

Testimonial from Lynley (age 29; Portland, ME)

1. How did you feel about dating before we started working together? What were you struggling with the most and what drew you to getting help?

“It feels like a whole host of things, but I would say the big issues were scarcity mindset (especially being a fat woman and being told you have fewer options), standards vs. expectations, and how to stop caring so much about the little stuff. You would post a lot about how dating should be fun – and while most of the actual dates were good – the process felt decidedly unfun. It felt full of judgement and stress and some pressure, given that I was working under a ‘relationship or bust’ mentality. I believed there was a better way to go about it, I just didn’t know how to get there myself.”

2. How do you currently feel about dating and what has changed? Is your life different now, and if so, how? How do you feel about yourself?

“The biggest thing so far is how much less anxiety there is and I can’t even put into words how good that feels. My expectations of complete strangers were so mixed up, especially during the ‘early days.’ We’d go out once and I would have this fairly unreasonable expectation of attention even though they’re still very much a stranger and they don’t actually owe me much besides basic respect. And so when that attention never came, I’d write them off or unmatch or needlessly get wound up because I didn’t understand why they wouldn’t want to talk. Didn’t we have a good time?! I so badly wanted to be the cool and unaffected girl who didn’t give a shit when stupid men blew her off because I could just move on to the next one.... only what if there isn’t a next one? And thus arose scarcity mindset with a sprinkling of poor body confidence. I knew that people could be busy or just not want to talk or WHATEVER but I guess I already wanted to be a priority and even though I knew it was unfair and unrealistic. Nowadays it’s a lot easier to go with the flow. The only thing I have control over are the moves I make.

Another big change, thanks to mindset work, is that I’m finding I no longer give dudes the time of day and carry conversations when they give half-assed responses, especially to questions that are thoughtful or conversation-provoking. The funniest thing is that they almost always come back when I don’t respond and don’t unmatch right away. It’s still sort of baffling as someone who would put them on pedestals and felt like I needed to work super hard to show I am worthy (gag) because what if this potential love opportunity never comes around again? I’d put in so much energy while they gave crumbs. No more. I’m not carrying that shit. Pass. Do better or get the fuck out.”

3. What are the top 3 things you learned during our work together?

1. “Men are not complex and elite. This may sound like a no-brainer but as someone with paternal issues who grew up feeling like she constantly needed to impress men in order to get attention, it was easier said than believed. Which sort of leads to the second thing I learned/am still learning.”

2. “Showing up fully as yourself is what’s going to get you what you want. You don’t need to lay out all your thoughts, feelings, quirks and hangups right away but if you’re hiding a little or being someone you think the other person wants to see, whatever you’re trying to build is already a little fucked. Don’t be scared to be you because so many people are going to love it. (And it’s OK if someone doesn’t love it! It’s unrealistic and slightly narcissistic to think you’re for everyone. You’re not, and that’s a good thing.)”

3. “I’m sure that fact that we’re in a pandemic plays into this more than I realize but as I look at my assessment and read about how I say I don’t like when I feel there is a connection and then not hearing from someone for 3+ days. “It makes me feel like you aren’t serious about this.” Girl, it hasn’t been that long. Chill. You’ll know when someone isn’t interested. That kind of rapport will grow in time if it’s meant to be. Be patient.”

4. How do you see this work improving your life going forward? What are you planning to keep working on?

“The fact I don’t feel the need to prove myself **to men** (gross) as much as I used to is huge. They’re not actually in short supply and I’m sure as shit not desperate. It was all so helpful but something I’m definitely implementing moving forward came from the last week working together, where we made a list

of things I need to know before diving into a relationship with someone. It really opened my eyes to kind of how backward and rushed my last relationship was and how maybe if I'd had this list, we might have not even gotten into a relationship at all (not that I regret it, to be clear, because I still learned a lot about myself. But for example, his way of dealing with stress and anger was to shut out the world, and had I known that going in, I could've saved myself a lot of energy). I didn't know how deep into the 'relationship or bust' mentality I was until couple weeks ago and just how slowly I'm moving with someone now. And that that speed doesn't necessarily determine anything! It can fall apart no matter the speed. I was so scared that going slow would lead to disinterest so I had the mentality that I needed to lock him down before I lose him! But I shouldn't be learning a bunch of key things about someone **while** I'm already in a relationship with them. There's a value in slowness that I didn't see before. Can I see myself trying to rush in the future, especially if I'm feeling discouraged? For sure. But hopefully I can take a step back from dating entirely instead of going full steam ahead out of panic and likely compromising on things I shouldn't be."

5. If a friend wanted to work with me and asked you about your experience and whether or not you would recommend me, what would you say to them?

"If you're 100 percent ready to make changes and put in the work, Dana is your girl. I came in with a lot of fear of men – not in terms of physical safety but mental and emotional – and now I feel like I have so much more confidence and power. I knew what I had to give before as a partner but I'm not sure I trusted it was enough (as the message growing up has been that I'm working at a disadvantage because of my size), because I saw my body as a sort of hindrance. Thanks to therapy, that messaging has quieted a lot but it was important for me to **feel** the power of that trust that I'm more than enough, if that makes sense.

Dana has an excellent way of gassing you up that feels really genuine even though in the end she'll only have known you for less than 10 hours total. Lack of confidence and scarcity mindset definitely left me feeling scared to ask for what I wanted sometimes because what if they leave and oh no! I might not have ever admitted it but there was a small part of me that figured I'd have to sacrifice some things because my body was 'lacking.' It was always going to be the thing that held men back (as if that's actually a thing, as if men do things they don't actually want to do) from being fully into me. If that's how you feel too, it's so ridiculously false. It was one of the pieces that I didn't even know was actually missing. Everyone says confidence is sexy, and it totally is. I thought I mostly had it. I'd gotten past a lot of my hangups and was going on dates and having sex so it must be there, right? And I think it was but I don't think I'd fully unlocked it, as corny as that might sound.

I knew confidence would be sexy to other people but never anticipated what feeling my own confidence was like. It's so powerful and that's probably the overarching theme in my working with Dana. I'm sure women come away with other feelings but for me, it's power. I'm talking with some really hot, interesting people and while on a bad mental health day it would be so easy to slip into 'Jesus, this person is so attractive. What are they doing talking to me?' (and I don't doubt sometimes that might happen) but overall, it's about how I feel when I pull myself out of that hole. Why shouldn't I be talking to hot, interesting people?

I know all the mental and emotional strengths I bring to the table and I also know that to show up confident in my skin is such a strong quality. I know how attractive I find it in other people and I have to believe it goes both ways. My pictures accurately show my body and if I were someone else looking at my pictures (particularly the boudoir ones), I'd believe they were bursting with confidence and that would really appeal to me. If you're sitting across from someone you already find physically attractive and they show up comfortable and confident, you're likely going to be even more into them. If you want to start coming into that kind of power, or whatever lesson you're looking to learn, sign up with Dana ASAP. You will walk away with valuable tips and information no matter what."

5. Is there anything I can do to make this experience more enjoyable? Do you have any feedback or criticism for me? (Don't worry, you won't hurt my feelings! I love client feedback; it helps me get better.)

“The only one I can think of is sometimes I wish the sessions were longer. An hour seemed like plenty but sometimes we’d spend 30 minutes on just ONE question from the homework! You definitely went a little over our hour sometimes, which I so appreciate because I don’t think you’re the type to leave unfinished business, but at least for me, I would have paid a little extra to have another hour during some weeks. That said, I know you have your own life and other clients and other work so longer sessions may be unfeasible.”