

DAREE ALLEN

WHAT'S WRONG *with me?*



*A girl's book
of lessons learned,
inspiration and
advice*



**"...takes the reader
on a poignant journey
of self-discovery that can
help young women move
toward empowerment."**

KISHA B. HOLDEN, PhD
MOREHOUSE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

WHAT'S **WRONG** *with me?*

*A girl's book
of lessons learned,
inspiration and
advice*



DAREE ALLEN

*K*haracter
D I S T I N C T I O N

KHARACTER DISTINCTION BOOKS
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version, NIV. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com.

Scripture quotations taken from AMPLIFIED BIBLE, Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

Scripture taken from THE MESSAGE. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

Scripture quotations marked (CEV) are from the Contemporary English Version Copyright © 1991, 1992, 1995 by American Bible Society, Used by Permission.

Scripture quotations marked “NKJV[™]” are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Kharacter Distinction Books
4355 Cobb Parkway
Suite J185
Atlanta, GA 30339
Printed in the United States of America
Copyright © 2012 by Daree Allen

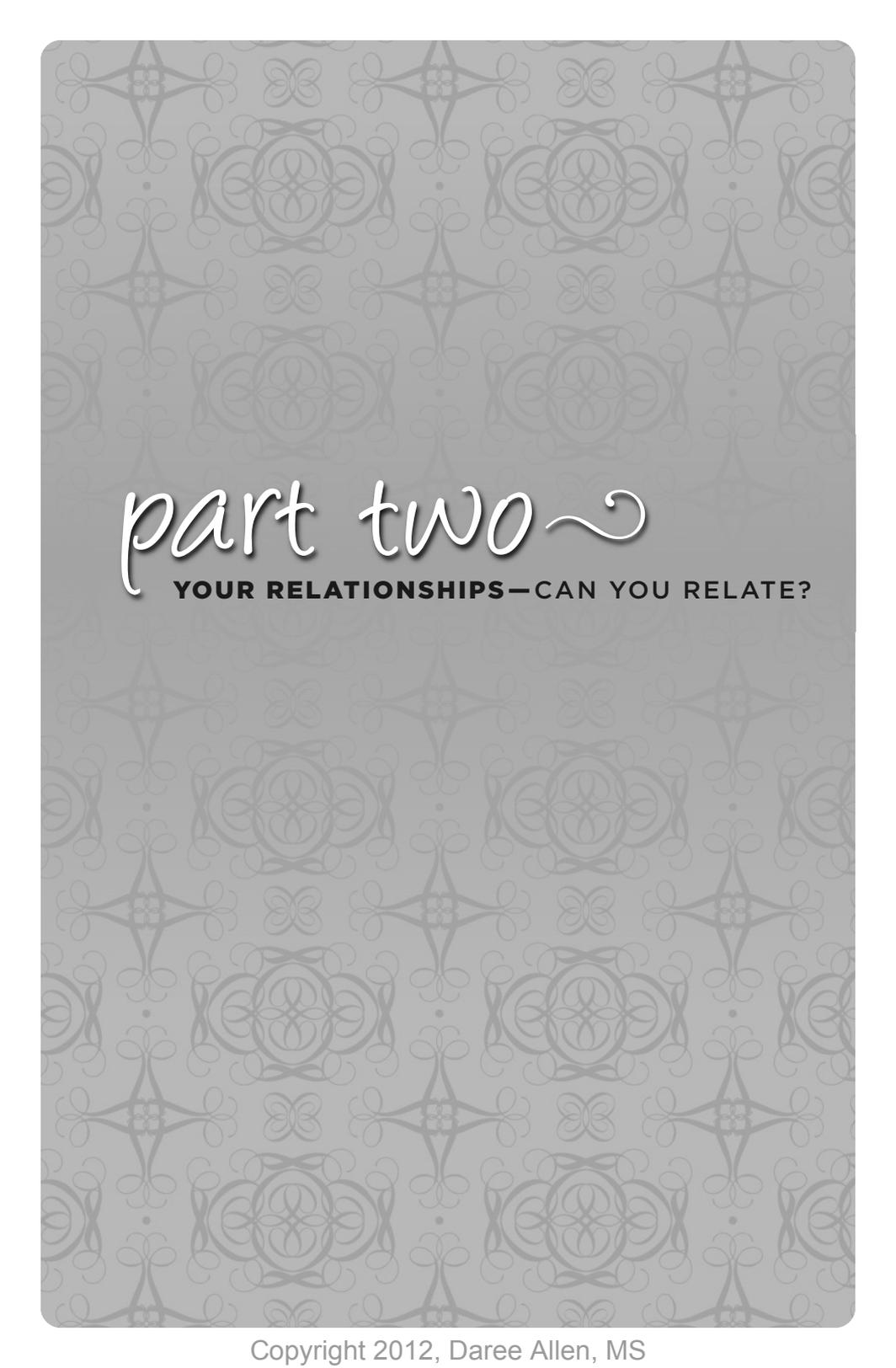
Design and Composition: LeftRight Collaborative
Design: Jennifer Rogers Tyson, www.leftrightcollaborative.com
Design Revisions: Mélissa Caron, Enki Communications, www.go-enki.com
Author Photo Credit: Innovation Photography, www.InnovationPics.com

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means—electronic, mechanical, photographic (photocopying), recording, or otherwise—without prior permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in a review.

What's Wrong With Me? is a work of nonfiction, but the author has changed the names of the people depicted in the stories herein.

This book contains information gathered from many sources and personal experiences. It is published and sold with the understanding that neither the author nor the publisher is rendering any legal, accounting, or psychological advice. The author and the publisher disclaim any personal liability for the advice and information presented herein. Although the author and the publisher have prepared this manuscript with diligence, careful to ensure the accuracy of the information presented, they assume no responsibility for errors, inaccuracies, omissions, or inconsistencies herein.

ISBN: 978-0-9837455-0-1
LCCN: 2011911385



part two ~

YOUR RELATIONSHIPS—CAN YOU RELATE?



WHAT'S WRONG with my friends?

"A successful person is one who can lay a firm foundation with the bricks that others throw at him or her."

— DAVID BRINKLEY —

The word "friend" is an overused catch-all phrase. Calling someone your friend could mean various things: an acquaintance, a casual sex partner, or a person who helps you and/or shares things and experiences with you. We all have struggles with friendships throughout life.

I had a hard time keeping good friends. I felt that I didn't have enough in common with the kids I wanted to be friends with. I told myself that kids were missing out if they didn't want to be my friends, but it really felt like the other way around. Sometimes I wondered if no one liked me because I didn't like me. What you project about yourself and how you feel about yourself comes out in your body language even if you don't talk about it.

*“What about your friends?
Will they stand their ground,
or will they let you down again?
What about your friends?
Are they gonna be on down,
or will they ever be around...
or will they turn their backs on you?”*
—TLC, “What About Your Friends?”

In addition to my experience with friendships, in this chapter I'll also discuss how to deal with “mean girls,” how to choose the right kind of friends, and how to keep from being discouraged when you lose friends (or have to cut them off yourself).

A LONER

Sometimes I wonder what kind of person I would be if I had grown up in Pittsburgh with a host of aunts, uncles, and cousins—where my dad's side of the family is from. As a girl, I felt like I was missing out. Other people went to school with their siblings or cousins who were their instant friends—friends who would stand up for them if there were any issues with other kids at school—but not me. I always wondered what it would be like to have that.

Since I was the middle child, spaced out five to six years apart from both of my siblings, we never went to the same schools at the same time. It wasn't until 12th grade when I learned that one of my classmates was my cousin (a boy I'd known since the seventh grade, and liked, too)! Holidays were boring with nowhere to go because my whole family lived in the same house—our extended family was far away, so we just spent Christmas in the house all day every year.

MY BFFS

Too often it seemed like my girlfriends from school liked me one day, and we got along great, but the next day they would act jealous and talk about me—even my so-called “best friends.”

My first best friend was a girl named Kim. She is six months older than me to the day. We met when we were four years old. We were neighbors, and best friends throughout elementary school. Sometimes she acted like she hated me, and other times she seemed to love me. We shared a lot of things with each other, but she often would talk about me behind my back, blab about something I told her in confidence, or make fun of me.

Another girl named Deanna was my best friend from the seventh to 10th grade. She lived a few blocks from me, and our parents knew each other (my mother worked for her father after we finished high school). Because of her religion, she was not allowed to wear pants, and could not go to the movies (although she could watch the same movies on TV). In spite of our religious differences, we were very close. Although I felt like I could talk to Deanna about anything and everything, sometimes I still felt empty and inadequate. Deanna liked me for who I was, even when I stressed her out. I argued with her quite a bit as our friendship progressed because of my fears. I always had a fear of someone liking me and then after I started to like them, they'd leave me and stop being my friend. I felt like I had to impress her or make her laugh so she'd continue to be my friend. I'd feel threatened just because she was friendly with everyone. I was afraid she would like another girl better than me, and then I would lose my best friend. I had a lot of insecurities, and at times that came out as controlling behavior. I needed to learn to accept myself and be comfortable being myself around

others. I eventually learned to stop being possessive and smothering her (she was my best friend, not my girlfriend). Just having fun is the way to go. I'm still friends with Deanna to this day; I was in her wedding, and we remain in touch.



**Learn to accept yourself
as you are and be comfortable
being yourself around others.**

Around the 10th or 11th grade, I started hanging out with a White girl named Jennifer who accepted me for who I was. Although I lived in a nicer part of town that was predominantly White, and Jennifer lived in the “ghetto” part of town, she was my first White BFF. The reason Jennifer and I became close was because of a falling out with what you would call “mean girls” or “gossip girls.”

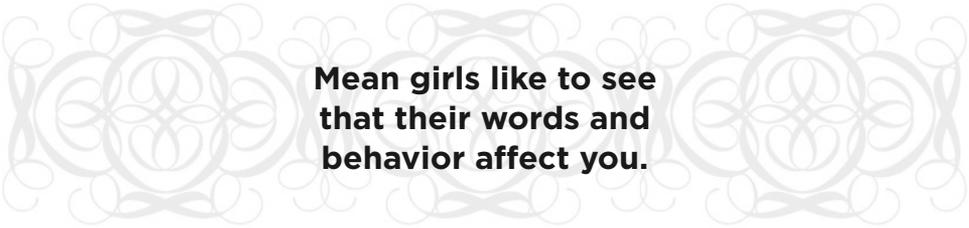
GOSSIP GIRLS

These days, I like to say that a hater is a motivator. But back in the day, I didn't see it that way.

I remember hanging out with a group of friends including Kim, Deanna, and Ayana, and we were pretty tight from the seventh to the 10th grade, but things came to a head in 11th grade: One of the funniest, boldest, and most outspoken girls in the group, Ayana, considered me uppity and claimed I thought I was too good for them and was trying to “act like a White girl” because of the way I talked and what she perceived to be my “I'm-better-than-you” attitude. Kim and Ayana's sister sided with her, while Ayana's cousin and Deanna remained friends with me (but not as close as before). It was during this time that I started hanging out with Jennifer.

Mean girls, gossip girls, bullies, b*tches—they'll always be around. Girls' reasons for being mean vary—they could be insecure, not getting enough of the right kind of attention at home, and they may even be victims of abuse. Regardless of why they treat others the way they do, your reaction and response to their antics will make the difference in the drama-meter of your day.

Mean girls like to see that their words and behavior affect you. If you react to them, showing that they're hurting your feelings or bothering you, it gives them the power and satisfaction to keep it up. In many cases, their own source of self-esteem is putting others down and getting attention from it.



**Mean girls like to see
that their words and
behavior affect you.**

You don't have to answer to name-calling. If someone addresses you by anything but your name, you don't have to answer (in fact, you probably shouldn't). Often, ignoring the mean girl is the best way to go (at least hold out until you get home to cry or complain about it).

Don't talk about the mean girl to her friends or with any of them around. If you choose to stop ignoring her and confront her, take note. Confrontations are best done one-on-one because there's less pressure on both of you. Don't be defensive; just be honest. Confronting her in the company of others gives her attention, so you have to be ready if you really want to battle with her (and hopefully you keep it verbal—not physical). Please—walk away from the threat of a physical fight. The emotional scars won't heal when your skin does.

I was able to mature and grow out of my teenage angst. During the last weeks of high school, I wrote in my diary:

June 2, 1994, 8:13 p.m.

I've gotten acquainted with everyone I wanted to in the past three years. I've grown so much emotionally, and the turmoil with my ex-best friends has made me stronger.

KEEP YOUR CIRCLE TIGHT AND RIGHT

Everyone can't be on your front row. A few close friends are more than enough. Choose positive friends, even if they're not the most popular. It's likely that you'll be laughed at and ridiculed for doing what's right, so you'll need supporters to walk that positive, upright lifestyle with you to encourage you. Think about and look for people who have the same mindset as you, and befriend them.

For example, if some of the girls you hang out with smoke, it doesn't mean you should try it. If anything, you should reconsider your friendship with them. Or maybe there is a group of popular girls who are promiscuous. Just because they engage in sexual acts doesn't mean you should, but if you hang around them, the pressure to do what they are doing will intensify. Don't underestimate the power of influence. If a bunch of people in your circle of influence are doing something, it won't be long before you go there, too (this applies to good and bad behavior). Maybe you need to move them to the acquaintance category and not keep them so close—just say, “What's up?” in the hallways and keep it moving.

When it comes to the people we spend time with, we must be careful of their influence on us. In 1 Corinthians 15:33, Paul warns us about bad influences. How can you protect yourself

from other people's bad morals and prevent them from corrupting you?

- ☞ Set boundaries. A boundary is an intangible emotional and intellectual line that is established in relationships for freedom, protection, and privacy. Be prepared in advance, because when you get into the situation it may be too late to make a quality decision. (*We'll discuss boundaries more when we talk about dating in the next chapter.*)
- ☞ Do not closely associate with people who enjoy gossip or arguments. These people are toxic and can "infect" you if you have prolonged exposure and you do not detach from them, and they should be avoided (*see Romans 16:17 and Proverbs 6:16, 19*).
- ☞ Discourage certain behavior in your presence: smoking, swearing, certain types of movies/TV programming (*see Romans 12:2*).
- ☞ Do not let other's poor treatment of you determine or influence how you treat them. Treat them how you want to be treated, with a pure heart, regardless of what they say or do.

CHECKMATE

It is prudent to take a look at the people you interact with, and periodically assess which of the four levels, or categories of friendship you have placed them in: intimate friends, close friends, casual friends, and acquaintances:

Acquaintances—Acquaintances are people that you know in some way, but you have no intention of pursuing a closer friendship with them. This will be your largest friendship

category, because it consists of everyone you know, whether you actually consider them a friend or not.

Casual—This group consists of people we see regularly (for example, at work, in the neighborhood, or in classes). A real friendship hasn't developed with any of these people because you don't share much of yourself with them. Typically you'll have about 20-100 people in this category.

Close—You'll probably have about 10-30 or more people in this category, as follows:

- *Associates*—those you become close to because you both have a specific job or place of service.
- *Mentors*—those who build significantly into your life by teaching, counseling, and guiding you.
- *Personal friends*—the ones you see, talk to, or spend time with frequently, by mutual choice. You are comfortable sharing bits and pieces of who you really are with them.

Intimate—You feel at home with intimate friends without fear or hesitation. These are the friends you trust the most and share everything with. They know all about you and love you anyway! You can lean on them in bad times, have fun with them, and they're always there for you. This is your inner circle, and this should be your smallest friendship group (usually about 3-6 maximum).

Take some time to figure out the people who influence you the most, those closest to you, and those you hang out with regularly. You may need to reevaluate a friendship and move that person to a different category. Some friendships are only meant for a season, not to hang on to for life. It takes some reflection and spiritual guidance to determine the difference between a "seasonal" friend and a lifelong one.

Make a chart with two columns (see the sample in the sidebar): one column for the category you have placed them

in currently, and the category they should be in, based on the information in this section and your own reflective analysis.

Under the Influence

MY FRIENDS NOW	CURRENT FRIENDSHIP STATUS	IDEAL FRIENDSHIP STATUS
~ Lisa	~ Close	~ Acquaintance
~ Joanne	~ Intimate	~ Casual
~ Melissa	~ Casual	~ Close
~ John	~ Acquaintance	~ Acquaintance
~ Deidre	~ Close	~ Intimate

There's a Scripture where God tells Samuel, "...The LORD does not look at the things human beings look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7b, NIV). Don't just look at a person for what they seem to be on the outside, but consider their personality and how they treat others (this goes for girls you want to be friends with, and guys you're interested in, too).

IT'S LONELY AT THE TOP

It takes a lot of courage to be the first person to take a stand when no one else will speak up against something wrong. If the people you admire want to be liked, or those who are considered "popular" in your school are in the wrong, it's easy to keep quiet or just go with the flow and do what everyone else is doing. It doesn't matter how old you are—right is right and wrong is wrong. You may not feel like drawing attention to yourself, but if you're a Christian, you're called to a higher standard.

Are you afraid to step out and do something bold, new, or exciting because of what others might say? Often when you're on the right path, others can't go with you, and you may feel alone, but you're not—God is leading you to a better place in your life. Pastor Paula White preached a sermon in 2006 called “I’m Back!” that addressed this idea:

“When you get a Word, you have to work it out in your life, then it becomes real and the enemy [Satan] comes. You will be isolated and disconnected from others. You will miss your former associations and feel like you don’t fit in anywhere. This causes a hunger for a connection to God. ...It’s good that people let you go, because this is a job for Jesus. Training always happens in the wilderness. ...Don’t listen to the criticism or the praise—just keep walking the path. People will be fickle! In the end, you’re gonna thank God for all the people who hurt you because they drew you closer. ‘Judas’ [the one who betrays you] is your friend!”



**Be thankful for your enemies.
They’ll help you get closer to God.**

Remember when I mentioned that mean girls become jealous when good things happen to you? What Pastor White is saying is that people who you thought were your friends may hurt your feelings, talk about you, and accuse you of negative behavior, but these people actually help you because they push you into your destiny—you cannot continue to stay close to people who want to drag you down—

you cannot thrive and develop into the person God has called you to be when you remain in a toxic friendship or relationship. Some people will put you down when you accomplish things, just because of their own insecurities. As much as you may care about your friends, you can only do so much for them. Don't let your feelings of guilt or longing to belong enable them or allow their manipulation to take advantage of you.

CONSIDER THIS

Friendships change, just like seasons, with different ebbs and flows. Some relationships come and go. It's normal throughout life. It's hard to find real, true friends, but we all need them.

*"Friends will let you down, Friends won't be around
When you need them most, where are your friends?
Friends are hard to find, Friends—yours and mine,
I'm talkin' 'bout your friends."
—Jody Watley, "Friends"*

When you do the right things in life (making the right decisions and not following the crowd), you'll be blessed, but you'll also be disliked and talked about. I remember when people would talk about me (and not always behind my back), saying things like "She thinks she's all that," when good things happened in my life, or "She's trying to be White," because of the way I talked. It may start as just one person, and then others follow suit because they're afraid, jealous or insecure. If this happens, it's important for you to uphold your values and standards. Strive to stay above it.

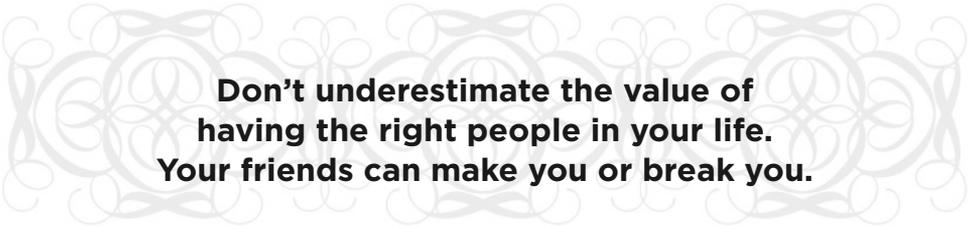
Be careful when you form friendships in general. Do it gradually. Don't start off telling someone all your personal business right off the bat. That person has to prove he or she is trustworthy and deserving of your friendship.

Don't be too clingy, either. Clingy people are insecure and always looking to another person for approval and personal validation. Every other phrase is a question about them: "How does my hair look?" "Does this make me look fat?" "Why didn't you wait for me after class?" "Do you like her better than me?" All the constant questioning gets tiring pretty quickly.

If you feel like you don't have real friends, why not look for someone else who needs a friend? The girl who eats lunch by herself, or the shy one who always looks down when you pass her in the hallway, or the one who mean girls make fun of because of her hairstyle or the way she dresses? She would probably welcome making a new, sincere friend like you.

A true friend loves at all times. There are seasons of friendship, and everyone you meet can't (and shouldn't) be a close friend. Use a discerning heart to determine the type of people you should spend your time with—those who lift you up and who you feel make you better just for knowing them. Nurture those relationships and build bonds with the people who are truly there for you and care about you (you can tell when someone cares about you—they're genuine and not selfish; they're not constantly trying to take advantage you).

Don't underestimate the value of having the right people in your life. Toxic relationships, friendships, and family members drain your energy and—if you're not careful—can make you lose sight of your focus, distorting it. With some people, there comes a time to stop trying to be their friend and let them go. Toxic people will only bring you down.



**Don't underestimate the value of
having the right people in your life.
Your friends can make you or break you.**

When you grow, everyone doesn't grow with you. Be a positive example, and never lose sight of your God-given purpose. As God told Jeremiah, "For I know the plans I have for you,... plans to give you a hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV) He doesn't ask us to do things that we can do on our own because He won't get the glory for it. He doesn't give us assignments that are easy. We have to go through hard times so we can learn to trust Him and rely on Him. In times like this, He shows us His faithfulness and He gets the glory. Be a light that draws others to Him—and people will naturally be drawn to you as well.

Why get caught up in the he-said/she-said stuff? Who cares who's messing with whom? You're above that nonsense. Stay focused on God and your studies. Treat people right—even friends who turn out to be phonies or haters. A hater is a motivator. I know it hurts sometimes when you're going through it, but when you're 25 or 35, you'll look back on these petty situations (if you can even remember them) and see that they don't matter.

Above all, remember you can't change how other people act. You can't make a person like you or be your friend, but don't give anyone a reason not to. The way you treat people is so important. How you talk to people, your tone of voice—all the little things do matter. Don't say anything you would be embarrassed to repeat onstage in an auditorium of people or printed in a newspaper. Watch your language, be respectful of others, and when it comes to school, do what you came to do—learn.

FURTHER READING

Pepa (née Sandy Denton) from the female hip hop group Salt-N-Pepa can attribute much of her fame to the friends and acquaintances she hung out with as a teenager. Peep her memoir, *Let's Talk About Pep* for a fun, can't-put-it-down story of a woman who endured self-esteem issues, abuse, and near-death, but triumphed over it all with much success.



about the author



DAREE ALLEN is a technical writer and motivational speaker. In her spare time, Daree likes reading and writing (yes, for fun!), watching movies, turbo-kickboxing, Zumba, bowling, dancing (especially line dances) and hanging out with friends. She resides in Atlanta, Georgia, with her daughter, Kaia.

Find her online at:

www.DareesInsights.wordpress.com

and **www.DareeAllen.com**.

WHAT'S **WRONG** *with me?* **Nothing!**

Have you ever wondered, “What’s wrong with me — is my butt too big, my hair not straight enough?” or “Will my BFF or boyfriend still like me if ...” Today’s age of everything-goes media messages and in-your-face sexuality has led to many teen girls grappling with self-esteem and self-worth. As a woman who lived through it and a mother with a teen daughter, I answer these questions and more, offering self-empowering building blocks designed to strengthen your inner truths in the face of relationships with yourself, others, and God ... so you can learn to love the skin your in, realize your dreams, and make a positive impact on the world!

YOU’LL LEARN HOW TO:

- Discover your self-worth.
- Eat better, feel better, and look better (they all go together!).
- Examine your relationships with friends, family, and the opposite sex.
- Use money wisely.
- Find your purpose.
- Have a personal relationship with God.

Drawing from Christian principles as well as some intimately shared firsthand experiences of growing up in the Black community, *What’s Wrong With Me* is a must-have addition to your reading list.

“Daree Allen is a shining example of what happens when a woman learns to love herself and steps into her own power and confidence. Daree’s book shares her personal journey with humor and inspiration. Girls can find their own path to personal growth by applying Daree’s lessons to their lives.”

LISA NICOLE BELL AWARD WINNING FILMMAKER, AUTHOR, SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

“Dynamic author Daree Allen dares to go there with teens in her inspiring piece, *What’s Wrong With Me?* She does parents and educators a favor by opening a dialogue on the universal challenges that young girls will often secretly face that can ultimately build or destroy dreams. Pick up a copy of this book and arm a young lady with the key that unlocks a successful life.”

DENENE MILLNER

NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR AND EDITOR OF MYBROWNBABY.COM

ISBN: 978-0-9837455-0-1

LCCN: 2011911385

ISBN 978-0-9837455-0-1 \$14.95
5 1 4 9 5 >



9 780983 745501

*K*haracter
D I S T I N C T I O N