



# Dear Chicken Nugget, You Complete Me

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My favorite go-to comfort food has always been McDonald's chicken nuggets. I have no shame admitting that I use them to self-medicate a fictional void I feel after experiencing a horrendous day.

Those crispy, salty, fried nuggets of heaven remind me of carefree childhood days at grandma's house. Every time I order them, I completely disregard the fact that gluten covered chicken is not conducive to my health. But, despite my better judgment, I devour them for the ten minutes of happiness they bring me. Yes, I trade a small window of false happiness for a series of heinous consequences when my body unleashes its revenge.

Now as my harshest critic, I am the first to admit that poor judgment in wanting to have comfort has occasionally stretched past chicken nuggets and into my search for a relationship. The difference though between the two is the consequences of a bad relationship can be far scarier and life-threatening than what any chicken nugget has ever done to me.

Yet, despite all the trauma experienced while trying to find the one, I am still very much a hopeless romantic...albeit a smarter one. Years of dating the wrong guys have taught me that as soon as one says, "you complete me," it's a signal to end the relationship. Now, I'm sure some people are scratching their heads thinking "Why would someone who says she loves romance walk away from such romantic words?" Come on, they made cinematic history. How does a line that worked so well for Tom Cruise, cause me to roll my eyes and see a red flag?

It's because, over the years, I learned the extremely hard lesson that a relationship built upon the foundation - that in order to be happy we need someone to complete us - can be eerily similar to the comfort of McDonald's chicken nuggets. Before I got wiser, there were more than a few times when I thought a guy was the perfect solution to fill my want for comfort and security. My naïve perception of what I thought love should be (thanks Lifetime movies), ultimately led to me be incredibly blinded to the unhappiness I was experiencing.

Many more than just a few times, I fell for the same familiar pattern. You know the one where at first you connect with someone and everything seems perfectly perfect. Feelings of loneliness are replaced by butterflies in the stomach and pupils get larger

when you look at the person who has made you feel love again. Before long statements to people change to “We will..., We are..., We want...” instead of “I did..., I want..., I dream...”

When my sentences changed, subtle interventions from my mother and close friends began. To their credit, they tried incredibly hard to open my eyes to the red flags, but it didn't matter. Deep inside with all my being, I fell for the notion that the person I was with completed me. Even Mother Nature made it harder for me to see the warning signs. She chemically bonded my body tight to the comfort of the relationship. And even my brain worked against me. It tricked me into thinking that if the person who loved me left, happiness in my life would cease to exist.

Relationships are the ultimate gift of the human experience - when they are healthy. When they are toxic, they can become a catalyst that can destroy us mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. In the darkest time in my life, I made a conscious decision to get my head out of the clouds and start intensive therapy to regain my happiness. What I learned in therapy saved my life, gave me confidence and brought my happiness back.

If you love the idea of love like me, you may think the idea of someone completing you is an ideal outcome for a relationship but, really it's a dangerous one. What I learned in therapy was depending on someone else to complete you or make you happy is co-dependence. Being co-dependent blinds you to the red flags and can cause you to lose yourself emotionally, physically and mentally to the other person. The reason this is so dangerous is relationships built on this foundation can lead to abusive situations.

When you are a romantic, it's an incredibly hard reality to accept that depending on someone else to bring you happiness is not only futile, it's irresponsible. When you expect another person to “complete you”, you are already placing unrealistic expectations on the relationship. And let's face it, humans are perfectly imperfect. We were not designed to be puzzle pieces made to fit seamlessly into others' lives. Which is why relationships are confusing and messy but that's the beauty of them. And exactly why you have to work on your own happiness first. Starting a relationship in a place of insecurity does not allow you to successfully work through the bumps and hiccups of the puzzle.

Plus, life is known to be terribly unpredictable. There will come a time when whoever you are in a relationship with will in some capacity let you down or even disappear completely. At that point, the only thing you have control over is how you react to the situation. This is why the idea of needing someone to complete you is a dangerous slippery slope. The ending of the relationship will be far more painful and leave you feeling incomplete again.

As much as I love them, Lifetime movie endings don't occur in real life. If you learn anything from this column, stop selling the amazing person you are short by thinking you need someone to complete you. Instead of stuffing your life with chicken nuggets, build a fantastic one on your terms by filling it full with meaningful experiences over things you are passionate about. Isn't it time you trade in the idea of someone completing your life to someone complimenting it?

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