To Our Readers: 
A Note on Our Use of Language

Before you dive in, there are a few important things we'd like you to know about us and about this book. As you read, you'll notice that we make heavy reference to husbands, wives, spouses, ex-partners (“exes”), mothers, and fathers. But here is how we see things:

**Our Definition of a Parent**

A parent is any person who identifies as a parent and who is identified by a child as being a parent. A parent has or shares primary ethical responsibility for meeting the physical and emotional needs of a child. A parent may or may not be called “Mom” or “Dad.” They may or may not share DNA with the child, or be in (or have ever been in) a relationship with the other parent or parents. There may never have been another parent. A parent may or may not be recognized as such in the eyes of the law. A parent can fall anywhere on the spectrums of gender and sexual orientation.

**Our Definition of a Couple**

A couple is any two people who have made a mutual commitment to share life, love and intimacy.
A Few Words on Our Use of Pronouns

We make inconsistent use of pronouns in this book. It’s pretty hodgepodge. But that’s not because we didn’t think things through or forgot to proofread.

In some cases, we employ gender-specific, singular pronouns, such as *him*, *her*, *his*, and *hers*. Because we don’t want to favor either fathers or mothers, we switch back and forth across various vignettes—choosing in each instance whether to feature a “he” or a “she.” At other times, we deal with the issue differently, opting not to choose one gender-specific pronoun. This practice is more egalitarian but is unwieldy. It results in sentences like “Each professional must choose for him- or herself how much personal information he or she is comfortable to disclose.” It also doesn’t address the fact that some people are neither male nor female, or that some parents are neither mothers nor fathers.

Finally, we often use plural pronouns to refer back to singular subjects. For example, we might say, “The client was happy with their outcome,” or “If you don’t respond to your client’s email, you might upset them.” This sentence structure has historically been considered a grammatical sin. But it’s gaining acceptance in the media and in print and (although it’s a matter of debate) is moving toward common usage.

We use plural pronouns with increasing frequency. We’re working toward a point where either the larger community reaches consensus or we are ready to give up the complicated and awkward attempt to speak to individual preferences in our audience—in favor of employing a simpler, more inclusive language that is consistent with our values.

Language is about respect. Our goal is to write in a way that conveys nondiscriminatory recognition and acceptance. The social, political, and linguistic landscape is changing for the better. We admit to being at a new phase in our own development. As individuals, we have a lot to learn. As writers, we clearly have not cracked the code. It’s an ongoing process.