



A short, sharp comedic view of a single mother trying to have it all. As working providers in our forties we are trying to achieve everything from being the perfect mother in an imperfect world, to holding down a job or having a roaring career to being social media goddesses and online dating queens.

The Single Mother Trying Not To F*ck Up Life

by Mel W

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The Single Mother Trying
NOT TO F★CK UP LIFE

Me! W.

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CHAPTER 1

The concierge: unpacking 20 years of baggage

I've had so many conversations with friends about my attitude. According to them I'm a protected species. I've not been exposed to years of dating the awful and cruel butt wipes of the world. I remember a friend once said to me, 'You've never been hurt, cheated on or had mean cruel games played on you. Of course men would want you, you're confident and you've not been f*cked up like the rest of us'.

Oh really... I think what an interesting assumption to make. I really should have said, 'Well actually we are all a little f*cked up in our own way'. Some are beyond emotional repair, others are in denial and just act like angry arseholes, some are mean and cruel and torment others to make themselves feel like they have a reasonable sized penis or behave like mean girls trying to get votes for homecoming queen. Then there are the majority of us.... The Others.

The Others try to work with it and turn things around or at least make sense of it all. I should have extended that information to allow myself to prove the levels I'd go to un*f*ck myself (is this a real term?).

I started to unpack the baggage I accumulated and carried for 20 years. The aim: To move forward as a well-balanced human being with a chip on *each* shoulder instead of a chip on just one shoulder. I try most things from antidepressants, therapists, psychics, astrologists, chakra healers, shamanism, hypnotherapy and NLP.

Unpacking the brain: Antidepressants

So I turn to my doctor of over 20 years and burst into tears. He literally poops himself and tries to stop me from crying with a fatherly lecture. Then he plays Quiz Master.... Are you sure you want to leave him? Are you really that unhappy? Are you sure you can't work it out? How can you be with someone for 20 years and end it?

His solution was to offer me antidepressants as he said no one can cope with my pressures without help. Now my idea of help would've been a kind nanny or hot nanny, a cleaner, an overly attentive on-call 24/7 masseuse or winning lotto numbers to afford such things.

I tried the antidepressants for a short amount of time but felt as a bonafide control freak it wasn't my gig. Walking around in a hazy daze, constantly thirsty and uncomfortably constipated just felt too awkward. Plus, I

found it hard to focus at work and function without constantly opening and closing my eyes to focus.

Unpacking the unclaimed baggage: Spirituality

Psychics

I've seen psychics. I'm so curious if it's true. It's like a competition. I like to see if anything eventuates. Sometimes it's been freakishly accurate with timing and predictions, others I've treated as a bottle of wine and a movie. Light entertainment and their fee adds up to about that.

The scariest ever was in New York. I walked past one of those psychic shops. I looked in the window, as I was intrigued by these little shops that looked the equivalent of opium dens with tarot cards. The lady smiled at me and I smiled back. She got up from her chair and walked out to the front where I was on the footpath. She looked into my eyes and said, 'You've been cursed. Someone has put a curse on you!' I stood there a little shocked wondering if I actually had been cursed and whether it was via a voodoo doll, séance or freezing my name in the freezer or taking a sample of my hair and burning it with some sacred candle. She assured me that for US\$300 she could release the curse.

Was I cursed? Am I still cursed? I'll never know as I said, 'Sure let me go and get some money out at the ATM and I'll be straight back'. I never returned and have never walked away so fast in my life in heels on those slippery winter New York footpaths. Making a Batman and Robin getaway, I end up lost from my hotel, *Double Tree Suites*, in Times Square. I end up near a massive bed of water I am guessing is the Hudson River. On the way back I wonder if I'll ever find Times Square and get to my Broadway musical, *The Color Purple*.

On the plus side, I walk back and get to see all the different little pockets of New York. I stop and get my hair done as I figure you need great looking hair when you're lost. It's kind of similar to when elderly ladies tell you to always wear nice underpants as you never know if you'll get hit by a bus. Never got that saying but somehow the principle made sense for my hair. Oh yeah and I stopped for a massage. You may as well be relaxed and feeling Zen when lost in a foreign country.

Chakra Healing

I tried chakra healing sessions after reading and hearing you can gain enlightenment. Apparently, all my chakras were blocked which effectively means I'm a mutated, unemotional, sexless, heartless turtle with a blind third

eye! After the session I feel light, much lighter like \$200 lighter. It was relaxing but I didn't really think I gained an insightful spiritual journey, so I agree not to bother with healing my chakras and be happy with a blind third eye. According to my sons, pirates are cool so I could always put a patch on it, right?

Astrology

I did astrology sessions. When I received my astrology charts I couldn't read them and didn't get it. My chart looked mysterious like I was in the third century BC during the reign of Ptolemy II of Egypt. I would unravel my papyrus containing my very own zodiac / astrology chart. The only thing is fast forward to this decade and my mystical papyrus is a photocopied template of a chart on an A4 white piece with bad handwriting all over the place.

I thought the zodiac / astrology was a mythical Greek thing and that their charts resemble Egyptian hieroglyphics (ahem confused ignorant bozo right here!). I don't know the difference between the zodiac and astrology. Is it the same thing? Coke in a bottle or Coke in a can. Same thing just different packaging. Or is it like same, same but different? Like Coke and Diet Coke.

Ok so where was I? Ahhhh yes. So I thought the zodiac / astrology was a mythical Greek thing and that my astrology charts resembled Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Now I've always wanted to see the pyramids in Egypt and one day make my way to the glistening Greek islands. So I'm curious, like a dog waiting for their master to throw the Frisbee, as I've somehow unintentionally connected Egypt and Greece. So yes! I'll pay for the chart I cannot read. Just when you thought nah there's no way she's that ridiculous.... hello yesssss I am and I'm pleased to meet you!

Now for the Egyptian and Greek connection. Work with me. I know what you're thinking, this is as confusing as trying to find a shortcut out of IKEA in under ten minutes!

Apparently, a long, long time ago before I was born (actually make that an extremely long, long, long time ago) the Egyptians believed the ancient writings 'Mdwnt ntr' was invented by Thoth an ancient God. I *assume* 'Mdwnt ntr' is now known as hieroglyphics. Remember if you *assume* you are likely to make an ASS (out of) U (and) ME.

Anyhooooo, did you know the word hieroglyph is Greek and derived hieros (sacred) plus glypho (inscriptions)? The word zodiac is derived from the Greek meaning ‘circle of animals’ and was believed to have been developed in ancient Egypt. With my dream to go to Egypt and Greece, no wonder I was paying premium prices for maps I couldn’t read! They are connected... kind of. Ummmm I still have no idea! All I know is that I paid for a service that gave me houses and rising moons or suns and stars. Think I’ve just made an ass out of you and me!

Shamanic Journeying

Shamanism. Ok, so I read this book about a Sharman in stilettos. It’s an amazing read about this corporate English lady who becomes immersed in learning about shamanism and starts her life journey in the Amazon Jungle.

During this time, I meet the cutest most organic hippy ever. We spend months exploring and debating about that old argument of hallucinations versus spiritual awakenings. Similar to the one parents have over nurture versus nature or is it nature versus nurture? This guy is amazing. He came from a very underprivileged

background and created an organic sales empire through ‘visions’ he had when taking Ayahuasca.

Curious, I go and see this Shamanic Healer. She seems nice and asks me what I’m looking for. I advise her that I wouldn’t have a bloody clue. Looking a little frustrated she prods for more information about why I’m there. Insert the sounds of chirping crickets and visions of tumbleweed. I still have no bloody clue.

I scramble for a reply, so I say, ‘Ummmmm I have time off work, and this guy I know does Shamanism in the Amazon, so I’m curious’. She looks impressed that I know someone who does Ayahuasca in the Amazon and purges by almost shitting his pants and vomiting.

I lay on the bed, room smells nice, and she starts chanting. Walking around my body and chanting. I’m assigned a spiritual animal of the bear (does she know I’ve not had sex and my armpits and legs are a little furry) and the spirit guide of the humming bird (I definitely have not been humming with anyone!). I think why, why, why I couldn’t not be in the Amazon with a real Sharman and off my face on Ayahuasca. Instead I’m in a spiritual clinic on a cliff top in Manly wondering if I’ll get a parking ticket.

Unpacking the mind and soul: Therapy

A book I was reading said for me to stick post-it notes all over the house with messages, then say them out loud to myself:

- You are awesome
- Make every day count
- You deserve to be happy

I did this, and it lasted about a week before I'd look at the post-it note and say, 'Oh go screw yourself stupid note'. I think, hmmm maybe I need a psychologist and need to do some therapy.

One day, I left the office in the city. I found myself walking up Hunter Street towards Wynyard crying. Stuffed if I know why I'm crying. I just feel empty and numb. Was it the wrapper on the path, was it the loud drilling noises, the colour of the buses or maybe the traffic light turned red too early. All I know is that I was racing to collect my sons from day care and was crying for no reason.

So with my incredibly large sunglasses on and my iPhone in my left hand I think to myself, 'Oh screw this!'

and google hypnotherapy. I find a blurb about a hypnotherapist on the northern beaches and think, why not? I've done just about every spiritual approach and it's not working as I need to see tangible results and I don't want to take medication as I didn't like the side effects.

Ahhh therapy. I arrive at this little building near Manly. A sweet mature lady answers the door. She has a soft voice, kind eyes with short grey hair. I take one look and think she's perfect. Her name is Lyn and she is pretty awesome. She's this amazing, sweet, funny and warm 70-year-old lady who didn't tolerate my self-loathing. We used to talk about dating apps and me getting out there and exploring sex in a healthy way rather than hiding from it through a self-imposed celibacy. She was like a mother figure with the exception of discussing sex and dating apps.

Lyn rolls her sleeves up over the months that I saw her and starts trying to get to the bottom of why I keep crying at the drop of a hat, and why I don't cope well with failing, and why I am so outcome and results driven that I'm not often present for the journey as it's all about the destination. At first, I'm like a hormonal teenage boy grunting one word answers. I can talk a lot, but I get uncomfortable when asked to verbalise my feelings. I'd

prefer to write them down and slip the note under the door and run.

We do hypnotherapy to finish each session. Hypnotherapy had me so relaxed I slept like a baby and never remembered a thing. As an undiagnosed insomniac, who can go 48 hours without sleep and still moderately function with kids and work, these sessions gave me the deepest sleeps ever. I even had drool on the side of my mouth on waking.

After Lyn managed to pry open my feelings and deep thoughts with a crow bar, we try NLP and I'm fascinated how mind over matter can take place. NLP is Neuro-linguistic programming. It's a way of communicating, and assumes there is a link between neurological processes, language and behaviour and that it is possible to achieve certain goals in life by changing your behaviour.

It turns out that I communicate quite well, can handle a lot of shit by avoiding facing emotions head on, and I hate the idea of failing, so I am able to quickly figure out solutions to succeed. I can only figure out solutions if I take the emotion out of the situation and look at pure logic and a process. This is probably why I have been

affectionately called Tin Man with breasts. I speak more logically with a flowchart as it shows clear and clean lines from the beginning to the end.

Lyn said to me that I am a woman with altitude on the top of a mountain and need to hold my head up high when life and people kick me in the abdomen. Another fascinating point is that she felt I didn't value myself to bring myself first. Given my ego is the size of China and Russia on an average day, and can rival China, Russia **and** India on a better day, I wasn't sure what she meant.

After quite a few months, Lyn felt I didn't need to see her anymore because I was well equipped to manage on my own. That was an empowering moment. I was a little sad to say good bye. I still think about Lyn and miss her.

Legendary Lyn's advice was this, get creative and write a book, articles or a blog. That seems to be the most effective way I communicate and can open up. She said she loved reading and laughing at the pieces I'd posted on my (now rarely used, but might start again) Facebook page, *One crazy motherblogger*. She also felt I had a gift with my wit and ability to write. I just know I am really poor at editing! Plus, you will see evidence of my handiwork in here.

She also recommended I continue my journals, so I did. It is possibly the best thing I ever did. I need structure, process, order, and answers for everything. Here's proof! I created a spreadsheet of activities for my 6-week holiday, so I could run off periodic pivot tables, graphs or charts to make sure I balanced physical health, mental health, beauty, and fun! Writing helps me purge as I am living in a vortex of uncertainty so it's great to jot down every detail for every-time my brain farts.

Note to self: Send Lyn a copy of the book!

Playlist to help unpack this chapter

- Siouxsie and the Banshees: *The Passenger* – Best cover version to make me be inspired enough to get into the driver's seat and stop being a passenger in my own life!
- Icehouse: *Nothing Too Serious* – I felt like I had a broken heart and a broken head
- Jack River: *Fools Gold* – I felt like I was fooling everyone that I was more than fine when I just wanted to offload all my baggage and hit the 'life' restart button.
- Billy Ocean: *When the Going Gets Tough* – daggy but so true that when the going gets tough the tough get

going. Ummmm... hang on.... what does that even mean?

- MC Hammer: *2 Legit 2 Quit* – Too right MC Hammer!
- Big Audio Dynamite: *The Globe* – My life goes round and round like a merry-go-round and where it goes I have no clue. Yup this is my life! And that's fine by me! Action figure Adventure Mel right here!
- La Roux: *Bulletproof* – unpacking the emotional baggage I accumulated to make sure I didn't buy a new luggage set – I'm back feeling bulletproof.



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