



Overview

Overview of "I Didn't Sign Up for This" by Dr. Tracy Dalglish

"I Didn't Sign Up for This" by Dr. Tracy Dalglish is a compelling exploration of the challenges and unexpected realities that often emerge in long-term relationships. Drawing from her extensive experience as a clinical psychologist, Dr. Dalglish offers a candid, empathetic look at the moments in relationships when one or both partners might feel overwhelmed, disillusioned, or disconnected.

The book delves into the common struggles that couples face—such as unmet expectations, shifting dynamics after major life changes (like having children or career shifts), and the emotional toll of chronic stressors. Dr. Dalglish emphasizes that these feelings are normal and that many couples experience them at some point in their relationship.

Rather than offering a simplistic "fix" for these complex issues, Dr. Dalglish provides readers with practical tools and strategies to navigate these challenges together. She encourages couples to communicate openly about their feelings, to redefine their expectations of each other and the relationship, and to work collaboratively towards solutions that honor both partners' needs and desires.

One of the key themes of the book is the importance of resilience in relationships. Dr. Dalglish argues that enduring love is not about avoiding conflict or discomfort, but about learning how to grow through adversity. She introduces the concept of "relationship flexibility"—the ability to adapt and respond to challenges in a way that strengthens the relationship rather than eroding it.

Throughout the book, Dr. Dalglish uses real-life examples and case studies from her practice to illustrate the various points, making the content relatable and actionable for readers. She also integrates psychological theories and research to back up her advice, making this book not only practical but also grounded in clinical expertise.

"I Didn't Sign Up for This" is an essential read for couples at any stage of their relationship, particularly those who find themselves at a crossroads or struggling with unexpected difficulties. It serves as a reminder that even the most challenging moments in a relationship can be opportunities for growth, deeper connection, and renewed commitment. Dr. Dalglish's compassionate guidance offers hope and direction for anyone feeling lost in the complexities of love and partnership.



Blog

Navigating the Unexpected: What to Do When Your Relationship Feels Like "I Didn't Sign Up for This"

Every relationship goes through its ups and downs, but what happens when you find yourself thinking, "I didn't sign up for this"? Whether it's dealing with unmet expectations, navigating major life changes, or feeling disconnected from your partner, these moments can leave you questioning the future of your relationship. Dr. Tracy Dagleish's book, *"I Didn't Sign Up for This,"* offers invaluable insights into these challenging phases and provides practical tools to help couples not only survive but thrive through them.

Understanding the Reality of Relationships

One of the key takeaways from Dr. Dagleish's book is the understanding that these feelings of doubt and frustration are normal. Many couples, at some point, experience the shock of reality clashing with the expectations they had when they first entered the relationship. Life throws curveballs—be it the arrival of children, career changes, financial stress, or even just the wear and tear of daily routines—and these challenges can make even the strongest relationships feel shaky.

Dr. Dagleish emphasizes that these moments do not necessarily signal the end of the relationship. Instead, they offer an opportunity for growth and deeper connection, provided both partners are willing to engage in the work required to navigate through the difficulties.

Communication: The Heart of the Matter

At the core of Dr. Dagleish's approach is the importance of open, honest communication. It's not just about talking, but about truly listening to each other's concerns, fears, and desires. Often, when couples hit a rough patch, they either avoid difficult conversations or engage in them in ways that are more harmful than helpful. Dr. Dagleish encourages couples to create a safe space where they can express their feelings without fear of judgment or retaliation.

This kind of communication involves vulnerability, which can be scary, especially when you're feeling hurt or disillusioned. But as Dr. Dagleish points out, it is through these difficult conversations that couples can begin to understand each other better and start to rebuild their connection.



Redefining Expectations and Roles

Another critical aspect of the book is the need to redefine expectations and roles within the relationship. As life evolves, so too must the dynamics between partners. What worked in the early days of a relationship might not be sustainable years down the line. Dr. Dalglish suggests that couples regularly revisit and renegotiate their roles and responsibilities, ensuring that both partners feel supported and valued.

This might mean sharing the load more evenly when it comes to household tasks, parenting, or emotional labor. Or it could involve adjusting expectations around intimacy, career ambitions, or personal space. The goal is to create a partnership that adapts to the changing circumstances of life, rather than one that rigidly adheres to outdated expectations.

Building Resilience Together

Resilience is a central theme in *"I Didn't Sign Up for This."* Dr. Dalglish argues that the strongest relationships are not those that avoid conflict but those that learn to manage and grow from it. She introduces the concept of "relationship flexibility"—the ability to bend without breaking in the face of adversity.

To build this resilience, Dr. Dalglish encourages couples to focus on the positives in their relationship, to practice forgiveness, and to celebrate the small victories. This doesn't mean ignoring the problems but rather balancing them with a recognition of the strengths that the relationship has.

Practical Strategies for Moving Forward

Dr. Dalglish offers a variety of practical strategies for couples to implement in their daily lives. These include:

- 1 **Regular Check-Ins:** Set aside time each week to discuss how you're feeling about the relationship, what's going well, and what needs attention. This proactive approach prevents issues from festering.
- 2 **Conflict Management:** Learn to recognize when a discussion is becoming unproductive and take steps to de-escalate. This might mean taking a break and revisiting the conversation when both partners are calmer.
- 3 **Shared Activities:** Find activities you both enjoy and make time for them. Shared experiences can help rebuild connection and remind you of why you fell in love in the first place.



- 4 **Seek Support:** Don't be afraid to seek help from a therapist if you're struggling to navigate these challenges on your own. A professional can provide tools and perspectives that you might not have considered.

Embracing the Journey

Ultimately, *"I Didn't Sign Up for This"* is a reminder that relationships are a journey, not a destination. The unexpected twists and turns are part of the process, and while they can be challenging, they also offer opportunities for deeper connection and understanding. By embracing these moments with openness, communication, and a willingness to grow, couples can transform what feels like a crisis into a powerful opportunity for renewal.

If you're finding yourself in a place where your relationship isn't what you expected, take heart. With the right tools and mindset, you can navigate these challenges and come out stronger on the other side. Dr. Dalglish's book is an excellent guide to help you along the way.

Couples Handout

Couples Handout: Navigating the Unexpected in Relationships

Based on "I Didn't Sign Up for This" by Dr. Tracy Dalglish

Understanding the Reality of Relationships

- 5 **Normalizing Challenges:** Every relationship faces moments of doubt, frustration, and disillusionment. It's important to recognize that these feelings are normal and common among couples. Experiencing challenges doesn't mean your relationship is failing; rather, it's an opportunity to grow together.
- 6 **Shifting Expectations:** As life changes, so do the dynamics of your relationship. It's natural for the relationship to evolve as you go through different stages of life (e.g., becoming parents, changing careers). Recognizing and adapting to these changes is crucial for long-term success.



Key Concepts for Strengthening Your Relationship

1 Open Communication

- **Be Vulnerable:** Share your thoughts, fears, and desires openly with your partner. This creates a deeper understanding and connection.
- **Active Listening:** Make an effort to truly listen to your partner without interrupting or becoming defensive. Acknowledge their feelings and perspectives.
- **Create a Safe Space:** Encourage an environment where both of you feel safe to express your emotions without fear of judgment.

2 Redefining Roles and Expectations

- **Revisit Roles Regularly:** Discuss your roles in the relationship and make adjustments as needed. What worked in the past may need to change as life evolves.
- **Balance Responsibilities:** Ensure that both partners feel supported by sharing responsibilities in a way that works for both of you.
- **Adjust Expectations:** Be flexible in your expectations of each other and the relationship. Understand that perfection isn't the goal; adaptability and mutual support are key.

3 Building Resilience Together

- **Practice Forgiveness:** Let go of grudges and work towards forgiveness. Holding onto past hurts can prevent growth and connection.
- **Celebrate Small Wins:** Acknowledge the positive aspects of your relationship, even during tough times. Celebrating small victories can strengthen your bond.
- **Develop "Relationship Flexibility":** Learn to bend without breaking during conflicts. Being flexible in your approach to challenges can help you grow together rather than drift apart.

Practical Strategies for Couples

1 Weekly Check-Ins

- **Set Aside Time:** Dedicate 20-30 minutes each week to discuss your relationship. Talk about what's going well and what could use improvement.
- **Stay Proactive:** Address issues before they become bigger problems. Regular check-ins can prevent resentment from building up.



2 Conflict Management Techniques

- **Recognize Escalation:** If a conversation starts to escalate into an argument, take a break. Return to the discussion when both of you are calmer.
- **Use "I" Statements:** Focus on expressing your feelings rather than blaming your partner. For example, say "I feel hurt when..." instead of "You always..."
- **Repair Attempts:** Make efforts to repair the relationship during or after a conflict, whether through an apology, a hug, or a kind gesture.

3 Engage in Shared Activities

- **Rebuild Connection:** Find activities you both enjoy and make time for them regularly. Whether it's a hobby, a sport, or simply taking a walk together, shared experiences can reignite your connection.
- **Date Nights:** Schedule regular date nights to keep the romance alive. It doesn't have to be extravagant—what matters is spending quality time together.

4 Seek Professional Support

- **Therapy as a Resource:** If you're struggling to navigate challenges on your own, consider seeking help from a therapist. A professional can provide valuable tools and perspectives to help you work through difficulties.

Reflect and Take Action

- **Personal Reflection:** Take a moment to reflect on the areas in your relationship that could benefit from improvement. Discuss these with your partner during your next check-in.
- **Set Goals Together:** Identify one or two goals that you can work on as a couple. These could be improving communication, balancing responsibilities, or increasing intimacy.

Remember

Relationships are a journey filled with unexpected turns. The key is not to avoid challenges but to face them together with openness, communication, and a willingness to adapt. By using the tools and strategies outlined in *"I Didn't Sign Up for This,"* you can turn moments of difficulty into opportunities for deeper connection and growth.

Use this handout as a guide to help you and your partner navigate the unexpected in your relationship. Together, you can build a stronger, more resilient partnership.



Couples Assessment

Couples Assessment: Navigating the Unexpected in Relationships

Based on "I Didn't Sign Up for This" by Dr. Tracy Dagleish

Instructions:

This assessment is designed to help you and your partner reflect on key areas of your relationship that may require attention. Each section focuses on different aspects of your relationship, inspired by the themes in *"I Didn't Sign Up for This."* Please take the time to answer each question honestly. After completing the assessment, discuss your responses with your partner.

Section 1: Communication

1.1. How would you rate your ability to communicate openly and honestly with your partner?

- 7 ☐ Excellent
- 8 ☐ Good
- 9 ☐ Fair
- 10 ☐ Poor

1.2. Do you feel safe expressing your true thoughts and feelings to your partner without fear of judgment?

- 4 ☐ Always
- 5 ☐ Most of the time
- 6 ☐ Sometimes
- 7 ☐ Rarely

1.3. How well do you listen to your partner's concerns and needs?

- 5 ☐ Very well
- 6 ☐ Well
- 7 ☐ Fairly well
- 8 ☐ Not well at all



1.4. How often do you engage in meaningful conversations that go beyond day-to-day topics?

- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

Section 2: Expectations and Roles

2.1. How clearly have you and your partner defined your roles and responsibilities within the relationship?

- ☐ Very clearly
- ☐ Somewhat clearly
- ☐ Not very clearly
- ☐ Not at all

2.2. Are you satisfied with the balance of responsibilities between you and your partner?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied

2.3. How often do you and your partner discuss and adjust your expectations of each other as life changes?

- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

2.4. Do you feel that your current roles and responsibilities reflect the current stage of your life and relationship?

- ☐ Completely
- ☐ Mostly
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Not at all



Section 3: Conflict Management

3.1. How effectively do you and your partner manage conflicts when they arise?

- ☐ Very effectively
- ☐ Effectively
- ☐ Somewhat effectively
- ☐ Ineffectively

3.2. Do you or your partner tend to avoid difficult conversations to prevent conflict?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often

3.3. How often do conflicts escalate into arguments or unresolved tension?

- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Very often

3.4. How comfortable are you with making repair attempts after a conflict (e.g., apologizing, offering a kind gesture)?

- ☐ Very comfortable
- ☐ Comfortable
- ☐ Somewhat uncomfortable
- ☐ Very uncomfortable

Section 4: Emotional Connection and Resilience

4.1. How emotionally connected do you feel to your partner?

- ☐ Very connected
- ☐ Connected
- ☐ Somewhat connected
- ☐ Not connected



4.2. How often do you engage in activities that strengthen your emotional bond (e.g., date nights, shared hobbies)?

- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

4.3. Do you feel that you and your partner support each other during challenging times?

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely

4.4. How resilient do you believe your relationship is when faced with unexpected challenges?

- ☐ Very resilient
- ☐ Resilient
- ☐ Somewhat resilient
- ☐ Not resilient

Section 5: Moving Forward

5.1. How committed are you to working on your relationship and addressing the areas that need improvement?

- ☐ Very committed
- ☐ Committed
- ☐ Somewhat committed
- ☐ Not committed

5.2. How willing are you to seek external help (e.g., therapy) if needed to strengthen your relationship?

- ☐ Very willing
- ☐ Willing
- ☐ Somewhat willing
- ☐ Not willing



5.3. How confident are you that your relationship can improve with effort and communication?

- ☐ Very confident
- ☐ Confident
- ☐ Somewhat confident
- ☐ Not confident

5.4. What are the top three areas you believe need the most attention in your relationship?

- 1
- 2
- 3

Discussion and Reflection

After completing the assessment, take some time to discuss your responses with your partner. Use this as an opportunity to understand each other's perspectives and identify areas where you both can work together to strengthen your relationship.

Questions to Consider:

- What did you learn about your partner's views on your relationship?
- Were there any surprises in your partner's responses?
- What are the next steps you both can take to address the areas that need improvement?

Final Thoughts: Relationships are a journey filled with unexpected challenges, but with open communication, adaptability, and a commitment to growth, you can navigate these challenges together. Use the insights from this assessment to guide your conversations and actions as you work towards a stronger, more resilient partnership.



Couples Challenge

7-Day Couples Challenge: Strengthening Your Relationship

Based on "I Didn't Sign Up for This" by Dr. Tracy Dagleish

Overview: This 7-day challenge is designed to help you and your partner reconnect, improve communication, and navigate the unexpected challenges in your relationship. Each day, you will focus on a specific aspect of your relationship, inspired by the themes in *"I Didn't Sign Up for This."* Set aside time each day to complete the challenge together.

Day 1: Reflect on Your Relationship Journey

Challenge: Spend 30 minutes reflecting on your relationship journey. Discuss the following:

- 11 How has your relationship evolved since you first met?
- 12 What were some of the high points and challenges you've faced together?
- 13 How have your expectations of each other changed over time?

Goal: To gain perspective on how far you've come and to appreciate the growth you've experienced together.

Day 2: Practice Active Listening

Challenge: Choose a quiet time to have a 20-minute conversation where each partner takes turns talking about something important to them. The listening partner's goal is to practice active listening by:

- 8 Making eye contact
- 9 Not interrupting
- 10 Reflecting back what they heard ("I hear you saying...")

Goal: To improve communication by making each partner feel heard and understood.



Day 3: Revisit and Redefine Expectations

Challenge: Spend 30 minutes discussing your current roles and expectations in the relationship. Consider:

- 9 Are there any responsibilities that need to be adjusted?
- 10 How can you better support each other in your current stage of life?
- 11 What expectations can be adjusted to reduce stress or resentment?

Goal: To ensure that both partners feel supported and that roles are balanced and fair.

Day 4: Engage in a Shared Activity

Challenge: Choose an activity that you both enjoy and spend at least an hour doing it together. This could be cooking a meal, going for a walk, playing a game, or watching a favorite movie.

Goal: To strengthen your emotional connection by enjoying quality time together.

Day 5: Address a Conflict with Compassion

Challenge: Identify a recent conflict or ongoing issue in your relationship. Spend 30 minutes discussing it using the following guidelines:

- Start with a "softened startup" (e.g., "I feel...when...")
- Avoid blame and focus on your own feelings
- Look for solutions together

Goal: To practice resolving conflicts in a way that strengthens your relationship rather than causing further harm.

Day 6: Celebrate Each Other's Strengths

Challenge: Take turns sharing three things you appreciate or admire about your partner. Be specific about qualities or actions that you value.



Goal: To build a positive atmosphere in your relationship by focusing on each other's strengths and contributions.

Day 7: Plan for the Future Together

Challenge: Spend 30 minutes discussing your future together. Consider the following:

- What are your shared goals and dreams?
- How can you support each other in achieving these goals?
- What steps can you take in the short term to move towards these goals?

Goal: To align your visions for the future and create a sense of shared purpose and direction.

Reflection and Next Steps

After completing the challenge: Take some time to reflect on the past week. Discuss the following questions:

- What did you learn about your relationship during this challenge?
- Were there any activities that were particularly impactful for you as a couple?
- How can you continue to apply what you've learned in your daily life?

Next Steps: Consider making some of these activities a regular part of your relationship routine. Whether it's weekly check-ins, regular date nights, or ongoing conversations about expectations, these practices can help you navigate the unexpected challenges of your relationship with greater resilience and connection.

Final Thoughts: This 7-day challenge is just the beginning. The key to a strong relationship is ongoing effort, communication, and adaptability. Use the insights gained from this challenge to continue growing together and strengthening your bond.



Bundle Description

"I Didn't Sign Up for This" Couples Bundle

This comprehensive bundle is designed to help couples navigate the unexpected challenges in their relationship, inspired by Dr. Tracy Dagleish's book *"I Didn't Sign Up for This."* The bundle includes:

- 14 **In-Depth Overview:** A detailed exploration of the key themes and insights from the book, providing couples with a deep understanding of the realities of long-term relationships and how to navigate them.
- 15 **Blog Post:** An engaging blog that delves into practical strategies for overcoming common relationship challenges, offering actionable advice based on the book's principles.
- 16 **Couples Handout:** A handy guide summarizing essential concepts from the book, including tips on communication, redefining expectations, and building resilience together.
- 17 **Couples Assessment:** A thoughtful assessment tool that allows couples to evaluate key aspects of their relationship, helping to identify areas of strength and opportunities for growth.
- 18 **7-Day Couples Challenge:** A week-long challenge designed to help couples reconnect, improve communication, and strengthen their bond through daily activities and reflection.

This bundle is the perfect resource for couples looking to deepen their connection, enhance their communication, and build a more resilient relationship. Whether you're at a crossroads or simply want to strengthen your partnership, this bundle offers the guidance and tools you need to navigate the journey together.