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The Career Advice No One Will Give You

Seriously, chill the f**k out.

Jennifer Romolini *Weird In A World That's Not*



*Below is an excerpt from **Weird in a World That's Not: A Career Guide for Misfits, F*ckups, and Failures** by Jennifer Romolini, Chief Content Officer at Shondaland.com.*

Over the decade or so since I officially became an editor, I've sat on a number of conference panels, with a number of silly-formal conference-panel names. I've given speeches with post-speech Q&As, been a guest speaker in classrooms, and been interviewed about my career for publications, both biggish and small.

The questions I am asked in these situations range in quality and scope —sometimes people want to know old magazine yarns, sometimes they want to talk about *womyn* on the *Internet*, sometimes about something real sexy, like how brands can reach an audience across platforms. But most of the questions I get involve advice — *What's your advice for young editors? What would you tell new college grads?*, and then, if the moderator/interviewer/question-asker is trying to mix things up, *What career advice would you have given yourself?*

Myself” books, in videos where semi-famous people fade into one another as they espouse inspiring aphorisms about life. It’s intimate. It’s navel-gazing. It’s nurturing. It somehow flatters us all.

Whenever I am asked this question in public, I don’t really know what to say. (So I say something canned, like “A little sugar goes a long way!” Or something I think will get a laugh, like “Wear a bra!” Hardy har.) The real advice I wish I could give my younger self is more intense and harsh than what I’d give to others, what I’d give to you. It’s not a sound bite, it’s not onstage cool. What would have been most useful to me in the early stages of my career, during the period between first-job terror and middle-management malaise — in addition to all the more general advice you’ve read so far in this book — is embarrassing and intimate. It’s tough love. It’s not always nice. Here’s what I would have told myself. Maybe it will help you too.

You’ll Suck at Everything the First Time You Do It

You will probably suck the second and third time too. Don’t get defensive about this; don’t decide that you should never do the thing again because you’re as worthless as a chin zit. Don’t compare yourself to other people who have been doing the thing longer, who have practiced and are better. Who were maybe born better—who cares. Don’t pretend the reasonable person critiquing your work is wrong and awful and your sub-standard work is up to snuff because believing this soothes your ego. That thing you did sucks, but it doesn’t matter: with effort, you can become great at almost anything except maybe (at this point) professional sports. Accept this as reality, stop getting so mad, stop being so mean to yourself, and start working to make it good.

There Will Never Be a Positive Consensus about You

Some people just won’t like you, whatever. There’s no amount of extra-teeth smiling or forced charm or jokes or compliments or social games or happy-face emoji DMs that will change their minds. Sometimes people just won’t like the cut of your jib. Sometimes you will say or do the wrong thing, put your foot in your mouth, and cause irreparable harm. You’re human, you fuck up. Don’t fixate on this. Don’t clap back. Learn from the situation and move on.

Stop Vacillating between “I Am Garbage” and “I Am God”

This is annoying. And it’s exhausting. All these self-esteem swings are tuckering you out. You don’t need to be one or the other. You’re in the middle. Everyone is. Even Kanye. Moderate your ego. Do your best. Seek out new opportunities. Don’t be afraid to take risks. Some days you will feel good about your work, some days you will feel bad, but all days you are fundamentally the same. Ground yourself so you don’t crave constant validation, so that every accomplishment or positive reinforcement, every negative comment or rejection, doesn’t redefine who you are. Call your grandma. Do something kind. Think about someone else for a while. That will help.

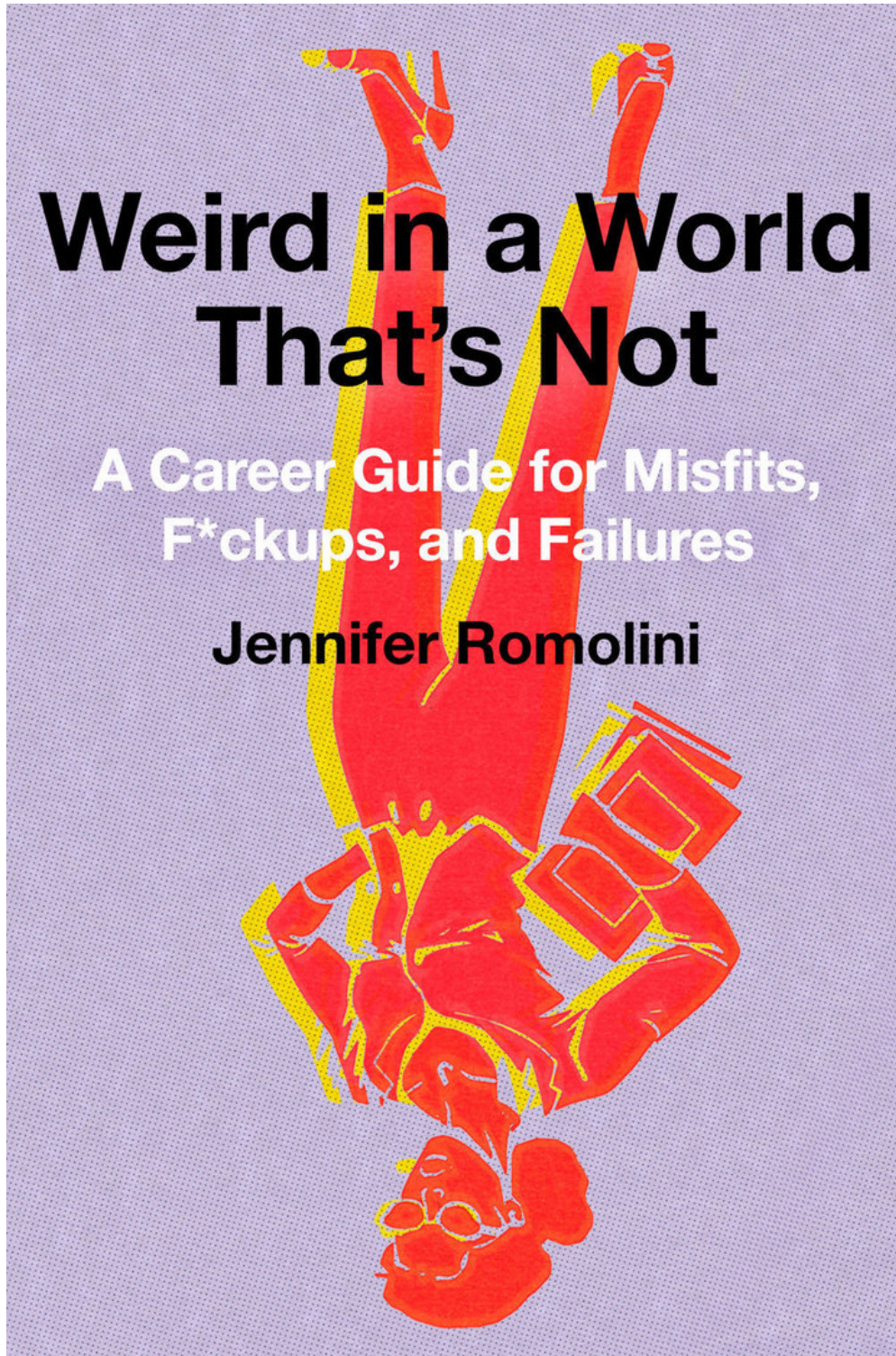
Chill the Fuck Out

You’re taking work too personally and too seriously, you’re confronting people too much with too much hostility, you’re letting every tiny facet of work get under your skin, and you’re freaking people out. Put aside that America hates assertive/aggressive/ambitious women more than it hates puppy killers; put aside that if you were a man, these “problems” would most likely never have been a concern. The fact that all your performance reviews say “difficult,” “rubs people the wrong way,” “bedside manner: meh” cannot be blamed entirely on misogyny. This is not the case for everyone, but it is for you. You need to slow your roll just a bit, find the middle of your dial, take the time to pause, read the room, think it out, and come at the issue calmly, with a plan. By not doing this, you’re hurting yourself more than you’re hurting anyone else.

Stop Treating Your Career Like a Race to the Death Sprint

Man alive, you are going to put so many hours into this career, so many weekends and early mornings and late nights. You are going to talk about this career until you’re hoarse, and work so hard you feel blind. You need to slow down; it’s not going anywhere. You need to take care of yourself. Stop drinking so much. Get some sleep. Sit for a moment with your disappointments instead of racing to the next thing. Stop trying to run away from uncomfortable situations. Identify your triggers; understand what makes you feel most envious and insecure, so your envy and insecurity don’t make you do fucked up things to other people.

to do with your job. Stop hoarding your vacation days. They're not going to fire you, at least not for taking a vacation. Take advantage of the health care plan you don't understand that costs you \$7,995 a month and get yourself some therapy. You need it. Needing it doesn't make you a freak. Go to the gym. Or take a walk. Do something active with your limbs. Spend two hours a day not thinking about work. Don't eat four pieces of toast and a block of cheese before bed unless you want to wake up feeling like you ate four pieces of toast and a block of cheese. When all else fails, do a face mask. It's going to be OK. You're weird, sure, but you're better than you think. Sometimes you're even great.



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