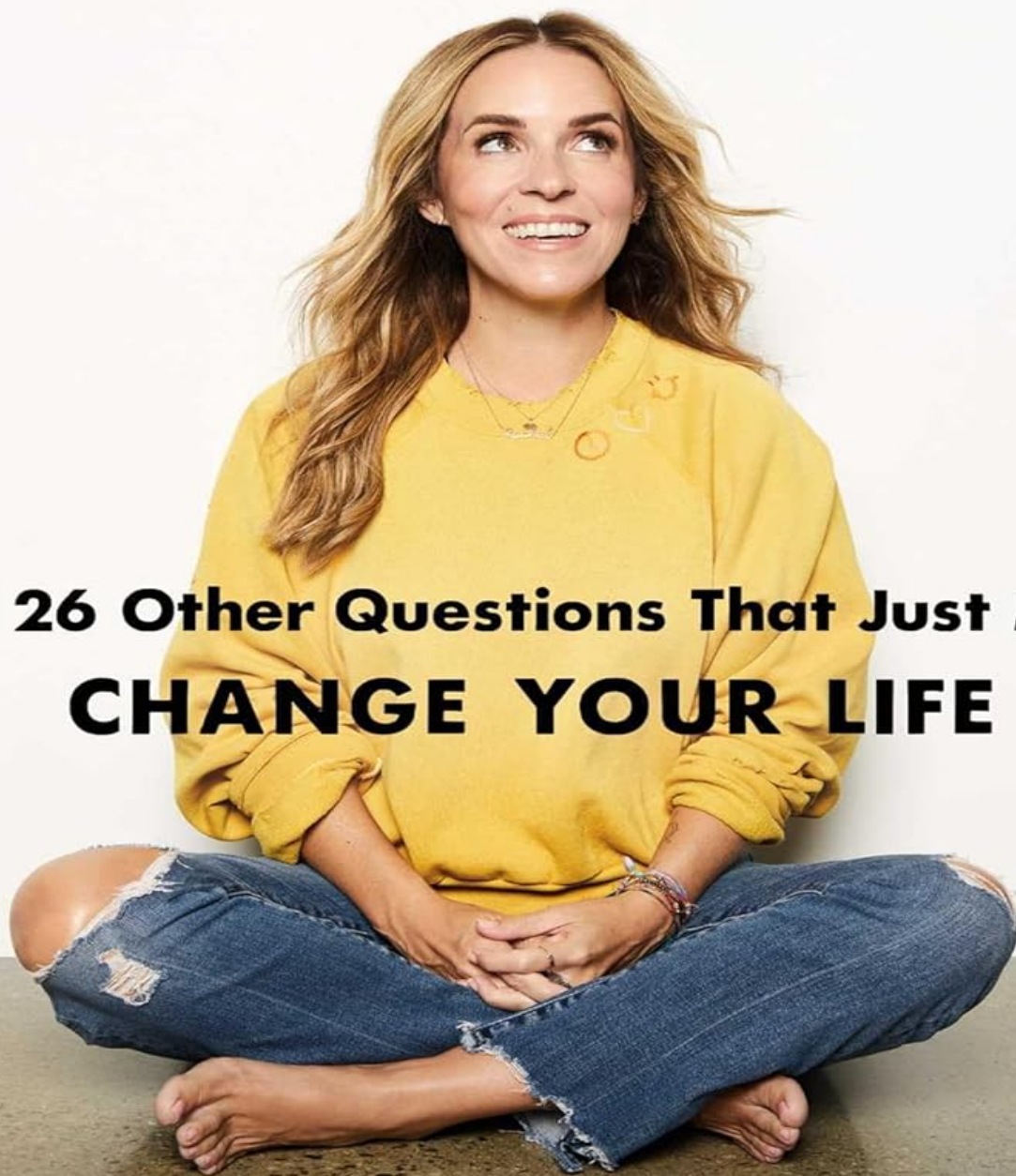


What if YOU Are the Answer?



**And 26 Other Questions That Just Might
CHANGE YOUR LIFE**

RACHEL HOLLIS

#1 New York Times Bestselling Author

What if YOU Are the Answer?



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What If YOU Are the Answer?

Also by Rachel Hollis

Girl, Wash Your Face

Girl, Stop Apologizing

Didn't See That Coming

What If YOU Are the Answer?

And 26 Other Questions That Just Might Change Your Life

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For Cez

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ood questions are powerful.

As powerful as the moon controlling oceans from two hundred thousand miles away and turning perfectly upstanding citizens into werewolves against their will. Good questions are influential. As **G** compelling as Julia Roberts's crying in a movie—why do I *immediately* start crying too?

Good questions are like that—they force the point.

At least they do with me.

Sometimes good questions knock me sideways with a perspective I've never seen before. Sometimes they work their way into the deep crevices of my mind, a surprise to unearth later—a forgotten piece of hard candy at the bottom of grandma's purse. Good questions won't let go until I've given them time and attention. Good questions can be a catalyst for change, directions at a crossroads, or the swift kick in the butt we need to push us out of our comfort zone.

Six years ago, someone asked me a good question, and it changed the course of my life. *If you could write a book about anything at all, and readers would actually retain what you share, what would you tell them?*

Before the prompt, I hadn't even known I had an answer to that question. It must have been bubbling in my subconscious along with the dialogue to any Disney movie made before 1998 because just like *The Lion King* soundtrack, when prompted, it all came spilling out of me.

What would I share with people if I could share anything? The hard truths and life lessons it had taken me decades to learn. I wrote the book I wish I

could have read when I was twenty-five. I wrote a love letter to imaginary readers, the kind of things I wished someone would have said to me.

Like, no matter how small you sometimes feel, you are powerful beyond measure. I shared what Epictetus said, that we can't control what happens to us in life, but we *can* control our response to it.

Ancient Stoics knew what was up.

I wrote about surviving pain and trauma, how it can weaken us—make us bitter or terrified or mean. But it can also make us the strongest kind of warrior, able to lead ourselves and others with compassion and grit. I wrote about hardship and how the single determining factor in who you become on the other side of it is the meaning you place on the experience.

I was so passionate about sharing all I had learned that I'd written the first chapter of what would later become *Girl, Wash Your Face* within the hour.

I remember someone telling me, “Enjoy this process. You'll likely only ever have enough ideas for one book like this.” As if at thirty-four, I'd acquired all the wisdom I ever would.

Back when I wrote that first personal development book, I was so excited to share every idea that I thought might be helpful. *Do this, or try that, or consider this . . . here are three different things that helped me, and maybe they'll help you too!* I'm so proud of those pages and the two self-work books that have followed it up. I'm proud that people have gotten something out of lines I wrote and still fairly shocked that anyone listens to my thoughts on the regular. But in the last eight years, you know what I've learned?

I don't actually know anything.

Or really, I suppose that's not accurate.

I know lots of things. I'm a veritable treasure trove of ideas for self-improvement and random bits of pop trivia and historical facts and lines from movies and the lyrics to just about every song I've ever heard, especially jingles from radio commercials for small local businesses from my childhood. *Marine parts are so easy to buy . . . at Galey's Marine Supply. Toot Toot.* That one has lived rent-free in my brain for thirty-five years.

But what I don't know are *the answers that will be most helpful for you.*

The capital-*T* truths I believe today with all my might? Time has taught me that they might potentially be swept away at a moment's notice.

I wrote the chapters of this book, in no particular order, over four of the most challenging years of my life. I wrote through disillusionment and divorce. I wrote while my business, built around live events, burned down in the pandemic. I wrote while navigating new love. I wrote while recovering from a miscarriage. I wrote while parenting my four children through the grief of losing their father. I wrote while moving back across the country, starting where we once began, a fresh chapter after so many years of absolute shit.

“Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the face.”

Mike Tyson, the prophet.

Life has punched me—and I'm sure you too—in the face *many* times, and in those moments of shock that immediately follow something hard or the months (*OK, but really, it's years*) of overthinking I do in the aftermath, I often have a prospective shift about whole parts of my worldview. What I've learned is that, at any moment, I'm one life experience away from having a

totally different belief about how the world works. All I know—*all any of us can ever know*—is what's real and true for us, in this moment, today.

But I had no idea that was the case when I began my self-work. How could I? When you're starting to work on any part of your life for the first time (health, mental well-being, business, relationships), it's pretty damn scary.

Chances are you weren't raised with a ton of resources or guides. You likely don't have a lot of tools for emotional evolution in your toolbox, which is why you start looking for help. In the beginning, you're not working on yourself because you're great at it. I wish! You're working on yourself because you've experienced a catalyst of such acute pain, you vowed you'd never find yourself there again. In those moments, we don't even know where the hell we're going—we just know we don't want to be where we are.

Enter: someone with ideas!

No, not ideas. They've got *answers*.

And they've got the charisma to propose those answers to you in a way that changes your whole perspective. Now you have a guide to help you down the road you started walking without any clear indication of where the path leads. This can be wildly supportive when you're starting out. Nobody knows what they're doing when they're new to it, so it helps to have someone there gently reminding us what to do next. Like when you're little, and you finally start using the toilet on your own, and every time you go, some older, wiser person has to remind you, *Hey, buddy, great job. Don't forget to wipe your butt.*

Sage advice.

But just like with wiping your butt, if you're truly evolving, then the guidance you start *any* journey with will have a natural plateau. The excitement and energy you had at the beginning of the marathon will be long gone when you're at mile twenty-two and there's no gas left in your tank. The swagger you possess as a small business owner with your first customer is MIA three years later when the economy is in a nosedive and you're not sure how you'll make payroll. The euphoria you experience as a first-time parent holding your newborn to your chest is hard to tap into when you're trying to calm a **threenager** in a temper tantrum or a fifteen-year-old who's struggling with anxiety.

As our lives change, as the journey takes new twists and turns on the trail, we need new skills, new knowledge, and new perspectives.

And that's where I find myself . . . both as a student of life and as a sharer of ideas.

Once upon a time, I thought I needed to have all the answers, both for myself and for anyone who might read what I wrote or listen to me speak or watch something I create. But the older I get, the more I understand that if you're looking to someone else for *your* answers, you run the risk of getting a watered-down version of a truth that only applies to you in *some areas*. Worse still, we'll raise up subsequent generations without the ability to think critically, utilize common sense, and hold space for the magic and mystery of a universe so vast, we'll never be able to understand it all.

And if we'll never be able to understand it all, why would we assume we can ever really, truly have capital-*T* truths about any of it?

So, my friend, I'm no longer looking for answers; I'm looking for wisdom.

I'm collecting stories and ideas and thoughts and experiences like a little girl catching fireflies, and I'm doing it with a similar sense of wonder.

My core value in life is growth, and I spent the early part of my adulthood believing that growth looked like rising up. But now I think growth might actually be growing out.

And down.

And sideways.

Growth is a stretch in every direction—even directions you didn't know existed.

That kind of growth happens when we learn, yes, from others, but most especially when we learn *ourselves*. The single greatest thing I can do in this life and with this work is not try to teach you what I think is true but potentially to ask you questions that help you discover your own truth.

And so this isn't a book of answers *because only you have those*; this is a book of questions.

Because the right question can change everything.

That's what questions do . . . they teach us about ourselves, they make us think, and if we're honest in the reply, questions have the ability to give us our own answers.

That's my intention with this work. It's a collection of questions that I've learned to ask myself—a firefly in my jar. Might I suggest that as you read each chapter, you sit with the question for a moment (or a week?) before you ever read my take on it? After all, it doesn't really matter what I think about

it; it only matters what **you** think about it. The answers to these questions have had such a profound effect on my life that it changed something for me instantly. I hope these questions, and the pondering they produce, might have a profound effect on you too.

But if not, that's OK. We've established that I may not really know anything. I've just got some ideas that have been real and true and good for me . . . at least until I get punched in the face again.

xo, Rach

What If YOU Are the Answer?

What *Who* are you waiting for?

I'm not going to tell you what to do in this book. I swear I'm not.

But if—hypothetically—I *was* going to offer you any advice, it would be this: **Live Your Life.**

I I know. It sounds as basic and as obvious as the “Live, Laugh, Love” sign your mom got on clearance at TJ Maxx, but this edict is actually surprisingly complex, and very few people truly pull it off. Let's break it down.

Live: If you ask one hundred people what it means to really live, you'll get one hundred different answers. If you ask me, there is only one. To me, *living* means that we actively take part in the creation of the world we exist inside of. It means we become truly conscious that we're *not* an NPC in someone else's video game. *You* are the main character of *your* life, and truly living means *you act like it!*

Don't believe me?

Scream. Scream right now at the top of your lungs. Or don't, because that would be weird . . . but just imagine if you *did scream*. How would the energy in the room shift? If you're on an airplane, you're gonna cause some trouble—an air marshal will probably be called, and you'll have to explain yourself. If you're in a coffee shop, maybe you get some looks, maybe some people will leave (I definitely would). If you're all alone, then at the very least, the scream probably woke you up and made your heart pump to a