

# What do The Single Do at Christmas?



**A Minibook for Surviving the Holidays without Killing  
your Family**

**LaVonia R. Tryon**

# Copyright Page

Copyright © 2020 by But-I-FLY Ministries & LaVonnia R. Tryon

## **What do The Single Do at Christmas?**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

Although the author and publisher have made every effort to ensure that the information in this book was correct at press time, the author and publisher do not assume and hereby disclaim any liability to any party for any loss, damage, or disruption caused by errors or omissions, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or any other cause.

Adherence to all applicable laws and regulations, including international, federal, state and local governing professional licensing, business practices, advertising, and all other aspects of doing business in the US, Canada or any other jurisdiction is the sole responsibility of the reader and consumer.

Neither the author nor the publisher assumes any responsibility or liability whatsoever on behalf of the consumer or reader of this material. Any per-ceived slight of any individual or organization is purely unintentional.

The resources in this book are provided for informational purposes only and should not be used to replace the specialized training and professional judgment of a health care or mental health care professional.

Neither the author nor the publisher can be held responsible for the use of the information provided within this book. Please always consult a trained professional before making any decision regarding treatment of yourself or others.

ISBN: \*issue not for resale\*

# Dedication

This book is dedicated to every Single that has ever dreaded a holiday because of not having someone special to share it with. Remember, you are someone special. A whole someone. Just by yourself. You are enough. Don't allow anyone to convince you otherwise.

I see you. I am you. Let's journey together...

*Singleness is no longer a lack of options – but a choice. A choice to refuse to let your life be defined by your relationship status but to live every day Happily and let your Ever After work itself out.*

— Mandy Hale

So, you are here.  
Single again, at the Holidays.  
Don't worry, I'm right here with you.

Being Single isn't a curse, it's not a holding ground, it's not an in-between place on your road to marriage – you have been divinely placed here by the Creator of the universe for a purpose, on purpose and it's your responsibility to live in purpose.

If you are struggling on how to get there, or even if you are enjoying your Singleness and just want to get clearer in your identity and closer to God... here is a free gift for you.

My debut book is now LIVE on Amazon. NOT Another Singles Book sold over 400 copies in the first few weeks of sales, which is astronomical for a new Author with no paid advertising and only word of mouth marketing. The message in this book is powerful and needed for such a time as this. I believe we haven't even begun to scratch the surface of the impact that this book will have on this generation or our movement of Singles.

NOT Another Singles Book gives you the foundation needed to:

- Understand the difference between being alone and being lonely
- Find the balance between enjoying Singleness while still anticipating marriage
- Fall more in love with the person you see in the mirror – or become brave enough to admit that you aren't there yet, and walk you through it
- Teach you to see Singleness as not only the season that you happen to be in, but as a divine placement by God for His glory and your purpose.

To read the first 3 chapters... [click here](#).

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Where do we even start? .....	2
Skipping it – I’ve always liked turkey alone. ....	4
Covid Changes Everything.....	5
Alone and NOT Lonely .....	7
Weighing in on Weight .....	10
Let’s Get Personal.....	13
I’d Never Wear Those Shoes...and other equally offensive statements.....	16
Rent-A-Boo .....	18
ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....	20

# Where do we even start?

So, it begins. You turn the calendar on your desk and your eyes zoom in on the date. November 1<sup>st</sup>. Holiday season is upon us and no matter who you are - if you are Single (unattached, unmarried, and seemingly unapproachable) two thoughts go through your mind.

Dread...

Or

Excitement *and* Dread...

No matter how much you love your family and can't wait to kiss your granny (post Corona), there is a part of you that feels uneasy about going home and facing the same questions that you faced last Thanksgiving or Christmas after you vowed to have a different answer this Thanksgiving or Christmas...with the same answer.

"Yes, I am still Single, Aunt Jan. No, I'm not crazy, Uncle Junior. I do have friends and a life, 8-year-old Tameka *that already has a boyfriend.*"

So, the thoughts start to race through your mind, "am I too young to fake a heart attack?" or "Wait, this is 'Rona... I can do a Zoom Thanksgiving!' ...but – 'nope can't taste Aunt Emma's dressing through the screen, so that won't work either'."

Then what's left, wear a shirt that says, 'YES I'M STILL SINGLE & NO I DON'T WANT TO MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR'S SON'? But on second thought, if he is single, still has all his original teeth and has a job, something might be arranged. What? I have already tried cute and successful and look where that's gotten me. A reserved nameplate at the kids' table.

If you can relate to ANY of this, then this mini-book is for you. I wrote this book in roughly about a week, simply because this is a topic that I have lived for my entire adult life (short of 3 disastrous years – you'll have to wait for *that* book), and it's one that I suffered through until I started implementing some of these strategies that you will find in these pages. Now let's be clear – I didn't know they were strategies when I started doing them – I just knew I was exhausted with dreading the time that should be filled with joy and happiness and turkey induced comatose, and something needed to change. The Craigslist ad for a new family didn't pan out so well, so I was stuck with the one I had. If I wanted something to change – I had to be the catalyst.

And I will also add the disclaimer that this will not work for every family, and *everyone* in your family. This is meant to be a humorous, lighthearted read that could be very powerful if you allow it. I will suggest things to do and some things that you

shouldn't do, but you're an adult sooo...do you, boo. Maybe some of the don'ts will work with nosey Cousin Shay.

This will not be an all-inclusive guide. I don't claim to be an expert on family dynamics or relationships. I could take you through some psychological aspects of family structures and how they can affect adult decisions; I could also argue the balance between nature vs nurture, but I'm not. For this mini-book, I will mostly leave my degrees out of this and just speak to you as a Single that has shared many-a-table with families during holidays *and* as a Single that spent several holidays alone or hiding with friends instead of facing my family having to explain why I'm still Single, yet again.

Holidays are a time of bonding, of seeing old family and family friends that you may have not been able to see over the year. In 2020, in the middle of a global pandemic, the holidays will look a lot differently for a lot of people. The huge family gatherings with everyone bringing a dish and coming together around MaDears turkey, Aunt Emma's stuffing, and Aunt Laura's Teacakes, may not be exactly the same, but the sentiment is still there. As we gather in albeit smaller and more immediate families, that still may not shelter us from the prying eyes and the inappropriate questions.

How do we deal with the anticipation of seeing our family and the anxiety of Mama's disapproving looks when we don't ask her to pull out the leaf on that dining room table for our +1? There are several ways we can look at different situations that may occur during the holiday and this book will explore only a few.

This guide will give you one-pagers for several scenarios listing do's and don'ts that could get you out of some conversations and situations that occur at most of our holiday gatherings. Based on your family and your strengths, decide which will work for you and which won't. Remember, this is family, and we don't get to choose 'em, but we never want to intentionally harm or damage a relationship. This is about sticking up for yourself, doing what's best for you, being comfortable in who you are and where you are in your life...while enjoying time with loved ones.

Ohh, and it's mostly unedited, so be kind. Govern yourself accordingly. Let's get started...

Journeying Together,  
*La Vonía*

## Skipping it – I've always liked turkey alone.

For many of us, the idea of skipping the holiday gathering with family has crossed our minds. If you are like me, you've even done it. I've participated in many a 'Friendsgiving' that just happened to substitute for my family gatherings, only to find that they didn't really fill that void. No matter how much my family gets on my nerves and trust me that could be an entire book itself, they are still...family. There is no substitution.

If you are thinking of skipping Thanksgiving and/or Christmas with friends and family, check your motives and motivations. Being Single, we already spend a lot of time alone, so really evaluate your reasons for choosing more of it and especially during this season. Are you avoiding? Are you hiding? Does work really need you or do you need it? There could be any number of reasons that you could skip, but you must ask yourself if any of them are good reasons or just good enough?

Take advantage of your time as a Single, and choose to spend it how you want, but don't allow someone else's opinions or attitudes dictate your holidays. We all have that one, or those 10 family members that seem to be completely unbearable. It can be exhausting having to dodge or defend, so sometimes we just think it would be easier to skip it all.

But let's say you don't. Think through the worst-case scenario. What's the worst thing that could come out of your going home to spend time with family and close friends? A few uncomfortable conversations? Some awkward questions and even more awkward responses? Some blows to your self-esteem? Well, let's talk about that last one.

Our family's opinions of us and our life decisions many times play a major role in our lives, so a few ill placed and insensitive comments can definitely sting, but they should never stick. What does that even mean? It means that you are marked and called by God for a purpose, so there should be no one or nothing that can affect your self-esteem, because your self-esteem should be what YOU think about YOURSELF. This isn't something that is built up or torn down by the external, but it's formed based on a fixed understanding of your divine creation in the image of God. Don't give anyone else that kind of power. If you do struggle with self-esteem, please go to my website and go to the 'NOT Another Singles Workbook' – there are exercises associated with your self-esteem and how to make sure it's grounded in Christ. Head over to [www.lavoniartryon.com](http://www.lavoniartryon.com) for a free download (coming December 2020).

Vow to only allow negative comments to sting as they bounce off the armor of an individual that has done the hard work to know their value and worth, knowing that it will not stick. Never again allow a person to leave a lasting mark or impact simply because you are still looking at something or someone external to define you.

# COVID-19 Changes Everything

As I decided to write this book, I realized that COVID truly has changed everything. Here in the United States, many officials and official sources have encouraged us to postpone or cancel all together our holiday gatherings due to the rising COVID-19 cases. This book isn't a political or health stance, and I offer no opinion or advice about either route, I only plead that whatever you choose to do that you stay safe. And that you think beyond yourself and think about those vulnerable around you as you make the best decisions for you and your family.

No one believed that starting 2020, we would be ending it the way that we are. It has been almost 10 months since we have gone into some level of shut down and the things that we took for granted, like going into the grocery store or to the gym, have become foreign to us. No matter what stream of thought you ascribe to, Coronavirus has affected your life in some way. Many people have lost jobs, had to share Wi-Fi with teleworkers and kids doing homeschool, gained weight, lost weight, read a book, wrote a book and many other numerous things that we never had the time to do before March.

As Singles, one thing is clear, COVID has made us hyper aware of our Singleness. We have probably spent more time alone than we have in the past, and it may have been a struggle to really understand being comfortable alone without being overwhelmed with a sense of loneliness. This is a fine art and not one that is easily mastered. We spend so much of our time being busy instead of productive that being forced to slow down and spend time with ourselves, either gave us time to be introspective and do some internal work, or it made us extremely uncomfortable in our own skin; in our own homes. Hopefully, you are the former and you have used this time to fall more in love with yourself and really hone into your purpose. But if you are in the later and this pandemic has been particularly hard on you, my prayer is that this mini-book brings you hope and a different outlook. I would love to connect with you more and walk you through the beautiful journey that is Singleness. Please connect with me at [lavonia@lavoniartryon.com](mailto:lavonia@lavoniartryon.com) to book a free coaching call. No one should be Single alone.

As Coronavirus changes the way we view the world and each other, we have choices. We can choose to be defeated and accept that we will be alone *forever* unless the Amazon delivery person is really cute, or we can turn our focus off of the one thing that we think we are missing and focus on everything that we do have. As Singles, we often rock our own contentment boat by focusing on the wrong things, and not keeping the main thing – the main thing. As a Single, during a global pandemic you have a unique advantage that many people don't have. No distractions, or at least less than your married counterparts.

For the Singles without children – how are you spending your time? Since the social life has either diminished or at least changed shapes, what productive activities have you added that will cause multiplication in your life? Have you been able to build your savings account? Are you focused on your health and wellness and you've finally started to use that home gym that has been collecting dust in your garage? Have you built your career and professional resume? Started a business? Picked up a hobby? Learned a new language? Wrote a book? *Read a book?* This list isn't meant to make you feel like you haven't done enough, in fact it was created for just the opposite. You have a unique opportunity in this time to come out better than you went in. Don't waste it on Netflix binges.

For the Singles with children – I can only imagine some of the stress that you may be under. Especially if you must homeschool your kid(s), work, take care of the household and have any expectation to bathe that day as well. Although I can't personally relate to your struggle, I can speak to your strength. You got this, sis. You are making a difference, brother. Your children will rise up and call you blessed. Reach out to your support system. If you have someone that is 'in your bubble' – meaning someone that you have either quarantined with or that is in a safe environment who can babysit for a bit, take advantage of it. We are a nation and a generation that has this aversion to asking for help. I want to call you out on that and call that out of you. It's not strength to struggle when there is help available; it's pride. Use your village so that you can get some time for yourself to recharge and reconnect with *you* – the you that is enhanced not hindered by the unique experiences that you have been trusted with as a Single parent. Get creative. Even if you can't physically get to someone, I had a friend that gave the suggestion of doing a Zoom call with her friend's kid so that she could go take a long bath. Technology is wonderful, and I'd love to see the LEGO castle that your child has built or to read them a book, so I'm sure that you have someone in your community who would love to as well. Show yourself strong and reach out.

# Alone and NOT Lonely

In my first book, [NOT Another Singles Book](#), I discuss in great detail the difference between being alone and feeling lonely. If you struggle with understanding this difference, you aren't the only one. We've never been taught the fine line of being alone and being ok with it. Being alone is a matter of circumstance – it simply means that you are in your own company. Being lonely – is feeling like you missed out on something because of it. I personally know what it's like to be lonely while in a marriage, and if it's any consolation to your Single heart, you'd much rather your cup than mine. I struggled so long in understanding how to be alone with myself and comfortable, that if I can spare you of that – this will be worth it.

So how do I be alone without being lonely? First step is to truly get to know yourself. When you are comfortable in your skin and your identity, being alone can serve to refuel and recharge you. Being alone with yourself gives allowances to self-assessment – what's working for me? What's no longer serving me? Where can I improve? What accomplishments can I be proud of in this day, week, month, year? All of these are self-reflective questions and great starting points in getting comfortable being alone.

The world, society, and social media all give us the indication that being alone is either something that we shouldn't be ok with, or something different than what it actually is. For example – if you search the hashtag #alone on any social media site, you will most likely see posts with people being anything but. We all know that social media can be a great thing, but it can also be the thief of contentment, by trapping us in a whirlwind of comparison. Being alone doesn't have to be some perfectly poised and staged photo worthy moment, it can simply be enjoying your own company.

So how does this relate to the holidays? Because Auntie Ann and Uncle Junior that got married at 19 fresh out of high school and started procreating your nine 1<sup>st</sup> cousins right away, never had to learn to be alone, so they more than likely won't understand that you can be happy Single. They equate singleness to loneliness and can't imagine that you would actually *choose* to be in your own company. This is where sensitivity and confidence come in. It's easy to defend something that you are secure about. If you aren't happy being alone, then be honest with yourself first and foremost, then fight to do what it takes to get there. If you need help, go to [www.lavoniartryon.com](http://www.lavoniartryon.com) to download your free abridged copy of the NOT Another Singles workbook (available early December 2020) which has tools and resources on how to learn to be comfortable alone.

Now that you are comfortable and content being alone or at the least more confident in how to get there, it'll much easier to field the questions and comments about whether you are lonely, because you can actually answer honestly. Whether you choose to do so out loud or not, that's up to you. When the questions come

about why you haven't settled down, you can clearly and confidently state the advantages of your being alone and the things that you are accomplishing by yourself, for yourself. Unless you have a more than normally dysfunctional family; their goal and concern is typically for you to be happy. They know how awesome you are and believe that someone of the opposite sex should get the pleasure of your company. This should be perceived as a compliment to your character and how much of a good catch they know you to be. Take it as such.

When the infamous 'You're still single? Aren't you lonely in that big ole house? When you gonna stop all that schooling and start having me some grandbabies?', questions come - simply smile and reassure them that your being alone is a choice at this time and when you meet a person that makes you want to change that, they will be the first ones to know.

## **5 Tips:**

1. Get honest with yourself about where you are, emotionally. Are you comfortable being alone? Are you ok with your Singleness right now? If yes, how are you actualizing it? If no, what are you doing to change it? Getting to the root of this question is important to do, cause all it takes is one ill-placed comment to have you crying into the mashed potatoes about how lonely you are. Trust me, that's not a good look.

2. Once you have worked out your honest feelings about being Single – sure up your answers on this. If you haven't gotten to contentment yet, be honest but don't open the door to more questions than you are ready to answer. Responses like 'I'm working on myself right now and when I'm ready, I'll actively begin to pursue a relationship' are quite effective, but they also can lead to follow up questions, so be prepared.

3. Highlight your accomplishments as a Single. It's ok to brag a little bit in this area but be sensitive. Sometimes people aren't asking out of genuine concern but because of envy. Even your family. Especially your family. They may wish that they had the freedom your Single life has afforded you. Focus on the areas you have improved with pride, not arrogance. During this pandemic – I personally lost weight, reset my mind, wrote a bestselling book, revamped my business and did some home organization – all while still maintaining a 40+ hour workweek. Know when to share this information; and here's a bonus tip, it's usually not right after Aunt Jan just finished talking about how stressed she is with her kids, husband and house.

4. Use this as a teaching moment to acknowledge the difference you now understand between being lonely and alone. You can discuss your time on personal enrichment, the interesting ways that you have been able to still connect with friends, and suggest new ways to connect with the family that can't get together during this

time. It might be a great time to surprise Grandma with a Zoom Thanksgiving call of all the family she can't see due to The Rona.

5. Smile. Breathe. Confidence in your lot in life speaks more than any words that you could say. Be comfortable in you, that's enough.

# Weighing in on Weight

If you are like any other person in the world, you have a bit of self-consciousness about your body image, maybe due to personal insecurities, but probably mostly due to comparisons. We all suffer from comparison anxiety or at least uneasiness from social media. Someone is always doing more, being more, going more, making more than us and we wish we could just get it together. They just went on an international vacation last year and now they are buying a new house? She just had a baby and now her snatch back is in full effect? She's working a full-time job, running her own business AND her house is always clean? Scoot over last season's boots, let me climb under this bed.

Many times, it feels like we just can't measure up. Well, I'm here to tell you that you were never meant to *measure up* to someone else's life. In fact, if we were able to see the behind the scenes, *they* probably can't measure up to their own social media. It ain't real life, boo. By comparing yourself, you are saying that *you* are supposed to be a better them *than them*? That doesn't even make sense! In the wise words of the prophet Dr. Seuss – 'Today you are You, that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is Youer than You.' So simple, yet so powerful. There is no way that you can measure up to someone else because you were not created to be them, you were created to be YOU. Anything else is a cheap imitation and a cheaper blow to The Creator who fashioned you. To want someone else's life, body type or vision is like telling The Lord you aren't satisfied with what He has for you. Not a good look, sis.

So how does this relate to the Holidays and family? Simple. There may be someone in your family that you are always being compared to or measured against. In some cases, you come out *the victor*, and in other cases you end of lacking. But here's the thing-with comparisons you never win, no one does. Because there is always someone that is winning in life more than you in whatever category you choose and there is always someone that is looking at you as their goal point of 'making it'. Therefore, the only way to win, is to bow out of the game.

Not so long ago, I was caught up in self-image issues so heavy that I would sometimes avoid family events and gatherings. I've always been self-conscious about my weight since adulthood. As a teenager, I was small. I was athletic, so I was very active which easily hide my poor nutrition choices. I remember in High School – Diet Coke and French fries or Funyuns served as my lunch more days than not. I would gorge on sweets and carbs but didn't gain weight due to the high caloric burn of my sport activities. All of this came to the forefront when I went to Baylor and wasn't very active. I had never *intentionally* worked out, who does that? So, my stress eating showed up strong and instead of the Freshmen 15, mine was like the

Freshmen 40. And poof, my weight issues were birthed. And it has been a yo-yo ever since. At least, until about a year ago.

When I would go to a family outing or gathering, it seemed like they could smell the insecurity and would play on it. I would get the blatant comments about ‘how big I had gotten’, and ‘girl, don’t sit here – it’s not that much room’. Sometimes it would be a bit subtler- my cousin that was obviously at least several sizes larger than me saying that she wanted to trade outfits or for me to give her my skirt. Then my sister saying that she had some ‘insert an obvious larger size than I was in’ jeans that she had bought, and she was saving them for me.

Then when I lost weight, there was either no comment or still the slight digs about my weight as if I were still the *big girl*. It never failed, someone still reminded me that I was ‘the big one’. It still stings to write this, even though I’ve *mostly* healed from this pain. Why do I share this? Because it’s for someone else that struggles with their weight and have often been the brunt of some ‘family friendly’ taunts, that weren’t so friendly towards you. I’m here to tell you: don’t let that or them steal your joy or keep you from your family. You have every right to be there and you have every right to change in whatever way you wish, without needing their approval or permission.

Many times, we are targeted not because of something wrong in our lives, but something lacking in their own. Even when the slight is unintentional, it still speaks to some thought process that they have that allows them to think it’s ok to comment or weigh in on another person’s weight or image. It could be their own insecurities about their own body image; it could be trying to hide the fact their husband was laid off and they can’t pay their bills; or their son is in jail yet again for Christmas. They may be thinking, ‘see, if I focus on you the attention doesn’t have to be on me.’ And it works, until it doesn’t anymore.

So, what do you do in this situation? Do you give the same measure that you have been given? An eye for an eye, you say. Let’s play that out. Though their slights *might* be unintentional, yours would not be. You will be hyper aware of the pain and insecurities that you are bringing up as you ‘stand up for yourself’. Can you live with that? Is that the person you want to be? Someone that stoops to a level that is beneath your character, simply to get someone off your back, or do you choose to as Our Former First Lady says ‘when they go low, we go high.’ I want to challenge you to stay high this holiday. That definitely doesn’t sound like it did in my head, lol. Allow your character and the work that you have done on your self-esteem and identity to speak louder in these circumstances.

Here’s what I’m not saying – to sit back passively and allow someone to use you as a joke. Don’t willingly submit to ridicule, insensitive comments and rude statements simply for the sake of keeping the peace. That ain’t peace, it’s passivity. You can tactfully stand up for yourself without putting someone else down. I remember one Thanksgiving not so long ago when an Aunt made some kind of joke

with my weight being the punch line. I squarely looked her in her eyes, smiled and said loud enough for those in the immediate area to hear – Auntie, my weight isn't a subject we are going to talk or joke about this year. I'm comfortable and confident in my skin, so it doesn't need to be discussed.' I can still remember the look on her face. Shock and then realization. Her next words were, 'Oh, I didn't mean anything by it, it was a joke.' My response: well, it's no longer funny. Who wants to play Taboo?'. That was it. I didn't let it get awkward or become this uncomfortable space in an otherwise joyful occasion. I simply set a boundary, firmly and respectfully. Giving her something to self-reflect on was just a bonus.

### **5 Tips:**

1. Remember that most of the time, it isn't even about you. It's their own insecurities and you're the closest target.
2. Get comfortable in you, like really comfortable – then every hurtful comment might sting, but it surely won't stick.
3. You're aware of the issue, which puts you above the issue. Every comment doesn't deserve your response and every remark doesn't deserve your energy.
4. Set firm boundaries, but not at the sake of embarrassing or belittling them.
5. They go low, you go high. If you can't get too high, then at the very least be higher than them.

## Let's Get Personal

Oh me, oh my! Who else has that Auntie or Cousin that thinks it's their personal calling from the gods to play Anderson Cooper at Thanksgiving? As if they are a New York Times journalist and they must 'get to the bottom' of everyone's life, and before dessert? We all have one, right? Or 5 (insert major side-eye). If you have a family member that starts off every sentence with 'did you hear...' then this tip is for you.

I'm no theologian but I *swear* gossip dates all the way back to the garden and the serpent. Think about it... his first words were, 'Did God *really* say...', see, just messy. And with that a seed was planted and we've been gossiping ever since. There is something so pettily enticing about sharing someone else's story and information, especially when it gives you an opportunity to look down on them or judge their behaviors and circumstances. As tempting as it might be let's just...don't.

I have a previous coworker that gave me a backhanded compliment which I still hold very dear. She called me into her office, and started the conversation with, 'Listen, let me tell you about...' Then she suddenly stopped and said, 'Never mind. I forgot you are just going to tell me 'that's not mine' and cut me off, so it's not worth it to start. Do we have any appointments today?' Even though she seemed to be disappointed by this, she had just given me a very personal compliment and an acknowledgement of a character trait that I still work hard to cultivate. Not that I always get it right, but I strive to not be the one in the middle of gossip. My tagline, 'That's not mine', is used equally when someone wants to share information about someone else that isn't their story to tell, and also when someone wants me to share a story that doesn't directly involve me. It works well, feel free to try it sometime.

So, what do we do when we have those family members that simply have any boundaries? How do we politely tell them to-in Kevin Hart's voice, 'Mind your own business'? This is a tricky one and will not work in every scenario and in every situation, but I do have a few tips. I think sometimes people don't even realize how deeply personal the questions they ask are. For example, while I was married, I had a coworker that would ask me every other day when I was having a baby. Mind you, what she didn't know, *because we weren't friends*, was that my ex-husband was engaging in some things that I distinctly remember the judge directing us to forsake. B even without this information, that question is way too personal to ask me while we are waiting to fax a document. So, at one point I got so frustrated by my attempts to politely change the subject being ignored, I blurted – 'Will you please get out of my uterus?' Everyone around, including me was shocked. Did I really just say that out loud? 'Yep, you did'. Then she had the nerve to look offended, and that was the nail in the coffin. So, I gave her what she was apparently came for. I politely told her that each time she asked me about having a baby, she was inadvertently asking me about my sex life with my husband, and since I would never consider to ask her the

same question, because it's well offensive, I didn't think it was an appropriate water cooler conversation. Needless to say, that was the last time she asked me. Mission. Accomplished.

No, I am not suggesting you ask Aunt Faye about her sex life when she chooses to get too personal or that you ask Uncle Chris if he's still sneaking around with the neighbor's wife. But I am strongly suggesting that you inform them of the personal nature of the conversation and that it is not an appropriate question. Depending on the circumstances and the question, you will have to use tact and discernment in this case. If you have a good relationship with the person asking the questions, you can casually switch the subject and/or tell them to get out of your business and the crisis is averted. But in the case that it is an older family member, you may have to use a bit more finesse.

Many people believe that with age, people have earned the right to not have a filter. Elderly people just say whatever they want. It doesn't matter how offensive, inappropriate or out of line, they sometimes believe because they have lived a long time that gives them the right to not show any tact. Well, I'm not here to argue that point, but I will say that the way you handle it speaks more to your character than to their intrusiveness.

First evaluate if you actually mind answering the question. And then rapidly process what follow up questions may come from this and if you are willing to answer all of them. If you aren't ready to chase this rabbit down the trail, I'd suggest you stop it before it starts. Here are some tips.

## **5 Tips:**

1. Covertly change the subject. This is the first and easiest option, but usually the most difficult to transition smoothly, so let me tell you from the beginning it probably will not work. But it's at least worth a try.

2. Give a vague partial answer. Remember, unless they were with you or have some inside information, they more than likely don't know a whole lot about the question they are asking. I'm not saying lie, I'm saying choose which truth and how much of it to tell.

3. Give them something *better* to talk about. Remember I said that I didn't gossip, so this isn't a ploy to give them a juicier conversation or to offer your Cousin Shae up on the chopping block. Control the narrative. If they are asking about your love life, try telling them about some of the things that you have done because you are currently unattached. If they are asking you when you and your on-again-off-again boothang are going to get married, inform them of the latest accomplishment you've received at work or school. This one really works if you are talking to someone that would much rather talk about themselves. For example – when Cousin Emily says,

‘what happened to that guy you posted about on FB?’ Your response: Oh, yeah, I saw on FB that you were remodeling your kitchen. It looks amazing! You did that all by yourself?’ Crisis averted. This one takes tact and finesse so you will have to practice until perfect. The art is to not let on that you are avoiding their question, simply to convince them that the new subject is a much better choice.

4. Ask a slightly less offensive, but quite personal question back. Now, be ready because this one is confrontational, so if that’s not your speed – skip to #5. This is an eye opener and often, like my uterus comment an initial shocker. But it could lead to a great conversation about the nature of the questions that are being asked. If you have a captive audience, use it as a teaching opportunity for your family member to learn how their questions are perceived, even if that’s not the way they mean them.

5. Answer it. In full detail. With explanations, pie charts, visual aids and make it as uncomfortable to hear the answer as it should be to ask it. I lied in #4, this one is equally confrontational, but a bit less directly. It takes guts to do 4 & 5, so they are not for the fainthearted. If these make you queasy to think about, just go with the safe choice – ignore them and go sit at the kids table, they are probably way more fun anyway.

# I'd Never Wear Those Shoes...and other equally offensive statements

Some people are just rude. And petty. And some of these people have the same last name as us. I wish I had a more politically correct way of saying it, but it is what it is. Some things will not change and the only thing that you can do is rise above it and not get caught in the drama of Cousin Sam's foolishness. This section won't be as long because many of the things that I would advise you to do or not do, I sometimes don't do a good job of practicing what I preach. Sometimes it feels good in the moment to tell someone just what *you* think, after they have given you their unsolicited life advice. But it's hardly ever a good idea, and it rarely comes with any benefit, either spiritually or emotionally. So, where does that leave us?

During family gatherings, I always have someone that makes a comment about my outfit or style or hair. Now, let me preface this by saying that if you have never met me in person, you might not understand this. I can be described as eclectic in my style, like I was born in several different wrong decades, so it is my life duty to combine them all...but in a stylish way. I have a life theme, 'it doesn't match but it goes'. But I come from a pretty matchy-matchy family – like shoes, nails, shirt and necklace are all the exact same shade of red and the pants are black with little red flecks in them. Yawn. So naturally when I wear a striped shirt, with flower pants and yellow shoes – I look cute, but it gets labelled as a LaVonita outfit. I even have my 4-year-old niece on the wagon and when her mom asks her what she is wearing, she says confidently 'I dressed like Aunt BonBon'. I'm so proud. So, for me it's not a big deal. I love the way I dress and wear my big fro or juicy curls or purple box braids – so these comments don't usually phase me. Aunt Betty saying she would never wear what I wear isn't offensive, it's a compliment, because I don't think I've ever precisely matched my shoes with my blouse since High School, so the feeling is mutual. No feelings hurt.

But for those of us that aren't trying to stand out in our outfit, but you still have those family members that believe you asked them for their opinion of your attire, how do we handle this? I know you are tired of me saying this, but it really does depend on the circumstance and the relationship. When your 65 yo aunt tells your 30 yo self that she wouldn't wear those shoes because she would break her neck – why are you offended? Do you secretly want to dress like Aunt Ruthann? Umm, this is not an insult, it is simply a fact. In today's day, we are so quick to be offended that we don't even know when there is no offense to be had. Having different style is ok and should be embraced.

Now for the slightly less silver lining comments and remarks, the way you approach this will be different. I would first ask about your choice of outfit to a family

gathering. If you are comfortable dressing a bit riskier and are inclined with showing a bit more than some others, ask yourself your motive of dressing this way to a *family* event. There's always a place and time for everything and although you look fiya in that catsuit sis, it's going to turn out not to be a good choice after your second serving of dressing and Aunt Emma's mac-n-cheese. Choose wisely. If you always wear a hat or dorag, but you know that Granny don't allow no hats at her fancy table, then make a better choice this year, and leave the hat in the car. Sometimes we choose a fight that isn't even worth our effort. It is not that serious to just be you, when you are doing it defiantly.

If something is said offensively, then calculate your response before giving it. Take a breath. I always say, 'eat the meat and spit out the bones.' Is there something that can be taken away positive or educational from the offensive remark? If yes, swallow and say, 'Thank you Aunt May, I'll think about that.'

If you can't take anything away from it, GO. OFF. Noooooo, I'm kidding. Maybe, I think so. Nah, don't go off, just go home.

## **5 Tips:**

1. Ignore it. Not every comment or remark deserves your response or your energy. Move on and move around. Typically, the comments that aren't weighted in good intentions won't be repeated.
2. Evaluate the person making the comment. Is it a person that we know has no good intentions and are living up to their petty ways? Then refer to tip #1. If this is a person born outside of your decade, then trust me the fact that you both have different styles is a compliment.
3. Be comfortable in you. This is work that you will have to do before you ring the doorbell, but well worth it. When we dress in a fashion that is not the typical norm, there is usually a 'why' attached to it. Are we doing it for attention, do we just really like the way purple and green complement each other, are matching earrings overrated? Do some self-evaluation and once you have your 'why', then do you, boo. Confidently.
4. Read your audience. Thanksgiving dinner is not really the place to showcase your new Choo's. Though you may have really nice legs, Grandma doesn't want to see them under her good table.
5. This could be another teaching opportunity to inform the person making the statement of how offensive it actually is. Some people honestly don't know, others honestly don't care. You'd do well to figure out which one you are talking with.

# Rent-A-Boo

Let's end on a lighter note. I know that many of us have seen those advertisements to Rent-A-Date for the holidays, and they are literally hilarious. There are levels and packages of the extent of deceit that the person is willing to create for you to survive the holidays with your family. We can probably recall a few movies that have had this as the central theme as well. While this makes for an interesting storyline, it can cause instant drama in your life. My advice: Just say no.

First off, Rona. That should be enough to discourage bringing a date-by-the-hour to a family event. If he is willing to pretend with you, trust me – you ain't the only paying Customer. You don't need those type of germs in your bubble.

But let's talk this through as if we could pretend this is a good idea, post-Rona (there will be a post-Rona, IN JESUS NAME!). Bringing someone home is a big decision for most people, although I know some people that introduce new boos to family and friends every season. It's like they have a rotating catalog to choose from. And the only reason that I can talk about this so flippantly, is because I've been that person. If you've read [NOT Another Singles Book](#), you know that I am a Reformed Serial Monogamist. I was always in a relationship, coming out of a situationship, or heading into a sinking ship...either way – I was never single, Single. NEVER. I didn't always introduce them to friends because honestly many of them didn't last that long, but if you asked me, I would be all too willing to discuss my latest victim, I mean love interest. I didn't realize that I didn't have to kiss all these frogs, because one day my prince would come. Then I thought he came, but he turned out to be just another dressed up toad, so I'm back in waiting again.

For you, bringing someone into your bubble should be thoughtfully considered, especially during the holidays. If you were going to Rent-A-Boo, you have to start early with the lies, I mean the planning. You can't just show up with a random and expect everyone to believe that this boo is the real deal. So you have to start posting little innuendos on social media, in the family chat and text messages indicating that you 'may be bringing someone'; smiling more often when you get a text message of another cat video – because no one has to know that it's your 3<sup>rd</sup> grade best friend and not the current love of your life. It's amazing the levels that our brains can come up with to keep a storyline intact. Just ask my ex-husband 😊. So now you've built the anticipation and it's showtime. You show up at the family meal and let's say you get through the entire meal, games, dessert and questions without him forgetting your name – or worse you forget his. You've worked out the backstory of how y'all met in a random Zoom meeting for a networking event and then started a private chat, ending in exchanging numbers and now y'all fall asleep on the phone every night together just to stay connected. I mean, if you are going to do it – do it big, right?

What happens after? After the holiday's shenanigans. What happens if he can make Thanksgiving, but someone else has already booked him for their Christmas gathering, or worse yet, he decides to spend it with his actual family – gasp! What do you do? You obviously must break up...obviously. And it needs to be big, and publicly announced, just in case those people that you tried to deceive actually didn't believe you in the first place so now you have to convince them that it was real, even in the way it ends. So, you figure – of course a social media LIVE. You pull off your best Grey's Anatomy re-enactment of any of the major couples breaking up and the monologue that ensues. Got it? Mission accomplished. I know. This is intense. This is extreme. This is ridiculous. And I know none of you would actually do this, but I felt the need to follow this scenario completely through for a few reasons.

1. The fact that we would actually consider this speaks volumes to how WE view our Single season, not our family's views. If you have ever contemplated, even jokingly – pretending to be in a relationship to avoid the awkwardness of being Single at yet another holiday, then you are not comfortable in your current condition. And it's ok to not be ok. It's just not ok to stay there.

2. Lying and deceiving anyone – even for such a good cause as to get out of Aunt Bam judgmental stares and comments about your possible lesbianism (“you know that's this new thing now a days, these people not identifying as a boy or girl and just loving and sexing everybody” – her words, not mine 😊) – is just not a good idea. To allow those thoughts to take root in your mind, gives the enemy a foothold into other areas of your life that he can make you believe aren't good enough so you need to dress that area up too. It's a slippery slope that leads down to a pit that you don't want to be in. Trust me – my struggle, your lesson.

And lastly, but most importantly...

You are ENOUGH. Perfect. Fearfully and Wonderfully Made. By your Single self. Your family knows this, they sometimes just need reminding. You just sometimes need reminding. Showing up, alone – yet again – but now no longer lonely, is a good thing. You are now secure and confident in yourself and your life choices. You know that you would rather wait for right then settle for wrong and loving yourself is the best gift that you can give everyone around you this holiday.

Go on, with your bad self.  
And pass the yams.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



LaVonia R. Tryon is an Author, Entrepreneur, Public Speaker, and Motivator. LaVonia is Author of the NOT Another Singles Series, books dedicated to teaching Single adults the value in this season and teaching them the difference between being Single, but not alone. She believes of the value of community and desires to inspire a movement of individuals that fall in love with themselves, before anyone else. She uses her unique experience as an Ex-Girlfriend, Ex-Fiancé, Ex-Wife and her extensive expertise as a Master's level Certified Counselor to encourage people to get into their Singleness before out. Her debut book, NOT Another Singles Book was released on October 16th and is available on Amazon.

LaVonia often refers to herself as a Serial Monogamist and she uses this hard earned wisdom to relate to our readers in a 'been there, definitely done that' fashion, that will have you laughing, crying and self-reflecting, sometimes in the same sentence.

What she loves most is connecting with her readers... follow her on social media and email her at [lavonia@lavoniartryon.com](mailto:lavonia@lavoniartryon.com).

Want to book a FREE Coaching call with LaVonia? [Click here!](#)