NEVER TOO LATE

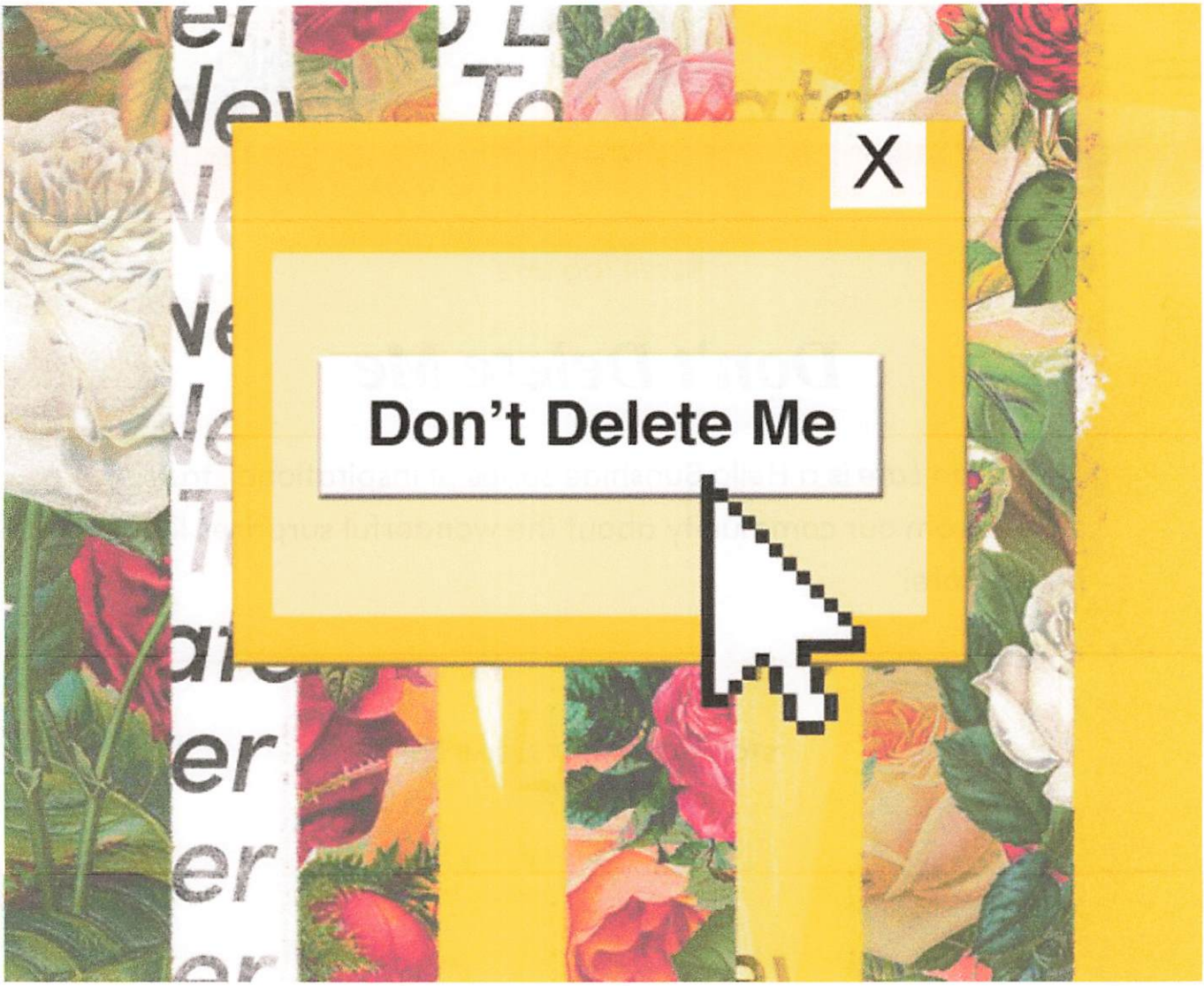
Don't Delete Me

Never Too Late is a Hello Sunshine series of inspirational, true stories from our community about the wonderful surprises life has in store!

›› STORY BY VIRGINA A. SIMPSON
MARCH 5, 2018

I'd searched for love my whole life, especially after my father's death when I was 12, not knowing I ached for what I'd lost that day and all the years after. I rummaged in all the wrong places for someone to love me. My quest left a trail of two divorces and my heart broken by a few boyfriends, including a sexy Italian, a rich older man, and a deceitful minister. After a 4 year break from relationships, at 54, I was ready to try again.





This time I no longer searched for someone to love me. I thought it more important to experience what it meant to honestly love someone. It was 2003, and following a girlfriend's lead, I used the internet. Numerous unhealthy, combative, odd men contacted me. After two weeks, I was about to give up when an email appeared. "Don't delete me. I'm planning to move to your area."

He was a widower who deeply loved his wife, Flo. He sent a beautiful poem he'd written, "Because of Her," which spoke of all he'd learned about love and relationships, and his desire to share love again. I'd never met a man who'd

experienced a healthy relationship, a relationship only death could end. He shared pictures and stories about his friends, and early on, we learned we had grown up in Los Angeles, about five minutes from each other. At 4 1/2 years older, he wouldn't have paid attention to 9-year-old me at the skating rink, but I like to imagine we were there at the same time.

As adults, we both lived in the Bay Area, and in my imagination, I see a movie scene, where two people are in the same place, preoccupied with other partners as they pass each other on their busy way to somewhere else. As we progressed from emails to phone calls to meeting in person, I liked him more with each encounter. Knowing about the effect of oxytocin—a chemical our brains produce which accounts for the strong emotions we feel early in relationships —I refused to fall in love. I'd learned when we fall, we sometimes land with a hard crash. Instead, I paid attention, certain I loved him, yet wanting to make sure we were the right fit for each other.

After two years of long distance dating, he moved to California. A few weeks later, he was with my mother when she took her final breath. He'd promised her he would take care of me and she believed him enough to let go of this life and entrust me to his care.

Choosing to love instead of needing to be loved has made all the difference. I became more patient and understanding, learned to self-soothe rather than ask him to fix me, and made sure I filled every day with compliments, thank yous, and ending every conversation with "I love you."

We've been together 14 years, and married ten, grateful each moment for the good fortune of loving each other every day.