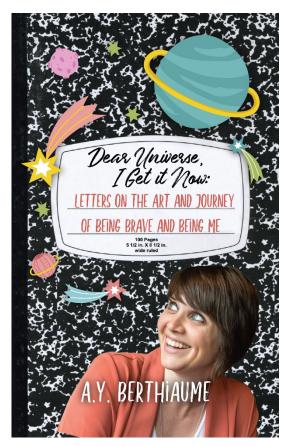
#### **Press Kit**

## Dear Universe, I fet it Now:

# LETTERS ON THE ART AND JOURNEY OF BEING BRAVE AND BEING ME



## BY A. Y. BERTHIAUME





Pub. Date: November 2020

ISBN 978-1-949066-43-2/978-1-949066-45-6; \$14.99/\$9.99; 5.5 x 8.5;

Paperback/Ebook; Body, Mind & Spirit/Self-help/Biography & Autobiography





#### **Advance Praise For**

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"Brilliant, inspiring, and laugh-out-loud funny. This is storytelling at its best. Berthiaume weaves truth with wisdom in a journey that transforms the soul as much as it captivates the imagination. Pure magic. You won't want to put it down. P.S. Bring *lots* of tissues. (Oh, and, Dear Universe... I'm so SO happy this book was born!)"

-Debbie Burns, Seer-Empath + best-selling author of *The Path to Courage* 

"Prepare to change your life. Berthiaume leads by example in this call-to-action book, bravely pulling back the curtain on how she has handled - or mishandled - key life events that led her to reveal, accept, and eventually love her real self. She invites us to chart a course to our own truth with provocative, at times painful, questions to ponder along the way. By the end of the book, you will be fired up to face the world with authenticity, courage, and hope!"

-Tammy Flanders Hetrick, author of the award-winning novel, Stella Rose

For more information, please contact

A. Y. Berthiaume

By filling out the form on

http://www.ayberthiaume.com/dearuniverse



#### **About the Author**



A.Y. Berthiaume is a professional writer, native Vermonter, practicing feminist, recovering middle child, wannabe superhero, and a mom who's pretty sure she's "winging it". She holds an M.F.A. in creative writing and is the Lady Boss Owner of The Write Place, Right Time, her virtual boutique of copywriting and ghostwriting services. Whether she's writing for herself or her clients, Berthiaume believes in emotionally compelling, honest, and powerful stories that are told in an authentic voice, come straight from the heart, and celebrate bravery, grit, and hope. If you can catch her *not doing all the things*, she's probably drinking Maple Lattes in a coffee shop, getting lost in a bookstore, or binge-watching something on Netflix in her sweatpants while she eats ridiculous amounts of movie-theater-style popcorn.

#### Find A. Y. Berthiaume Online:

Author Website: <a href="http://www.ayberthiaume.com/">http://www.ayberthiaume.com/</a>

Author Facebook page: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/ayberthiaume/">https://www.facebook.com/ayberthiaume/</a>

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WHAT WOULD YOU ASK THE UNIVERSE IF YOU COULD?

## Dear Universe, I Get it Now:

### LETTERS ON THE ART AND JOURNEY OF BEING BRAVE AND BEING ME

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## BY A. Y. BERTHIAUME



On a mission to empower women to be brave and share their stories, A.Y. Berthiaume, a professional writer, and budding entrepreneur realized she must first brave telling her own. This is her inspirational story about facing challenges and peering into life's dark corners while longing to understand her place in the world and learning to accept and love who she is. Berthiaume reflects on her journey through a series of letters written to her pal the Universe. With each letter, she sees that her path was a series of purposeful, cosmic invitations to become who she was born to be.

**DEAR UNIVERSE, I GET IT NOW** is the first memoir of A.Y. Berthiaume, a lifelong dreamer, and exuberant professional writer. It's for anyone questioning their purpose on this planet... who once dared to dream or still does ... or who's on the hunt to find themselves. These letters will re-ignite flames you thought were extinguished; empower you to see your experiences as gifts (and signs), and inspire you to own your stories. **DEAR UNIVERSE, I GET IT NOW** will beg you to consider what you need to ask the Universe about your own journey and invite you to finally brave the path that leads straight to *you*. Alongside Berthiaume's personal memoir are reflective questions, journaling prompts, and more to guide you on your way.

**A.Y. BERTHIAUME** has been writing to the Universe since she started keeping a journal and asking Them the tough questions about life, death, and her purpose on this planet since always. Berthiaume is a professional writer, native Vermonter, practicing feminist, recovering middle child, wannabe superhero, and a mom who's pretty sure she's "winging it". She holds an M.F.A. in creative writing and is the Lady Boss Owner of The Write Place, Right Time, her virtual boutique of copywriting and ghostwriting services for coaches and other badass entrepreneurs who "don't do words," but know they need them.

If you can catch her not doing "all the things," she's probably drinking Maple Lattes in a coffee shop, getting lost in a bookstore, or binge-watching something on Netflix in her sweatpants while she eats ridiculous amounts of movie-theater-style popcorn. (That's only if she's not with her son, playing dress-up, singing at the top of their lungs, and dancing in the middle of the living room.)

**Onion River Press** is a small, locally-owned, independent, print-on-demand publisher based out of Phoenix Books in Vermont. Their mission is to provide local authors with a high quality, author-guided alternative to other self-publishing platforms.

For more information on Dear Universe, A.Y. Berthiaume, or speaking events, please visit ayberthiaume.com/dearuniverse.

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#### PRAISE FOR DEAR UNIVERSE, I GET IT NOW

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### **Interview Questions**

A. Y. Berthiaume author of

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Q: When you set out to write *Dear Universe*, *I Get it Now* what did you envision for the success of this book? What did you hope it would achieve? Have your expectations or vision changed over the actual writing of the book?

A: Honestly, in the beginning I set the bar really low for myself. I basically told myself let's get it "Done and good enough." This was a mental trick I played on myself. I've been so tied to either perfectionism or the belief that I don't have anything good enough to say that I've walked away from projects when they get too difficult. Even if I had ridiculous momentum when I first conceived of the project or began to draft. So, by telling myself it didn't need to be long and it didn't need to be perfect, it helped me keep both my perfectionism and my inferiority in check. I didn't start out wanting to write my magnum opus. I wanted the book to be an actual tangible product that I could place in front of leads for my business and say, "I've

written a book (here it is), now let's talk about how I can write yours." For me, having it published, professional, and polished were the main ideas. For the longest time I even referred to this work as a "marketing stunt."

Somewhere along the way my companion called me out. "Stop calling it that," he said. "It's more than that and you know it." He was right and it made me really think about what exactly I wanted for this work. My original idea - to use it with potential clients - was still true, but it was no stunt. I wasn't half-assing the writing or the process or the revisions even if I was trying to keep my perfectionism in check. And as I wrote, revised, and let readers review, not only did I feel the only worth of my words but readers' feedback was always overwhelmingly positive. My imposter syndrome ("I didn't have anything to say.") really eased.

About two drafts in and I realized I felt really, really good about this book. Like in my heart, my gut. My intuition started to say, "Hey, you have no idea where this book could go. So why not shoot for the stars." I decided then I was going to go after Amazon Bestseller status. I was going to bust out all the stops. I was going to have launches and giveaways and get it into as many hands as possible. I was going to let it be my big debut into the world of books as I had always dreamed.

### Q: Who did you write Dear Universe for? Who do you imagine is on the other side reading your words?

A: I wrote *Dear Universe* for women searching for living authentically and finding their purpose (or following it, if they know it). I think it can appeal to men, but a lot of the experiences I included in the book I think can be most felt and related to by women. Beyond the individual episodes however, the thematic thread is the journey of finding my way back to myself or growing into myself - depending on how you look at it. I think being on a path of stepping into your own, understanding your gifts, following your passion or uncovering your purpose is a path many of us walk. And, I believe those of us who feel we are a part of something much greater, have questions we ask ourselves along the way; we strive to make meaning or connection between the things we experience and our purpose in this life. What was exciting to watch during the book's development was how it resonated with women of different ages, races, and sexual orientations. Each time I got one of their feedback I was over the moon with how they responded to the work.

#### Q: As a mom and business owner, how did you find time to write Dear Universe?

A: I focused on one letter at a time. I had a notebook with the list of letters I was going to include. Each time I wrote a letter, I highlighted it (which was my way of crossing it off). I had to write mostly in evenings I didn't have my son or on weekends. If it was a weekend I had him, I would draft letters during his nap time. If it was a weekend I didn't, I tried to block off chunks of time and do writing sprints where I would write as much as possible without censoring myself in that block of time. I've always been a powerful "reviser." So I knew if I could just get the words down on the page, it would be easier later. The main thing was just picking off a little at a time and anytime I got an idea for the book that wasn't about the draft itself (marketing, publishing, etc.), I wrote it down so I wouldn't lose the thought but also so that it wouldn't distract me from getting the draft done. There were times I had to minimize social engagements or skip them altogether to write in those small windows of time that my schedule afforded. Somehow though, bit by bit, it got done.

## Q: Your book is as much a commentary on social issues and advocacy for marginalized voices as it is about living an authentic and brave life. Was this intentional?

A: I wrote what was true to my experience and what related to the theme of being brave in being myself. It didn't even seem apparent to me how many social issues or advocacy was in there until one of my very first readers said to me, "I had no idea how much social justice and advocacy has been a part of your life since you were a kid." That made me stop and recognize that something I feel so powerfully as an adult, has actually always been there. I think we often take our own experiences for granted or don't see them as unique or notice something specific about them until someone else points them out. Once she mentioned it, however, I looked at those chapters differently. I wondered how what I was saying about my own experience would benefit the reader. And, of course, given the year of the books' publication and the political climate, I'm glad I took extra time to consider those chapters and their impact.

#### Q: What do you want your readers to take away from *Dear Universe*?

A: I want readers to feel empowered to seek answers to their deepest questions; to choose to live more authentically and find the ways to do that in a way that works for them; to go after their dream or pursue their passion. Honestly, I want them to define what their life means to them and how they want to live it because we only get to be here (in this current form/state depending on what you believe) once and we don't know how long we have. And it's all of this that underlies my tag line: Be Brave. Be You. It's Time.

#### Q: What was the greatest challenge in writing this memoir? The greatest joy?

A: The greatest challenge was losing momentum during various parts of the process. Right before I finished the first draft, my grandmother passed away. The timing was around Thanksgiving and so between that loss and moving into the holiday season, I didn't get back to it until a few months later. Once I did, I operated at warp speed. I finished the first draft, sent to readers, collected feedback and then turned out a second draft. Then COVID-19 landed in the U.S., daycares closed, life turned upside down, and I could barely balance keeping my business going and doing the mom thing, so the book sat for a few months again. As such, the book's timeline has expanded well beyond the original plan.

The greatest joy has been the satisfaction of finally completing my first (real) published work and making this dream come true. I don't care how corny that sounds. It's the truth.

#### Q: Did you worry about upsetting loved ones, and did this impact your truth-telling?

A: I always worry about that. I've been worrying about that since high school. And this has been a large part of the journey to get here - overcoming *that* fear. The fear of upsetting people. The fear of being judged. The fear of being misunderstood. The fear of being looked at or treated differently as the result of something that has been shared.

With this particular book, my biggest fear was in writing about my marriage and about motherhood. I don't need anyone's permission to tell my story, but I do take seriously that my story is never a story that is in isolation. It crosses over with others. And there are two sides to any story. My ex and I have an amicable relationship and we co-parent well. We share the custody of our son. My son is not even in school yet; he's still very young. While it was important to me to be honest in this work and not leave out the messy parts, I did hold myself to a standard of choosing very carefully what I shared and how I shared it as married or not, my ex, my son, and myself are a unit and as such, that demands a certain type of privacy and delicacy.

I have chosen to be a writer and share my experiences but those aren't their choices so I have to be respectful of that. I was conscious, of course, of all the people who appeared in my work, as evident by changing all names and only giving a few characteristics, but my son and his father were the two I was most concerned with.

## Q: How did you determine what letters to include? Or what individual scenes or moments from your life to depict?

A: Once I knew that the book was going to be a book of letters on life lessons, I needed to find a way to whittle that down. I also needed to keep myself focused on writing the book and not getting all jazzed or focused on the marketing and publishing of it. I took a huge piece of paper (one of those gigantic post-it notes for the wall) and drew boxes. The center box was to focus on the heart of the book. So I took post-it notes and wrote on them anything I thought was the heartbeat of the work. (At first I thought the heartbeat was going to be about finding my voice and expression.)

The next box (or the 2nd layer) was for any story or experience that stood out in my memory. So, I brainstormed until I couldn't think of anything anymore. I started from childhood and went in order and anything that most readily came to mind went onto a post-it note and onto the page. The third and fourth boxes were for later stages of the process, so I ignored them. I needed to manage the post-it notes madness that now appeared on this huge piece of paper.

I started to group the post-it notes by themes. For those that had ideas more than actual memories, I tossed them. I tried to focus on the most visceral experiences, the ones I could clearly remember as though they were scenes from a movie. If I could remember them in that way, I knew they would be compelling and powerful to write.

Filtering the post-it notes revealed to me what the book wanted to be. All the memories (or lessons) that "made the cut" were related to my journey of becoming a writer or in being true to myself – a lot of which is one in the same. There was also a clear way of putting them in chronological order. Once the post-it notes were organized chronologically, I drafted the table of contents in my notebook and began to write. Picking one off at a time.

## Q: There's a lot of heavy subject matter included in your book. Was there any letter that was more difficult to write than others? Or any that stood out for early readers more than others?

A: The letters about the death of my roommate, my sexual assault, and my miscarriage were the hardest ones to write emotionally. I cried through each of them and left the desk exhausted after each draft. However, the letters about my achievement identity and playground racism were the most difficult to write from a content standpoint. There was so much to say; I always felt they were cumbersome and unclear. They underwent heavy rewriting every time. I feel like I'll look back on this book in another five years and still feel like they aren't quite right.

Interestingly enough, the letter that had the most disagreement among readers was the letter about playing ninja turtles. My first wave of readers grumbled about my making that chapter about gender stereotypes and sexism, so I rewrote it and focused it differently. Then during the last wave of reading, there were readers who couldn't understand how gender and sexism wasn't addressed. Because I had originally written that chapter from the "gender" lens, I decided that was what the chapter wanted to be and so I reverted it back.

## Q: Were there any surprises for you while writing this book? Did you learn anything about yourself or others or life that you didn't know before?

A: The thing that surprised me the most was how easily it seemed to come onto the page. Even though I knew after the first draft that it was far from done, I could already tell it was powerful, meaningful. Each wave of readers proved that to be true with their feedback. Each draft, the power I felt from the book grew. Each wave of readers' feedback seemed to surmount the feedback from before. In that, I think what I learned about myself (or, perhaps, validated) is that I *really do* have a gift and I *really do* have something to say, and people *really do* want to hear it.

#### Q: What's next? Will there be a follow up to this book? Or something completely different?

A: I have loads of other book ideas, but now that I've written this one, I can see a long line of letter-styled books that focus on a variety of themes. I've had one memoir that I've attempted multiple times that is all about my failed love life (from like 17 years old to 24 - pre-marriage/divorce) and maybe that's next - either in this format or something else. I can also see spin-offs of *Dear Universe*, like an edited collection of letters written by other people centered on a theme. Kind of in the spirit of Chicken Soup for the Soul. Or I've always loved the whole idea behind subscription boxes. So, what about a subscription box that is all about bravery and living authentically? All I can say is, I'm just getting started.

For more information, <a href="http://www.ayberthiaume.com/dearuniverse">http://www.ayberthiaume.com/dearuniverse</a>



