



Mr Unavailable & the Fallback Girl

The Definitive Guide to Understanding Emotionally Unavailable Men and the Women that Love Them

By Natalie Lue

15-minute read

Synopsis

Mr Unavailable & the Fallback Girl (2008) provides a lifeline for anyone who keeps getting messed around by emotionally unavailable partners. With searing personal insights, tough love, and a large dose of humor, *Mr Unavailable* is an essential guide to breaking destructive relationship patterns and finding love.

Who is it for?

- Anyone who feels chronically unlucky in love but can't seem to break the cycle
- Women who want to get to know themselves better and develop their self-esteem
- Men recovering from bad relationships who want to avoid becoming "Mr. Unavailable"

About the author

Natalie Lue is the self-described Marie Kondo for emotional baggage. She's the creator of the enormously popular blog *Baggage Reclaim* and host of the *Baggage Reclaim Sessions* podcast. Her second book, *The Dreamer and the Fantasy Relationship*, was published to much acclaim in 2012.

What's in it for me? Become empowered to leave bad relationships, and find true love.

We've all been there: we meet someone who seems really wonderful, and go on a few dreamy dates. The chemistry is great, and he's already talking about plans for Christmas! We're sure that we've found someone special.

But then he suddenly disappears, leaving us to perform excruciating postmortems on everything we did or said to drive him away. In these blinks, you'll learn that this kind of behavior is a key trait of emotionally unavailable men. They blow hot and cold, make wild promises they can't keep, and keep you constantly hanging.

Their behavior is never your fault, and there's absolutely nothing you can do to change it. But the good news is, you can change your *own* behavior. Why settle for erratic crumbs of affection from emotionally unavailable guys when you could break the pattern and find someone who adores you unreservedly?

Discovering how to do this will not only change your relationships, it'll change your life.

In these blinks, you'll learn

- why a man who cries isn't necessarily in touch with his feelings;
- how Natalie learned to break her addiction to toxic relationships; and
- why you should never confuse good sex with emotional intimacy.

Natalie Lue realized that she had become a magnet for unavailable men.

The author, Natalie Lue, was very unlucky in love – or so she thought. Through ten years of dating she'd been stuck with men who blew hot and cold, men who pursued her relentlessly only to disappear.

She had an epiphany one night when she was on a date with her married boyfriend in central London. She suddenly found herself in the grip of a panic attack, gasping for breath. Instead of staying with her, her boyfriend put her on a train and then went back home to his wife.

Being abandoned like that was a reality check. The author realized that her boyfriend would *never* put her first and leave his wife. She also realized that she couldn't chalk up all her unsuccessful relationships to bad luck. After all, she was the common factor in all of them.

The key message here is: Natalie Lue realized that she had become a magnet for unavailable men.

She'd been so desperate for validation that she was willing to settle for relationships with people who didn't really care for her or treat her well. She'd become a "Fallback Girl," someone that guys could come to for sex, or a shoulder to cry on, without actually being committed in any way.

So why had she stayed with them? Well, she'd become addicted to the drama. And she'd fallen into the trap of thinking that they'd change, if only she loved them enough.

Instead of wasting her time trying to pursue this pipe dream, the author decided to take a long, hard look at why she'd undervalued herself for so long. Why had she become fixated on what other people wanted, instead of putting herself first?

She knew she had to work to develop her self-esteem, draw strong boundaries, and learn how to communicate them. It was a challenging journey, but the results were profound. For the first time in her life, she felt peaceful and mentally strong. Her physical health also improved dramatically.

Soon after she had her epiphany, the author met a lovely, emotionally available man. Instead of rejecting him for being "too nice," she embraced the relationship and reveled in being truly supported for the first time. Today, they're happily married with two daughters.

The author has shared her insights with many thousands of women, helping them to change their relationship patterns by teaching them how to recognize when a man is just not emotionally available.

Emotionally unavailable men blow hot and cold, and they do everything on their own terms.

Have you ever had the experience of going on a wonderful date with someone, only to have them ghost you afterward?

One of the biggest misconceptions that people have about unavailable men is that they're not available *at all*. In fact, emotionally unavailable men are confusing because their behavior is so inconsistent.

They'll take you out on magnificent dates, introduce you to their mothers, and provide a shoulder to cry on when you have a fight with your best friend. These emotionally intimate acts will lull you into thinking that your relationship is entering new territory. But, inevitably, the closeness won't last. Mr. Unavailable will quickly retreat when things get too intimate, leaving you to wrack your mind to pinpoint what you did to spark the change.

The key message here is: Emotionally unavailable men blow hot and cold, and they do everything on their own terms.

The truth is, you didn't do anything. Blowing hot and cold is one of the key signs of an emotionally unavailable man. He can't cope with real intimacy, so he distances himself just when things get close by suddenly disappearing or refusing to answer your calls. If you, in turn, respond by becoming more distant, or by threatening to end the relationship, you'll find that a miraculous transformation occurs: your partner suddenly blows hot again and starts to pursue you like a young Romeo.

When you finally relent and allow yourself to get close to him, he'll start to back off – and so the cycle continues. This rollercoaster ride is completely exhausting because you never know where you stand or what to expect. You're doing everything on his terms and at his pace, and your life is turned upside down by his moodiness and unpredictability.

When you confront him about his moods and absences, you'll probably find that Mr. Unavailable will become defensive, or even hostile. He'll accuse you of "dwelling in the past" and expect you to collude with him in pressing the "reset button," to pretend the bad times never even happened.

That can have the effect of making you doubt your own version of events and blurring your boundaries. His erratic availability starts to feel normal. You lose perspective of what you really want and, more importantly, what you deserve. Before you know it, you're settling for a lukewarm relationship when what you should actually have is someone that's passionate and hot – *all* the time.

Men who move too fast usually won't stick around for the long haul.

If you've ever seen a romantic comedy, you'll be very familiar with the story line of the whirlwind romance. Two people meet up for coffee, and the next thing you know, you're being subjected to a sickly sweet montage involving the couple dancing around in golden autumn leaves – and then heading straight down the aisle.

In the movies, this is represented as the definition of true love. The couple is so crazy about each other that they can't bear to be apart, not even to return home to fetch a toothbrush! In real life, though, encountering someone who comes on very strong very quickly could be a warning sign that you're dealing with a partner who is actually emotionally unavailable.

The key message here is: Men who move too fast usually won't stick around for the long haul.

Some men will declare their love on the second date, and introduce you to their mother on the third. This is called *fast forwarding*. By coming on very strong very fast, Mr. Unavailable is able to sweep you off your feet – and distract you from asking too many questions about

him. Usually, these types love the thrill of the chase and the intensity of the early stages of a relationship. But they're very bad at building something that lasts.

Men who behave so intensely at the beginning often paint rosy pictures of a future they have no intention of being around for – a strategy called *future faking*. We've grown up believing that men who are scared of commitment will never want to talk about the future. But this isn't actually true. Future Fakers may introduce the subject of children on your very first date, or insist that you accompany them on a business trip to Rome next year.

The problem is that – as the old adage goes – talk is cheap. When things get too real, the Future Faker will very likely disappear, leaving you to lick your wounds and second-guess what happened. Did you do something to scare him off? The answer is a resounding no. If you look more closely at his relationship history you'll be almost guaranteed to find a string of women who were treated exactly the way you were.

Leading people on and making promises you can't keep is cruelly irresponsible. If you think you're dealing with a Future Faker, then the only thing you need to fast forward is your exit out of that relationship.

Mr. Unavailable likes to keep you stuck in undefined relationships.

Are we keeping things casual? Is this a committed relationship? Are we just friends with benefits, or is there more to it? Mr. Unavailable will keep you asking these kinds of questions as long as you're with him.

He thrives on shades of gray and ambiguity because that means he never has to be accountable to you. He loves booty calls and "casual" relationships where he can enjoy sex with no commitment.

If you have great sex with Mr. Unavailable, it might keep you going back for more. You may tell yourself that you, too, want to keep things casual, so where's the harm? Unfortunately, sex complicates everything. There's nothing wrong with having fun, but you need to ask whose terms it's on. Is Mr. Unavailable holding all the cards? Are you fooling yourself into believing that's OK because you don't want to lose him?

The key message here is: Mr. Unavailable likes to keep you stuck in undefined relationships.

The problem is that Mr. Unavailable is unable to commit to *anything* – even breaking up with you. He won't sign up for a relationship, but he won't let you go either. Ideally, he wants to keep you hanging right where he can reach you, when he feels like it. So if you break up with him or cut off contact, he'll try and insert himself back into your life. He might beg to be friends, or stalk your Instagram profile and send you messages to try and make sure you don't forget him.

You might interpret this as genuine interest, but it's not. In fact, it's just a big, fat ego stroke. He simply wants to reassure himself that he still has a hold over you. Or he wants to use your willingness to be friends with him to prove to other people that his behavior wasn't that terrible when you were together. As soon as he's got the reassurance he was looking for, he'll disappear again to find someone new.

Mr. Unavailable will toss you breadcrumbs of commitment and affection. When you confront him with his evasive or disappointing behavior, he'll counter by reminding you of that one time he gave you a rose, or did something thoughtful. You may try and fool yourself into thinking that that's enough, but it's not. Unless you're an ant, breadcrumbs will never fill you up. You deserve the whole goddamn loaf.

Unavailable men cry crocodile tears, but they have no real emotional maturity.

The guy you've just started dating tells you a gut-wrenchingly emotional story about his past. Perhaps his parents never gave him love and attention when he was young. Or his ex-wife cheated on him. As he talks, he gets so upset that tears stream down his face. You feel terrible and resolve to be his shoulder to cry on. You'll show him that he is lovable, and that he can open himself up again.

A crying man appears to be in touch with his feelings. Unfortunately, in the case of Mr. Unavailable, you're probably witnessing crocodile tears. They don't signify emotional maturity. Instead, they're a well-developed strategy of emotional manipulation. Mr. Unavailable tells you sob stories because they provide a convenient way to yet again avoid taking responsibility for his actions.

The key message here is: Unavailable men cry crocodile tears, but they have no real emotional maturity.

If you ask for commitment or emotional availability later in the relationship, he has a get-out-of-jail-free card. He uses his traumatic experiences as a way to justify why he's so commitment-phobic. Instead of owning his past and getting help, he chooses to wallow and assign other people – like you – the responsibility of “fixing” him. If you don't manage this impossible task, he can turn around and blame the relationship failure on you.

This is a key part of Mr. Unavailable's playbook. He's a master of making excuses and projecting his own faults onto other people. For example, instead of acknowledging that he is a commitment-phobe, he might claim that he's a perfectionist, just waiting for the perfect woman. He has impossible standards and keeps an invisible scorecard in his head, on which he marks you down for any perceived infractions. Cruelly enough,

he even takes the fact that you put up with his nonsense as evidence that you're not perfect enough for him.

Mr. Unavailable will do whatever he has to do to avoid being accountable to you for his actions. Whether it's being defensive and aggressive when challenged, lading out the charm, or weeping big crocodile tears, the result is the same: nothing sticks to him.

That means you're being deprived of a real partner who will own his mistakes and put in the work to fix them. Mr. Unavailable doesn't actually care about your well-being, or your relationship. Ultimately, there's just one person he's concerned with: himself.

Instead of obsessing over Mr. Unavailable, you need to focus on yourself.

Women have wasted countless hours trying to understand Mr. Unavailable – analyzing every date and text, and trying to pinpoint what went wrong in the relationship.

It's a natural reaction to want to understand someone whose behavior is so erratic and seemingly inexplicable. But asking why Mr. Unavailable is unavailable is like asking how many stars there are in the sky. You'll never find the answer. He could be damaged by a childhood trauma, or have a full-fledged narcissistic disorder, or simply not be that interested in you. None of those justifications matter. What *does* matter is that he's not capable of building a healthy relationship with you.

You are never, ever the cause of Mr. Unavailable's behavior. You can rest assured that he was a commitment-phobe long before he met you – and will continue to be after you, leaving a string of bruised hearts in his wake.

The key message here is: Instead of obsessing over Mr. Unavailable, you need to focus on yourself.

While you won't ever be able to understand why he behaves the way he does, you *can* start examining your own behavior. Why do you seek out men who don't treat you well? And why do you buy into their ridiculous promises when you've seen that they don't actually come true? And why do you spend so much time trying to save damaged men instead of prioritizing your own health and well-being?

These questions are much more confrontational – but they need to be answered if you want to break the destructive relationship pattern you're in. It's not just random bad luck that you're meeting duds. On some deep, subconscious level, you're actually seeking out people who are unavailable.

To start understanding your own emotional patterns, you need to go back to your past. Often, we unconsciously repeat relationship dynamics we've witnessed with our parents. Was your father

emotionally unavailable, and did your mother stick around anyway? Or were your parents overly critical, absent, or even abusive? Of course, we also carry baggage from our previous relationships into the new ones.

Women are also bombarded by incredibly old-fashioned messages from the media that equate being successful with “keeping a man.” No wonder we grow up to become Fallback Girls, believing that we need to do whatever it takes to keep our partners happy.

Fallback Girls put up with bad behavior from Mr. Unavailable over and over again.

Fallback Girls come in many different shapes and sizes. But they all share one attribute: they accept and enable Mr. Unavailable’s unhealthy behavior in different ways. Let’s go through a few examples of the various Fallback Girls.

For example, some Fallback Girls normalize the fact that their partners blow hot and cold. These are *Yo-yo Girls*; they accommodate on-and-off relationships on whatever terms Mr. Unavailable chooses because they dread the finality of a break up.

Another breed of Fallback Girl is the *Other Women*. We all know the story. You meet a great guy, but there’s a catch: he’s already in a relationship. He swears up and down that he’s about to leave her – but never does. Other Women fall into the trap of thinking their story is so exceptional, and their love is so great, that their men will give up everything to be with them.

The key message here is: Fallback Girls put up with bad behavior from Mr. Unavailable over and over again.

Some men might have left their partners by the time you meet them, but they’re still emotionally involved with their exes. If you get together with them, you’ve just become a *Buffer*. You’ll allow Mr. Unavailable to ease out of his last relationship without ever having to give you any real commitment.

Fallback Girls known as *Florences* or *Renovators* are often drawn to men who appear vulnerable and wounded by their last breakup or some other traumatic experience in their past. When you’re motivated to be with Mr. Unavailable because you want to fix, change, or save him, you’re setting yourself up for failure because – news flash! – people don’t actually change. You’ll waste a lot of energy on a thankless challenge.

Some unavailable men are physically present but completely absent emotionally. You could be married and share several children with the man, but he’ll remain shut off, withholding affection and intimacy. Fallback Girls who choose to stay in marriages like these are *Floggers*. They set themselves up for a life of sacrifice and martyrdom.

The last type of Fallback Girl is *Miss Independent*. She’s likely to have been burnt in a previous relationship, and now she has her guard up. She embraces the idea of having casual relationships. But what starts as a seemingly empowered choice can become a trap as Mr. Unavailable takes advantage of their casual status to avoid any accountability.

Now we’ve covered some of the classic Fallback Girl types. But just because you’ve behaved like a Fallback Girl in the past doesn’t mean you have to remain one. You can break the cycle and embrace relationships which really do meet your needs.

In order to change the kind of relationships you have, you first need to change yourself.

We’ve been hearing all about how to spot Mr. Unavailable, which may make it sound like the dating pool is dominated by these unsavory types. But the good news is that many men *are* emotionally available and have no problem with commitment.

The only reason you haven’t found such a man so far is that *you yourself* have been emotionally unavailable. This might come as a shock. After all, haven’t you been furiously pursuing Mr. Unavailable and doing everything you could to make the relationship work?

Well, the problem is that you’ve been so caught up in pursuing dysfunctional relationships and waiting for Mr. Unavailable to finally show some interest that you haven’t had any space in your life for a genuinely available guy to come along. In fact, you probably wouldn’t recognize one if he fell into your lap!

The key message here is: In order to change the kind of relationships you have, you first need to change yourself.

In order to make space for a new, healthy relationship, you first need to discover who you really are. Think about your core values and beliefs, and what you find important in relationships. These values will form the basis for your own personal boundaries. For example, if monogamy is a key value of yours, you’ll know that you can’t accept cheating in a relationship.

Once you’ve established your boundaries, you need to get used to sharing them. If other people know where you stand early on, you’ll have a much greater chance of finding someone you’re genuinely compatible with. Sticking to your boundaries will help to restore your own trust in yourself.

You also need to get in touch with your gut feelings, and learn to ignore your brain’s tendency to rationalize and make bullshit excuses. How does this situation feel? A universal truth is that if a relationship is good, it will make you feel good. If you start feeling disempowered, disrespected, or out of touch with yourself, the relationship is probably bad news.

One of the best ways to ready yourself for a positive, new relationship is to focus your energy on making a life that brings you joy. Reconnect with old friends, develop new interests, travel, and pamper yourself. By finding multiple sources of nourishment, you'll be much more independent and free – even when you do begin a new relationship.

Final summary

The key message in these blinks:

Emotionally unavailable men give their partners mixed signals, blowing hot and cold, and keep them stuck in unsatisfying relationships. If you meet such a man, don't fall into the trap of thinking you can change him! While you'll never get him to commit to you, you can, luckily, change your own behavior. Instead of being attracted to men with commitment issues, you can learn to fall in love with people who love you back, and who will be prepared to build a real relationship with you.

Actionable Advice:

Mix It Up.

Doing the same thing over and over while expecting a different result will never work. If you want to meet a different kind of guy, you're going to have to find new ways to socialize. Instead of hanging out with the same friend group every weekend, take up a new sport or join a Meetup group. You could also consider going on a blind date. Even if you don't immediately find The One, meeting someone from a new social circle can be a breath of fresh air.

Got feedback?

We'd love to hear what you think about our content! Just drop an email to remember@blinkist.com with *Mr Unavailable & the Fallback Girl* as the subject line and share your thoughts!

What to read next: *The Dreamer and the Fantasy Relationship*, by Natalie Lue

By now you've learned how to spot Mr. Unavailable – and how to stop falling for his toxic tricks. Instead of being a Fallback Girl, you've learned how to value yourself and seek out relationships that really serve you. But what happens if you're stuck in a fantasy about a relationship that isn't even *real*?

In the blinks to *The Dreamer and the Fantasy Relationship*, you'll learn about how destructive fantasy relationships can be. Today, so much of our communication is virtual, and we can become lured into imagining we're in an intimate relationship when, in fact, we've only exchanged a few meager texts. If you're ready to go on a fantasy detox, and learn how to find the

love you deserve IRL, then these blinks to *The Dreamer and the Fantasy Relationship* are just the thing for you.