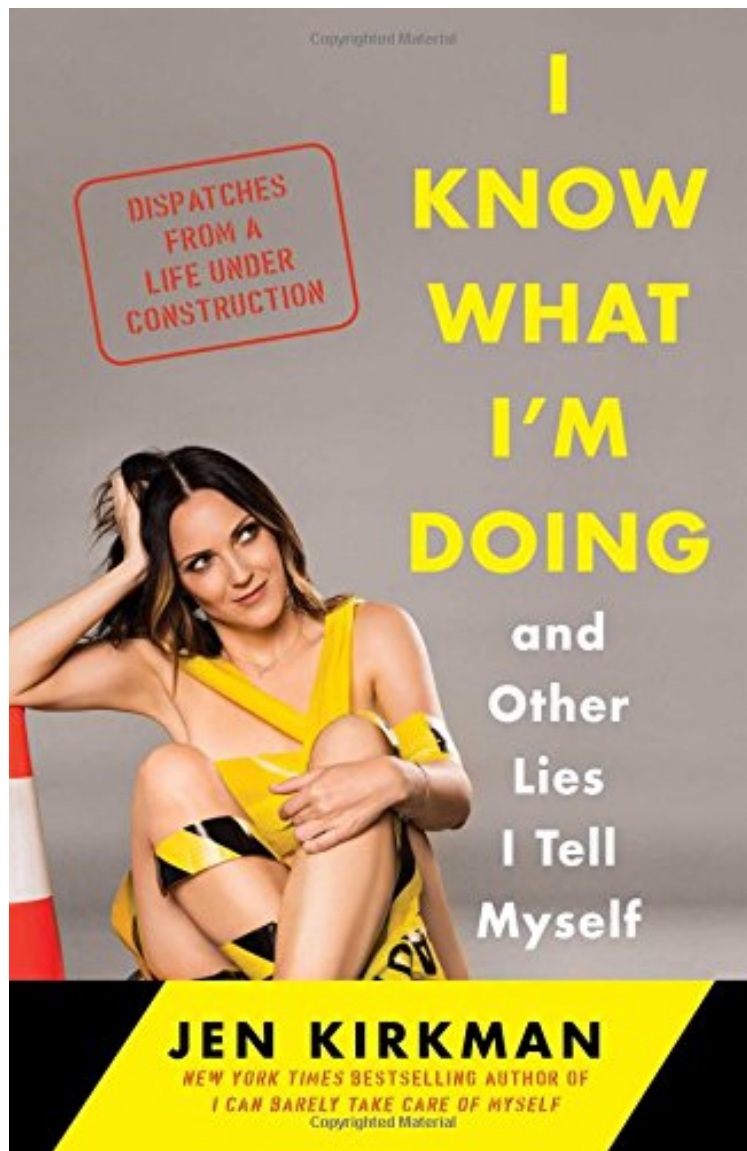


(Download) I Know What I'm Doing -- and Other Lies I Tell Myself: Dispatches from a Life Under Construction

I Know What I'm Doing -- and Other Lies I Tell Myself: Dispatches from a Life Under Construction

Jen Kirkman

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Jen Kirkman : I Know What I'm Doing -- and Other Lies I Tell Myself: Dispatches from a Life Under Construction before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised I Know What I'm Doing -- and Other Lies I Tell Myself: Dispatches from a Life Under Construction:

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Highly relatable
By Lloyd Dobler
Before I started this book I'll admit that I was a little worried that there would be little to relate to. What do I have in common with the stories of a 40-something, divorced, world traveling woman's relationships with men? Surprisingly, not much. Also surprisingly (to me), I took away much more from this book than I expected to. It's not all about Kirkman's interactions with men, though it does cover everything from marriage to blind dates in Sweden. There are also chapters that deal with living alone, aging, spending New Year's Eve by yourself, and undercover sting operations. Trust me, you're going to see yourself somewhere in this book. Maybe you'll cringe or maybe you'll have an "a-ha!" moment, but something is going to click and you'll be thankful that Jen Kirkman had the guts to dump her purse out on the couch and invite everyone into her problems. Even though there is some frank advice on marriage and sex, it's not all serious all the time. There are plenty of laughs to be had and some of them are at Jen's expense, and that's okay. Sometimes you just have to laugh at her, and sometimes you just have to laugh at yourself. Life is hard and full of choose your own adventure circumstances, but if Jen Kirkman doesn't even know what she's doing then we're all doing just fine. The writing in this book is just what you'd expect if you're familiar at all with Kirkman's work. She has a gift for storytelling that makes you feel like you're listening to a friend who called you up to tell you about some screwed up thing that happened to them. You're invested, you're laughing, and you're thankful it didn't happen to you.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. So funny!
By M Hill
I listen to Jen's podcast every week and I have seen her in person. She absolutely cracks me up! I love her humor, her takes on current events, her feminist and political views and overall her cool personality. I recommend this book and her other books to anyone wanting a great laugh. I also recommend her live shows if you are lucky enough to have her come to your city! F the lame Twitter haters!!!!
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Jen Kirkman great as always
By sw09
I've been a big fan of Jen Kirkman since I saw her Netflix special "I'm Going to Die Alone and I Feel Fine." Her book definitely did not disappoint. As a listener of her podcast some of the content was familiar but was still great to read in the broader context of her book. There was a ton of new stuff as well and I highly recommend it to anyone who enjoys Jen's work.

New York Times bestselling author and stand-up comedian Jen Kirkman delivers a hilarious, candid memoir about marriage, divorce, sex, turning forty, and still not quite having life figured out. Jen Kirkman wants to be the voice in your head that says, Hey, you're okay. Even if you sometimes think you aren't! And especially if other people try to tell you you're not. In *I Know What I'm Doing—and Other Lies I Tell Myself*, Jen offers up all the gory details of a life permanently in progress. She reassures you that it's okay to not have life completely figured out, even when you reach middle age (and find your first gray pubic hair!). She talks about making unusual or unpopular life decisions (such as cultivating a "friend with benefits" or not going home for the holidays) because you don't necessarily want for yourself what everyone else seems to think you should. It's about renting when everyone says you should own, dating around when everyone thinks you should settle down, and traveling alone when everyone pities you for going to Paris without a man. From marriage to divorce and sex to mental health, *I Know What I'm Doing—and Other Lies I Tell Myself* is about embracing the fact that life is a bit of a sh*t show and it's definitely more than okay to stay true to yourself.

"[Kirkman's] act has the feel of that wonderful moment at the end of a party when you are left alone to gossip with your best friend about the horrible and ridiculous things that just went on. Both on social media and onstage, however, Ms. Kirkman comes across as a happy warrior, a polemicist unafraid to show her silly side... Her jokes argue for the fun of being single, but it's the way she tells them that prove it." (Jason Zinoman, *The New York Times*, on Kirkman's Netflix special, *I'm Gonna Die Alone*)
"This book is full of hilarious, candid, and sometimes gut-wrenching stories. There wasn't a single moment that I wasn't completely invested in what happened next. She peels back the curtain and reveals every emotion we all have to go through in life, but with such grace that you almost want to apologize for laughing so much—until you realize that's exactly what she wants you to do." (Sarah Colonna, bestselling author of *Life As I Blow It* and *Has Anyone Seen My Pants?*)
"Often when I read a book, I nod because I can relate. But when Jen Kirkman shares her stories, I can relate AND feel empowered." (Lizz Winstead, co-creator of *The Daily Show*)
"Jen Kirkman is a pragmatist. Let her help you clear your head—'ease in' rather than 'lean in.' Life is too short not to listen to her—and she's right about everything, except the Congressional ban on pennies." (Janeane Garofalo, author of *Feel This Book*)
"Jen has a unique and essential point of view in comedy. This book is hilarious and emotionally profound. Simply magnificent." (Margaret Cho, author of *I'm the One That I Want*)
"This sharply witty memoir from the comic insightfully examines divorce and dating. A-." (InTouch Weekly)
About the Author
Jen Kirkman is a world-touring stand-up comedian and the author of the New York Times bestseller *I Can Barely Take Care of Myself: Tales of a Happy Life Without Kids* and *I Know What I'm Doing—And Other Lies I Tell Myself: Dispatches from a Life Under Construction*. Her Netflix original comedy special *I'm Gonna Die Alone and I Feel Fine* streams worldwide, and she has released two comedy albums, *Self Help* and *Hail to the Freaks* (which hit #13 on the Billboard charts). She was a longtime writer and panelist on the E! Network's *Chelsea Lately* and the narrator of many episodes in the award-winning TV show *Drunk History* on Comedy Central.
Excerpt. © Reprinted by

permission. All rights reserved. I Know What I'm Doing -- and Other Lies I Tell Myself INTRODUCTION Ugh, my parents are going to read this. I know that I'm forty years old (and even older by the time this book is in your hands), and I shouldn't care. Just be a grown-up and don't be afraid to speak your truth, Jen! And you know, funny person Bob Odenkirk once said that people should make their art, whatever it is, "as though their parents were dead." Why am I starting this book with sentiments about dead parents? Look, you know what I mean (or he means). My parents will have to handle the information in this book in their own way, whether it's calling to yell at me or just bursting into tears at the sight of me next Thanksgiving. They created another human being and that human being went on to live her own life, make her own mistakes, have her own sex, and oh, God. It's not just my parents. YOU'RE going to read this. For a stand-up comedian who talks about her life onstage, I'm weirdly, fiercely private. (By the way, I've also tried to respect the privacy of some people I've written about in this book by giving them aliases, including my sister Gail, who insisted that I call her Violet—not because she has anything to hide but she always wished that was her name.) I'm so afraid of being judged. And yet, I won't even know if you're judging me because you're reading this and I'm not there. I can't see your looks of disapproval. Here's the thing: I've never talked publicly about my secret on-again, off-again Friend With Benefits of twenty years. My ex-husband has no idea that while we were still married, I almost embarked on an affair with a new man I felt emotionally bonded to. (A different guy from Mr. Friends With Benefits.) It's new to me to reveal that, yeah, I get really lonely sometimes and I think of myself as the surrogate girlfriend for my male friends who date twenty-six-year-olds but come to me for conversation. Oh, God, please don't pity me. It's worse than judgment. I really want you to know how much I've learned from my less than perfect experiences. I hope I don't make it seem like this short-lived boyfriend I had was just some idiot with abs—he also had a really great design aesthetic! And I promise, I really, really do not have hep C. (You'll read about that . . .) My editor said I don't need to include a picture of the lab paperwork. And if you know anyone in Dublin, please, again, apologize that I called their city a "bunch of cunts"—and I can't believe that I just wrote "cunt" in my intro, to a book. This thing could be in a library someday. So why did I write all of this down, then? Because Simon Schuster paid me to? Partly. But I begged them to. I wanted to write this book. I think that people, not just women, will relate. I know I'm not Ernest Hemingway, although I do agree with him that my only regret in life is probably going to be that I did not "drink more wine." (I'm not totally positive that Hemingway actually said that but according to some drink coasters I purchased at a museum gift shop he did. The quote is printed right on them.) My job isn't to win Pulitzer Prizes and stuff like that, but to provide a voice in your head, other than your own, that sounds like you. My voice is here to say, "Hey, I have those same thoughts and do those same stupid things and am generally awesome despite what people might think about my lifestyle choices." And I'm also here for your voyeuristic pleasure. I'm happy to show you what it's like for a single-and-not-so-good-at-the-mingle woman of forty. The thing is, the other stories that make up who I am—devoted friend and family member—just aren't that funny. This is supposed to be a funny book written by a funny person. I'm not going to tell the story of how I stayed home one Friday night to do laundry and return e-mails. There's no funny story about how much I love my best girlfriends and how many times we got misty-eyed over a bottle of a blended wine and Trader Joe's Camembert Cheese and Cranberry Sauce Fillo Bites about how lucky we are to have one another. Or my male friends who are like the brothers I never had. The kind of guys I can text late at night and they listen to me instead of sending me pictures of their dicks. There's nothing funny about the fact that about seven months after my divorce, I met Jake. I was afraid that getting involved so quickly after a marriage ended wasn't smart. I felt that I should play it safe, keep my options open, see other people. I wouldn't commit. Eventually, because I decided to stay open to every other possibility but a committed future with him, after two years he told me that he had to end our "friendship." I spent a year of my life not speaking with him. Luckily, I had this book to write. Since then we've both had relationships, careers ups and downs, and lots of therapy. We put our past resentments to rest and now—we have an actual, normal, friend-ship, not some ambiguous, co-dependent bowl of crap. Things always change if we let them. We don't have to be freaked out by change, says the woman who is freaked out by all kinds of change—including pennies. Seriously, Congress, ban them. There's nothing funny about the fact that I mention "Fish N Chips" and cheese often in this book, but over the two years it took to finish, I renounced my pescatarian ways and went back to being a full vegan. I just couldn't ignore the fact that red meat was easy to give up—I never liked it. But the dairy and fish industries are just as bad for the environment. See? I can see you not laughing. I can feel you not laughing at my plant-based existence. There's nothing funny about the time that my dad hit his head, his brain swelled up, and he could have died but for the quick decisions of my family members who still live near him and surgeons who saved his life. I flew to Boston to be by his side before the operation and after. He couldn't speak and there was nothing behind his eyes except a childlike fear. We used to go to Disney World every year together so I bought him a Mickey Mouse stuffed animal at the airport. He loves Mickey. But see, that isn't funny. It's sad. I guess the one funny part was when his mean, lazy nurse was loudly placing a phone order to Dunkin' Donuts instead of changing his bedpan and I went over to her, in what I call my Mark Wahlberg moment, and whispered in a thick Boston accent, "Yah gettin' some cahffee fah yahself? That's nice. My fathah needs his fahckin' bedpan changed. Now." My mother was mortified that the daughter she had been bragging about, the one from television, just put on a fake Boston accent and then called the nurse an asshole. That's a little funny, I guess. But this

book also isn't about me being a hero or a shero. This book is about what a confused jackass I can be, have been, and will continue to be—though hopefully the ways in which I am a jackass will keep changing—just to keep things interesting. For example, did you know this is not my first book? It's not. That one was a New York Times Best Seller called *I Can Barely Take Care of Myself: Tales From a Happy Life Without Kids*. While I was writing *I Can Barely Take Care of Myself* (and do you mind if I call it ICBTCOM? Thanks. It's a lot to type.), my life was going crazy. I was going through a divorce—one that my husband and I mutually wanted but still, it was sticky and legal-y and cost-y. I had promised I wouldn't write any details about it in my book such as, "I was crawling out of my skin being married," and would instead focus on the crazy, uninformed things that people say to childfree people like me. As it turns out, that really is enough material for a book of its own. This book is about what happened next in life. Which was just more . . . life. Finally getting divorced (it's been a couple of years and I think it's okay to admit that I really was crawling out of my skin being married), living alone again, having boyfriends, continuing to avoid children, having breakups, traveling alone, turning forty, and getting some gray pubic hair. My divorce blew up life as I knew it, and I saw all of the pieces of me fall back to Earth and spent two years putting them back into place. I mean "blew up" in a positive way, not like an asteroid that came to Earth and took out my family farm that wasn't insured. This blowup was more like a fuse box exploding. I was left in the dark for a while. Had to rely on others to help me figure out where I could find the light again. And I had to finally buy my very own toolbox—even if it was a pink one called "Just For Her." People tilt their head with concern when I tell them that at age thirty I met someone, dated him for four years, was engaged for another year, and married for almost two years, but that at age thirty-seven, it ended in divorce. Which is just a legal term for "No one has farted in my bed in two years." There's no need to pity me. Having been married and now having married friends, I'm familiar with the sentiment, usually worn as a badge of honor by spouses, that: "Marriage is hard. We work at it. After our fight last night we decided we need to start communicating better." And those of us who aren't married nod in support. Sometimes I feel like there is no badge of honor for the divorced or the single. That if we admit to being lonely, or feeling like a failure sometimes, or wanting someone there while we take our morning vitamins in case we choke, we'll be bombarded with, "See? You should pair up with someone. You can't go through life like this!" Yeah, guess what? Life is work. I'm majorly under construction right now. I hate admitting to that. I feel like I'm a chewed-up area of road and everyone is staring at the yellow caution tape that surrounds me wondering, Why is she taking so long to fix? Newly divorced and happy, my friendships came back to life and my relationship with my family improved. As my mother said, "I don't know what it is, Jennifah, but you look younger this year than you did last year. You seem to have less baggage." (Mom, are you calling my ex-husband "baggage"?) I spent most of my life trying to fit in—whether it was lying to the rich girls at school that my parents' house had three bathrooms when in fact we had only one tiny bathroom adjacent to our kitchen, or lying to my friends when they all got their first menstrual periods within a few months of each other and I told them I'd had it since age twelve. I didn't even want to fit in to make myself comfortable—I wanted to fit in to make everyone else comfortable. Don't worry, my little codependent brain thought, you can still talk to me. I'm just like you! I even wore a tampon before I started getting my period just to trick myself that I hadn't totally lied to my friends. Growing up, I always felt like I was looking over my classmates' shoulders—not to cheat, but just to make sure I was getting the answers right. Whatever it was, I wanted to be doing it just like everyone else. I got so concerned with doing my life "right" that I assumed my own instincts sucked and learned not to give in to them. And I think that's what most adults do too, except that instead of looking at their neighbor's math test, they are looking at their neighbor's house, and spouse, and kids, and car, and thinking, Oh shit, I'm not doing it right! The first time I went to therapy was over ten years ago; I said to my shrink, "I don't relate to anyone my age. All they do is wonder when they're going to settle down. Who cares?" Then I proceeded to pay her every week to talk about how I was beginning to worry about when I was going to get my life together. I started to care—based on what other people wanted. The thing is, I don't relate to most people my age. I'm not some forty-year-old married woman spending my nights drinking chardonnay and pretending to like Rihanna music. I'm not a cougar hanging out at dive bars, doing shots, and hoping to attract the attention of some twenty-five-year-old ukulele player/artisanal cheese store clerk. (Although I have made out with two twentysomething men in the last few years. I'm done now. I promise. I'm not going to end up like Madonna, where people wonder if the boys in my Instagram photos are my backup dancers/lovers or adopted sons.) I'm not a woman who stopped at forty and realized that she never pursued her dreams. I've always pursued my dreams and my career is where I want it, although I'm also happy to admit when I want more. I'm single but I'm in love with me. It sounds defensive and corny, and I know that most people already know that they're supposed to love themselves, but I don't think I always really got what that meant. I grew up in the suburbs of Boston. There was no talk of loving oneself. If you did, someone would get in your face and say, "What? You think yah so fahkin' great or somethin'?" Yeah. I guess I finally do think I'm so fahkin' great . . . or something. I have pecked and poked away at writing this book on airplanes, in hotel rooms, and in coffee shops heading to, away from, and in the following cities: Atlanta, Austin, Boston, Buffalo, Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Dublin, Eugene, Grand Rapids, Halifax, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Lund, Madison, Melbourne, Miami, Minneapolis, Nashville, New Orleans, Oklahoma City, Omaha, Palm Springs, Philadelphia, Phoenix, San Francisco, St. Louis, St. Paul, Stockholm,

Tacoma, Toronto, Tuscon, Vancouver, Washington, DC, West Palm Beach, and Winnipeg, and I've been putting the finishing touches on it in every coffee shop in New York City. I abandoned sunshine and swimming pools in Los Angeles to go live in New York for a few months of winter. Why? On one silly level because I lived in Brooklyn for four years back in 1998 to 2002 and I found it poetic that twelve years later I was back writing my second book and not having to temp for a crazy stockbroker who used to throw his phone at me—his landline. Ouch. It had been a long time since I'd asked myself, Where would I like to be right now? and not Where do I have to be right now? It's been over a decade for me on the West Coast and there's something about never having to check the weather before you walk outside that makes you soft. I don't feel like comedians should get too comfortable. The other day on the subway there was an empty seat at rush hour. There was some water pooling right under the seat—probably the result of some melted slush from someone's snow boots before me. I sat down, my boots just centimeters from the unknown moisture. An expressionless older man sat across from me. He pointed at the water. He looked at me and said, "Honey, that some urine right there." It made me laugh. When I was just twenty-four that would have undone me. Urine? How dare urine be on the subway? How dare anything not be perfect, including that guy's grammar? My life already isn't perfect and now I have to contend with reality? Other people's bodily fluids? But now—even though I quickly changed seats—I pondered, Who am I to not see some urine once in a while? Also, Bill told me that I should go to New York City. Oh, Bill is a palm reader in New Orleans. He's about seventy-five years old; his white skin clashes with his oil-black, not-very-secure toupee. Bill is also mostly deaf and very effeminate—very stereotypically gay with dashes of Southern gentleman and RuPaul. I was vintage dress shopping on Chartres Street in the French Quarter when the woman selling me the dress told me that she thought I seemed like I had some questions. I said, "No. I don't. It fits perfectly and I'm ready to buy it." She leaned in. "No. Not questions about the dress. Bigger questions." She told me that her friend Bill could help. I looked around the store thinking that maybe Bill was hiding behind a shoe rack. She walked me outside and pointed me to the place next door, a shop that sold incense, candles, tarot cards, palm readings, and hope—false and otherwise. I'm not naive. I know that Bill and Dress Shop Woman probably have a little mutual agreement. She sends him women who seem to be seeking more than a dress and his readings probably end with, "I don't know if I see a husband in your future but I see a beautiful pair of vintage earrings, honey." I walked into the voodoo shop and asked for Bill. The woman behind the counter shouted his name multiple times as Bill and his bad ear continued to peer out the window. Finally, Bill turned around and fanned himself with his hand. "My goodness, I thought I sensed someone there." I followed Bill to a back room. (Yes, of course there were hanging beads that I had to push aside.) Bill held my hand and gave me the full report in his Creole-esque drawl. He gasped. "Oh, honey, your life line? It don't stop, girl. This thing goes into your wrist. Your life is lonnnng." He seemed burdened by this. He perked up. "Long is good. If you like it long. Some people can't handle it when it's too long." I wasn't sure if we were still talking about life. He stopped examining the lines in my hand and instead just held on tight. He pressed a button on an old-fashioned tape recorder, as though he were going to interrogate me at the county jail in 1984. He said, "With your permission, we will make a recording of this. You can play this back when you need a reminder of what we talked about." I haven't played the tape since, and not just because I can't get my hands on a tape recorder (though oddly I still have a pair of underwear from 1990). He held my hand and said, "You can do anything. You're free. Now, do you like where you live?" I told Bill—even though I didn't think I should be the one talking during my palm reading—that I was experiencing a little bit of a Los Angeles malaise. "So go somewhere," he said. Very reasonable. Then he gave an obligatory glance at my palm and said, "I see you living in London." I told Bill that I missed New York. He said, "Okay, so go to New York. Honey, we don't always have to do what our palms say. We have free will. New York City isn't for everybody but if it's for you, go. My God, some people need that fast pace. And some people like it given to them nice and slow." I still wasn't sure if he was still talking about life. Okay, so Bill probably isn't psychic, but he was really good at repeating back to me what I already said. But what I'm saying here is, I learned a lot of lessons these past few years. I'll hold in my heart that even though I have no answers, life is imperfect and funny and sometimes you think something is just water but then you find out that some urine right there. But that's okay. We can step over the urine. We have free will.