long and thick hair easily covers both of your breasts, which is great if you have to run to CVS and all of your tops are in the wash
- Hair is always getting caught in your armpits
- You can pull guests up to the window of your second-story apartment with your hair, Rapunzel-style

You're probably wondering where all this hair is coming from. Remember in middle school history class, when you learned about the Dutch East India Company? They would travel all over Asia and India for spices to ship on the spice route to the New World. That mercantile route is essentially the same geographical route hair travels to get

to actresses in Los Angeles. Locks of hair are culled from women in Asia and India, but instead of from the Dutch East India Company, you get them from places in downtown Los Angeles with names like *Divastyles Human Hair by Giovanná*.

If you think about where your hair came from for too long, it can be very sad. So I prefer to tell myself vague lies. Like, maybe these are all deeply spiritual women and cutting their hair off is part of some beautiful religious ritual, so they were going to do it anyway, and now they're just getting paid for it; which is better than the reality that these women are all Fantine and we are monsters stealing their hair.

You're probably wondering what you should do with the hair once you have it. I wear colorful, complicated clothes, so I keep my hair and makeup really simple.

If I wear a neon-yellow coat over a checkerboard dress and also have heavy eye shadow and Orphan Annie curls, I will look like your aunt who just came out during Pride Weekend. I have to pick my appearance battles. If you're Natalie Dormer, you can take big fashion risks and shave half your head, and it looks good. If you're a normal person and you try that, you just look like you had recent brain surgery.

SPRAY TANS! (SURPRISE! I'VE BEEN WHITE ALL ALONG!)

Two or three times a year I get a spray tan. "But why?" you ask. "You already have dark skin. Like, *really* dark skin." Well, first of all, that's a little racially weird that you said that. Second, it's not about changing the color, it's about *evening out* the color. When I wear a strapless dress or act in a nude scene, I have noticeable tan lines just like white people. And unless I've been hired to do an American

Apparel thong campaign, which, by the way, I'm totally into doing, tan lines are no bueno for me. So the night before we are shooting a scene where I have to show a lot of skin (which happens way more than I ever thought), I get a spray tan. Basically what that means is a really brave woman named Jen will show up at my house with a machine that looks like a small stainless-steel box to store a gremlin, and I will strip naked and stand in my bathroom with my arms and legs wide open and a guilty expression on my face. You don't have to wear underwear, but I always wear mine because it's important for Jen to know that I am classy. When sweet, patient Jen has finished spraying a temporary dye all over my body with a little airbrush, she uses a blow dryer to dry me off.

I'm so mortified during this entire process that I find relief in relentless chatter. "Oh, I've heard *American Horror Story* is groundbreaking. Tell me all about it! Like, every scene from every episode!" I get really focused on what we are chatting about so, in my mind, it seems like *our conversation* is the reason she is there, not because she needed to paint my boobs with a dye called "Chocolate Mama."

But it's all worth it, because the next day I am a scrumptious, golden-brown delight, like a McDonald's hash brown.

OH, THIS OLD (PERFECTLY TAILORED) THING?

I've always loved clothes. Like any normal woman, I would see a dress, buy it, rip the tags off with my teeth, save the buttons for ten to twelve years in a drawer, and wear it to work. If I was going on a date, I might take a little extra care and use nail clippers to remove the tag, wear a cardigan on top, and cinch the whole look together with a wide belt. "Cinch together the whole look with a wide belt"

was a very popular style in the early 2000s, which we believed accentuated our curves but in reality made a generation of women look like we were wearing lumbar support braces.

When I first met my costume designer, Salvador Perez, he was shooting the Lindsay Lohan-starring TV movie *Liz & Dick*, which, from all accounts, was far more tumultuous than any actual interaction Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton ever had. The experience was hard on Sal but excellent for me. Sal was so traumatized that he was extra willing to work on a show whose lead actress was only a little bit psychotic.

Sal is a genius and he has taught me that *fit is everything*. Whether it's Gucci or the Gap, he has everything tailored perfectly to my body. And it makes sense, if you think about it. Why should the tunic that looks perfect on the lithe Amazon with the three-foot-long torso modeling it in the J.Crew catalogue look like a bathrobe on me? Oh, because that's what you think I look like? Never mind. Skip this chapter.

People sometimes sweetly say that I have "child-bearing hips," but what they really mean is that I have hips that will definitely knock over your drink if you are sitting next to me on a plane and I have to get up to use the bathroom. I am somewhat happy with my legs, but I often find that when I buy a size up on a skirt to fit over my hips, the skirt becomes a little too long and I look like a religious woman (which I would love, by the way! The doting Jewish husband! The house in Hancock Park! The wigs!). After Sal got me into tailoring, I took all my skirts to get shortened to a much more flattering length. So at least my legs look good when my hips knock your Sprite into your lap.



We needed two people to dress me in a sari, which billions of Indian women put on every day by themselves.

What this means is introducing a tailor into your life. I know what you're thinking: Oh God, not another person I have to interact with. But trust me, this one will be worth it. Your tailor will transform all of your clothes and make them seem new again. Your tailor is the one person who always makes you look better after you see them. Soon you will want to bring them on vacation with you. The best part is now you are one of those people "who has a tailor," which makes you seem really old-fashioned and menacing, like Al Capone. The key to maximizing this perception is making sure you make lots of angry and tense phone calls while your clothes are being measured. When I want to save money, I don't waste my time getting clothes that don't fit from Bloomingdale's; I buy things from a vintage store or an affordable chain and have them tailored to my body type. I wore a tailored dress from Old Navy to a wedding last summer and I was a hit. It couldn't have been my personality; I was drunk as hell that night.

ROBOTS THAT ENHANCE YOUR LOOKS

Ask any Hollywood makeup artist and they will tell you that they would rather cover up a giant green shamrock tattoo that spans half your face, Mike Tyson-style, than a

whitehead in the center of your forehead (coincidentally, I have both). The reason is that color is much easier to cover up than dimension. It's way easier to paint over a tattoo than to somehow disguise a protruding pimple.

When we are filming the show, I do not have weeks to wait to get rid of my pimples. It doesn't help that we shoot in high-definition, which means that when the camera is on me in a close-up you can all but count the pores on my nose. By the way, what is our fixation on "high definition" anyway? Everything is HD this and HD that. What if I don't *want* to see things that clearly on my television? Leave something to my imagination, bros. I liked it much better before, when televisions weren't so crystal clear. Like when I was four, watching gymnastics in the 1984 Olympics, and the only way I knew that that red-white-and-blue blur bouncing around on the mat was Mary Lou Retton was because the announcer said so. This is the new cause that I feel most strongly about in my life.

So I have had to learn some drastic ways to get rid of my zits. Only one thing has ever worked, and I have come to depend on one device, a special wand the size and weight of a remote control that shoots hot blue light into my skin.

I bought this wand, the Tria Acne Clearing Blue Light, from my dermatologist's office. At one point I was spending so much time with the device that I started calling him Wall-E. He looks like a fancy sex toy from Japan. His job is to "eliminate acne-causing bacteria deep beneath the skin's surface," and I have to hold him pressed against my face for twenty minutes every night. The little whirring sound he makes when I switch him on is comforting.

And what does Wall-E feel like? Like a tiny white-hot iron you are pressing against an already-sensitive pimple. It's hellish. But it's very effective at squashing and destroying pimples, so you don't care. Also, I think I have a pretty high pain threshold, because one time, after a very long day of shooting, I was using Wall-E while I was watching TV and

fell asleep. When I woke up, I had a rectangular burn mark on the side of my chin. But no zits underneath!

YOUR BOOBS MUST BE ON *FLEEK*. (OK, NOW I KNOW IT'S NOT COOL. I'M SAYING IT AS A JOKE.)

I have never had any breasts to speak of. In high school I wore the same white cotton Jockey 34-A bra for three consecutive years. It wasn't that I didn't have other bras; it's just that I barely needed one anyway, and it was comfortable. I did this until one day in the locker room after field-hockey practice, Annie Devereaux asked me in a worried (secretly bitchy) tone, "Why do you only have one bra?" I lied and said I had several exquisite bras at home but I read that underwires give you breast cancer, so I never wore them. Annie was dubious, but the conversation had taken such a depressing turn that she let it go.

Soon after, I made my mom take me to Victoria's Secret, and I saw what I was missing out on. I didn't have to wear my stretchy white bra that looked like it was for someone going through physical therapy. My bra could be fun, sexy, and an outrageous color, like neon-pink. And that wasn't all; they had thongs that had your astrological sign in little crystals over the pubis! Underwear didn't have to be utilitarian; it could be a topic of conversation that announced your whole deal. My mom was supportive of this because I think she knew there was little to no chance any boy would ever see them anyway, so hey, why not? I asked her why she never wore underwear like this. She smiled and said kindly, "These aren't for serious people." I think she was right, because I have been wearing crazy bras ever since.

For events, I wear a moderately padded bra. I've found that a well-fitting padded bra can transform me from a pear-shaped woman to an hourglass-shaped woman. Okay,