

BETTER APART

The Radically Positive
Way to Separate

GABRIELLE HARTLEY
WITH ELENA BROWER

The names and identifying details of the individuals discussed herein have been changed to protect their privacy.

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Resources

Elena and I have compiled a concise but thorough list of resources to help you navigate the coming months and years, for yourself and for your family. Our intent is to leave you feeling full of supportive, constructive ideas with which you can go forward. Each of these authors has provided us with foundational insights. We've used these books to enrich our practices, our writings, and our work with our clients.

Gabrielle Bernstein, ***May Cause Miracles: A 40-Day Guidebook of Subtle Shifts for Radical Change and Unlimited Happiness*** (New York: Harmony Books, 2013) and ***Judgment Detox: Release the Beliefs That Hold You Back from Living A Better Life*** (New York: Gallery Books, 2018)

Where you place your attention, you amplify. With accessible language and practices, Bernstein ushers you into a place of forgiving your thoughts, clearing out even the most insidious, habitual judgments, and releasing beliefs that hold you back from your highest possibilities. Acceptance, nonjudgment, creativity, choice, and the freedom that ensues are all elements of her work, which includes EFT, meditation, practical prayers, and journaling. Bernstein invites you to quantifiably shift your energy in order to shift your (and your family's) future.

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Brené Brown, ***Rising Strong: The Reckoning, the Rumble, the Revolution*** (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015) and ***Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone*** (New York: Random House, 2017)

When I became curious about vulnerability, a dear friend suggested I take a look at Brené Brown's work. Vulnerability is what makes us human; is helpful to consider in the context of divorce resolution. *Rising Strong* takes the examination a step further, as Brown examines courage, vulnerability, shame, and worthiness. Vulnerability is the willingness to show up and be seen with no guarantee of outcome—and it's the only path to more love, belonging, creativity, and joy. *Rising Strong* is a study of the rise from the fall.

In *Braving the Wilderness*, Brown offers a definition of true belonging that might surprise you, and it will likely help you feel far more connected and purposeful in moments of doubt and loneliness than ever before. Her compelling childhood stories will help you feel included, seen, and felt. This book is an invitation to explore how you belong to yourself. Her potent reminder is that your willingness to choose courage over comfort will determine the course of your life.

Bill Burnett and Dave Evans, ***Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-Built Joyful Life*** (New York: Knopf, 2016)

We can create a life that is meaningful and fulfilling no matter who we are. Our age, accomplishments, and station in life do not limit where we can go. Approaching life as one would a design challenge, each one of us has the opportunity to build a satisfying, meaningful life. The message delivered is that the only failure is settling for a life that does not make us happy. This book provides a clear, iterative process for navigating yourself forward.

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Pema Chödrön, ***When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times*** (Boulder, CO: Shambhala, 2016; anniversary ed.) and ***The Wisdom of No Escape and the Path of Loving-Kindness*** (Boulder, CO: Shambhala, 2001)

Through traditional Buddhist wisdom, Pema Chödrön examines the issue of truly living your life even when it seems to be crumbling. How do we move forward when we feel overcome with fear, anxiety, and pain? Pema suggests that moving toward our difficult situation and becoming intimate with our pain allows heartfelt opening. She offers life-changing tools for transforming suffering and negative patterns into habitual ease and boundless joy. In *Wisdom*, she explores the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism and the practice of *tonglen* in real terms, imploring you to use your daily life to stay curious, spacious, and awake to the interconnectedness of all things, in both your interactions and your state of mind.

Amy Cuddy, ***Presence: Bringing Your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges*** (New York: Back Bay Books, 2015) and “**Power Poses**” (TED Talk, 2012)

I was first introduced to Amy Cuddy at a dinner party when a friend suggested that her TED Talk, “Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are,” would be great for my nervous clients just before entering a meeting, a negotiation, or the courtroom. The talk is about power poses, and the theory is that by accessing our personal power, we can achieve presence. A sense of presence adjusts the impression we make on ourselves, and then translates forward into the world, informing how we are perceived. While the science underlying Dr. Cuddy’s theories has recently been called into question, by altering our body language, we can shift our mindset, our behavior, and the outcome.

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Susan David, ***Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change, and Thrive in Work and Life*** (New York: Avery, 2016)

This is a practical, science-based guide to looking within and living with intent. Recognize your emotions, accept them, learn from them, and become more resilient no matter where you are in your process.

Carol Dweck, ***Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*** (New York: Ballantine Books, 2007)

According to Dweck's research, individuals can be placed on a continuum according to their implicit assumptions about ability. Some believe their success is based on innate, built-in ability; these folks are said to have a "fixed" mindset. Those who believe their success is based on hard work, learning, training, and doggedness are said to have a "growth" mindset. Whether we realize it or not, our mindset is especially evident in our reaction to failure. Fixed-mindset individuals dread failure because they perceive failure to be a negative reflection of their basic abilities, while growth-mindset individuals realize that failure is a process of learning how to improve and refine their performance. The mindset you exhibit plays a vital role in all aspects of your life. Dweck posits that cultivating a growth mindset will allow you to live a less stressful and more successful life.

Howard Glasser and Jennifer Easley, ***Transforming the Difficult Child: The Nurtured Heart Approach*** (Tucson, AZ: Nurtured Heart Publications, 1998)

Designed to build character strengths and virtues using positive psychology, the Nurtured Heart Approach is a social-emotional strategy used to transform negative behaviors into positive behaviors and to increase connectivity among family members. Some-

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times even the calmest of children can act out during difficult times; the wisdom in this book will help you manage those moments. With an emphasis on noticing the neutral as a tool to shift negative behaviors and reactions, this approach is useful for shifting the dynamic with a difficult ex as well.

Thich Nhat Hanh, ***Anger: Wisdom for Cooling the Flames*** (New York: Riverhead Books, 2002)

Thich Nhat Hanh teaches you to relax the bonds of attachment, anger, and delusion through mindfulness and kindness toward yourself. According to this beloved teacher of meditation, “Many people look for happiness outside themselves, but true happiness must come from inside of us. Our culture tells us that happiness comes from having a lot of money, a lot of power, and a high position in society. But if you observe carefully, you will see that many rich and famous people are not happy.” Thich Nhat Hanh’s teachings usher us from the internal swirl and external whirl toward deep calm. According to the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh shows us the connection between personal inner peace and peace on earth.

Marie Kondo, ***The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing*** (New York: Ten Speed Press, 2014)

Tossing and donating piles of belongings for both Elena and me has created space that effectively cleared our minds and our homes. This book is a game changer. Marie Kondo gives step-by-step guidance for determining the items in your environment that “spark joy” and ridding yourself of all that does not. According to Kondo, when we release belongings that no longer serve us, we make space for what brings us clarity. When you clear your clutter, she shows, you’ll enjoy a calm, motivated mindset. Making space in your physical

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environment is another means by which you can shift your life in a more positive direction.

Harold S. Kushner, ***Nine Essential Things I've Learned About Life*** (New York: Knopf, 2015)

Rabbi Harold Kushner condenses his experiences as a rabbi into nine essential points. Especially relevant at any point during your divorce process are the stories about personal strength in forgiveness. This is a fresh, vital offering of belief, mercy, conscience, and strength delivered with pragmatic advice, including reflections to consider. Rooted in Kushner's capacity to weave history and scripture with popular culture, this book is an illuminating, useful, quick read.

William Martin, ***The Parent's Tao Te Ching*** (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1999)

Martin distills the essence of the Tao's eighty-one chapters as they relate to parenting. Without being overly instructive, this book is a potent collection of teachings: how to respond without judgment, how to emulate natural processes, and how to balance doing with being.

Wendy Mogel, PhD, ***The Blessing of a Skinned Knee*** (New York: Scribner, 2001) and ***Voice Lessons for Parents*** (New York: Scribner, 2018)

Drawing on the wisdom of the Torah, the Talmud, and other teachings, *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee* uses the framework of nine blessings to help parents prioritize and cultivate positivity, help kids accept themselves, and help all learn to appreciate our many blessings. In *Voice Lessons*, Mogel elaborates on each stage and age of a

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child's development, bringing to light the chances you have to connect through language, to sort through the most uncomfortable topics and create a lasting connection with your kids through this time.

Rabbi Perry Netter, ***Divorce Is a Mitzvah: A Practical Guide to Finding Wholeness and Holiness When Your Marriage Dies***

(Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2002)

Divorced father, pastoral counselor, and congregational rabbi Netter illustrates how wholeness and holiness can be found in divorce and separation. He offers practical wisdom, information, and strength from a Jewish perspective to guide you through this challenging life transition. He explores the transformation of moving through trauma into a lifetime of growth and greater spiritual understanding.

Kate Northrup, ***Money, A Love Story*** (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 2013)

Northrup untangles your financial woes and helps you be a conduit for the life you want. As money is really an arbitrary system, your work is to begin re-creating your relationship to it from the ground up, through journaling, patching leaks, and vigilant explorations of how you spend and save. Northrup is here to help you take inventory of your blessings and learn how to pay your future self by the choices you make today. Let her help you redefine wealth and become friends with your abundant self. Especially if money is scary for you, this is a must on your list.

Mark Nepo, ***Things That Join the Sea and the Sky*** (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2017)

Elena loves Nepo's short prose reflections on life, love, and listening. This is a rich resource of reading and inquiry, to help recalibrate

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any difficult moment with the help of Nepo's post-cancer perspective, and reconfigure your relations with yourself and those closest to you.

Esther Perel, ***Mating in Captivity*** (New York: Harper Paperbacks, 2017) and ***The State of Affairs*** (New York: Harper, 2017)

Esther Perel has officially opened the conversation around the feasibility of modern human monogamy. What does it mean to balance the need for intimacy, love, belonging, and security with the need for freedom, adventure, and the exploration of erotic desire? Her writing and her talks are real, refreshing, and raw as she unearths the unspoken truths around marriage, love, and fidelity. According to Perel, an affair is not to be judged, and it needn't end your marriage. In fact, for some it can actually create a new beginning, as it refines each party's role and redefines the marriage relationship. Her TED Talks are powerful and full of interesting perspective. Be sure to check out "The Secret to Desire in a Long-Term Relationship" and "Rethinking Infidelity—A Talk for Anyone Who Has Ever Loved."

Jillian Pransky, ***Deep Listening*** (New York: Rodale Books, 2017)

Accessible, profound, and clear, the wisdom of *Deep Listening* grants us a chance to greet our habitual stress with new eyes of kindness and compassion. Through concise, consistent, and cumulative practices, Jillian provides us with the context to live more openheartedly and transform our ways of seeing and being. Pransky doesn't ask you to "be your best self" or "do more!" She asks you to "be here" and "do less," from being present and noticing your tension to welcoming what you discover with compassion. She integrates guided meditations, journaling prompts, and re-

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storative yoga poses to help you regard yourself with kindness and curiosity.

Gretchen Rubin, ***The Happiness Project: Or, Why I Spent a Year Trying to Sing in the Morning, Clean My Closets, Fight Right, Read Aristotle, and Generally Have More Fun*** (New York: Harper Paperbacks, 2015) and ***Better Than Before: What I Learned About Making and Breaking Habits—To Sleep More, Quit Sugar, Procrastinate Less, and Generally Build a Happier Life*** (New York: Crown, 2015)

The Happiness Project by Gretchen Rubin provides an uplifting post-divorce read. Gretchen Rubin says, “Time is passing, and I’m not focusing enough on the things that really matter.” With that, she dedicated a year to studying happiness. She explores various tracks, testing out current happiness research, age-old wisdom, and pop culture happiness tips. She brings humor and insight into this uplifting, interesting, and helpful book, which is full of surprising tips. The smallest changes can make the biggest differences. In *Better Than Before*, Gretchen explores the idea of making things automatic by creating conscious habits. These books are useful for a deeper understanding of the myriad unconscious choices we make, and how to shift them.

Dr. Stuart Shanker, ***Self-Reg: How to Help Your Child (and You) Break the Stress Cycle and Successfully Engage with Life*** (New York: Penguin, 2017)

It’s challenging for parents to truly grasp the various unseen stressors with which kids, and especially teens, are struggling. In this groundbreaking book, you’ll learn how to regulate yourself, recover, and respond to your own hidden stressors so you can help

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mitigate the experience your kids are having. This book is a welcome tool for any parent.

Jen Sincero, ***You Are a Badass: How to Stop Doubting Your Greatness and Start Living an Awesome Life*** (New York: Running Press, 2013)

This book is a perfect companion to *Better Apart*. Jen Sincero delivers a solid plan for how to get from where you are to where you want to go. Feisty, saucy, and humorous, Sincero explores personal power, gratitude, forgiveness, meditation, the banishing of fear, and learning from experiences. She is totally relatable and does a great job making the reader feel empowered to take on the world and make life happen. The primary message is that the universe will give us all we desire as long as we are focused and committed to doing the work to make the magic happen.

Susan Squire, ***I Don't: A Contrarian History of Marriage*** (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2008)

For those of us inclined to study human relationships, Susan Squire's provocative survey of marriage and what it has meant for society, politics, religion, and the home elucidates the turbulent history of the basic institution of marriage, now ten thousand years old. Starting with the discovery, long before recorded time, that sex leads to paternity (and hence to couplehood), and leading up to the dawn of the modern "love marriage," Squire delves into the many ways men and women have come together, and what the state of their unions has meant for history, society, and politics—especially the politics of the home. This book is rooted in more than a decade's research, but even more compelling is the author's contrarian boldness. *I Don't* is a compelling read for all thinkers: feminists, traditionalists, conservatives, and progressives alike.

Dr. Brian Weiss, ***Many Lives, Many Masters: The True Story of a Prominent Psychiatrist, His Young Patient, and the Past-Life Therapy That Changed Both Their Lives*** (New York: Fireside, 1988)

In Brian Weiss's bestseller *Many Lives, Many Masters*, he introduces the reader to his patient, Catherine. In a hypnotic state, Dr. Weiss's young patient summoned memories of many past lifetimes, demonstrated an astonishing ability to transmit transcendental messages, and turned the life of a respectable psychiatrist upside down. Weiss studied at Columbia University and at the Yale School of Medicine (1970), where he later completed his psychiatry residency. For many years he served as the head of psychiatry at Mount Sinai Medical Center. Weiss advocates hypnotic regression as therapy, claiming that many phobias and ailments are rooted in past-life experiences, which can have a curative effect. He offers workshops and seminars across the United States that explain and teach self-regression meditation techniques. During times of great stress, you may find Dr. Weiss's work incredibly healing and supportive. Worth a read if you are open to alternative explanations of how and why things happen as they do within a spiritual construct.

Lauren Zander, ***Maybe It's You: Cut the Crap. Face Your Fears. Love Your Life.*** (New York: Hachette, 2017)

Maybe It's You picks up where *You Are a Badass* leaves off. It's a no-nonsense, practical manual to help you figure out what you want out of life and how to actually get there. Zander walks you through her efficacious, innovative process, revealing results that can be achieved when you stop lying to yourself and begin keeping your promises. Through practical exercises, client stories, and Lauren's own hard-won lessons, this book will enable you to identify, articulate, and account for your own personal setbacks so you can transform them into strengths.

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Elizabeth Thayer, PhD, and Jeffrey Zimmerman, PhD, ***The Co-Parenting Survival Guide: Letting Go of Conflict After a Difficult Divorce*** (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2001)

In the county in which I practice divorce law, this guidebook is strongly suggested reading for the compulsory parenting course provided to all separating parents. *The Co-Parenting Survival Guide* illustrates how to navigate post-separation parenting within two households, identifying and resolving common hostility traps, with useful tools for sustaining a co-parenting partnership based on love and concern for your children.