

# TJ + HEATHER

.....

*our family book*





# hello friend!

We feel incredibly indebted for your courage, love, & selflessness in considering adoption as your parenting plan for your baby – we are so amazed by your strength & bravery! Whether or not we get to meet, or you choose us to walk with you on this path, know that **you are appreciated & so special** to us. We have been fortunate to bear witness to close friends who became parents through the gift of adoption, & the beauty and love that grows out of a challenging & brave decision ♥

We are Heather & TJ! Until we get the opportunity to meet (if you would like!), we hope these pages are a small glimpse into who we are & our life together, our individual passions, as well as what we aspire to provide as we grow our family through adoption. We are both in health care — Heather is a nurse practitioner in trauma/acute care surgery, & TJ is a thoracic (chest) surgeon. We have been married for just over 10 years & together for just over 14 (time flies ☺). Heather was born & raised on Bainbridge Island, Washington, & TJ grew up in Colorado Springs. Our adventures together have taken us from where we met in Nebraska, to Wisconsin, & out to the Pacific Northwest, where we currently live on an idyllic island in south Puget Sound with our cute lab pup Cooper.

We love to do life together (& take a mean selfie, lol). We cannot wait to introduce a baby to our family & friends, all of whom have been hoping & praying for us, for you, & for baby. Our faith & spiritual roads have been one of choice & evolution, but one thing we know for sure: we believe in the power of love & prayer. It is humbling to know how many are praying along with us. We feel incredibly well supported as we look ahead to where our future child (& you if you choose!) will feel that tremendous support also!

Friend, we are so grateful for the opportunity to share our story with you. We are so excited to be at this point in our lives. We have waited & prayed for this moment. Thank you for taking the time to look through our book!

Much love.

Heather

TJ







We initially decided to wait until we were through with most of TJ's medical training before starting our family, only to find that it just has not happened, for unexplained reasons. After several years & no clear answer, we started looking into & talking with our friends who became parents through adoption. Once we heard their stories, & learned more about their amazing experiences, we knew it was absolutely the right choice for us. We feel such comfort & peace in knowing that adoption will be a cornerstone of our story - we have so much love to give.

One thing we have embraced over the years is adaptability, which is one of our greatest strengths as a couple. We pray this translates well into the opportunity to grow a relationship with you! We hope to have an open or semi-open adoption, though we are very flexible to both what is desired by you, & what is best for your baby. We are excited to potentially be able to build a relationship with you over time so that your child may know you, celebrate you, & love you. We strongly believe adoption is a gift, & sincerely hope that it is a gift for all of us, particularly for baby to grow up knowing you in some way, large or small, & that his or her story is one of love and grace. We know relationships build & stretch, as ours has over the last 14 years. We anticipate our relationship with you, should you wish, will grow & evolve too!

**MORE THAN ANYTHING, WE WANT YOUR CHILD TO KNOW WHERE HE OR SHE CAME FROM, & THE LOVE YOU HAVE FOR HIM OR HER.**

We live in a great time where cultivating relationships, no matter geography, has never been more do-able! We imagine this may look like emails, letters, snail mail, pictures, videos, calls, texts, social media (Heather is an avid Instagrammer!), FaceTime, and/or in-person visits (we love to travel & explore new areas!). So many options to nurture relationships!

*our heart for adoption.*



# team t: our story

Our close friends started calling us by "Team T" (our last name), and it kind of stuck!

In the 14 years we have been together, we definitely have been through our rough times. We have learned about celebrating not just the very best parts, but all of the other parts — the difficult, the fun, the struggles, the happiness, & sadness — all of them together make up a life we feel pretty darn #blessed to have.



We began at a small college in Nebraska: Heather was in nursing school & TJ was on the way to medical school (TJ was ready to go on to school elsewhere, but he knew Heather was special as soon as he met her, so TJ decided he better stick around!). We dated for 3 years before getting married just outside Heather's hometown — TJ proposed in his parents' kitchen after his mom thwarted plans to propose while snowboarding! ☺ We lived & breathed school/training for many long years, but we finally got to surprise our families in 2017 with the news that TJ took a job out of training in Western Washington! Before moving, we picked up an adorable little yellow lab & drove West!

We now live about an hour from Heather's parents & family, where we recently bought our first house! Over our years together, we have made some amazing friends we feel lucky to have in our corner, & have cultivated a wide range of hobbies together. We are pumped to introduce a child to our adventures! Together, we enjoy the outdoors, particularly now that we are back in the NW — hiking & travel, time with friends & family, working in the yard, game nights, spoiling our pup, & we throw a killer make-your-own pizza party! We should also mention our dog is excited to have someone else to play with. He loves cleaning up after kids who come over & running around with them. We can imagine him parked under the high chair already!

We cherish our individual passions too. Heather is an accomplished baker (baking > cooking!). She enjoys barre & kickboxing (trying to turn herself into a runner, & man is it slow going!), reading, pretty much anything on the water, snowboarding, & country music (though the tastes are pretty eclectic). Heather LOVES to celebrate holidays. It has been fun for TJ to work on growing his own interests (after years of putting hobbies on hold during training). TJ also loves to snowboard, bike, kayak, & hike. He has been growing his tool collection and takes pride in things he can do with his hands! We hope to share these experiences with our child — We hope it will help him or her grow up to be resourceful & appreciate all the beauty the world has to offer — we cannot wait to show our future babe what this life is all about!





## *tj on heather*

I cannot imagine my life without her. She is such an amazing woman. Heather has been by my side through some challenging times and never once faltered. She is fiercely passionate & this shines through in her professional life, & most importantly, in our marriage & family. She has the strongest maternal instincts —

### **SHE WAS MADE TO BE A MOM.**

I'm stoked to see her become a mom. Having & raising a child is a gift — though I may not have that innate sense Heather has, I am ecstatic about being a dad & growing into that role with Heather. I know that together we will make one heck of a parenting team!



## *heather on tj*

TJ is incredibly thoughtful, hardworking, & intentional in his approach to his work & life.

Though I know I am meant to be a mom, TJ did not grow up around kids & I don't think he would say he had an innate sense he would be a father someday. He was thrust into my large family & it has been incredible to watch him grow from stand-offish around little ones, to teaching our friends' babies how to high-five & racing around with two kids on piggyback. He is SO good with kiddos — I cannot wait to see him as a dad! He is going to be so amazing! TJ is ever the Eagle Scout. I always tease him about the apocalypse he is preparing for, but you know what?

### **THIS GUY IS ALWAYS PREPARED!**

I'm pretty sure he has been researching the best, most safest possible car seat. ☺





## our wedding

a beautiful june day in 2009

We got married on a sunny day just outside of Heather's hometown of Bainbridge Island overlooking the Puget Sound. The day of our rehearsal was cloudy & chilly, but the big day was full of sun & blue skies! **We had the best time celebrating with our very dear friends & family.** Heather's mom made our cake (so much better than anything else!), & to this day, the salmon was the best we have ever had. Heather's cousin did her hair. TJ's family friend, an Episcopal priest, married us in the most dynamic ceremony we have ever witnessed (we may be biased! ☺). We danced to Van Morrison's *Into the Mystic*. Heather met our photographer on a Young Life trip, who now makes music videos for Macklemore and Ed Sheeran! Crazy! We ended our night just the two of us in a local dive joint eating chocolate cake in our finery!



# we hope...

...**HOLIDAYS & TRADITIONS** are always celebrated & are a big deal! Heather LOVES to celebrate Christmas the most & goes all out — a lot of baking, decorations all over, & watching all the Christmas movies! TJ is a lover of summer holidays & working on becoming a Trager master (he loves to BBQ!). We cannot wait to see the holidays through the eyes of a child & make each one special, not to mention create new traditions (especially BIRTH-DAYS!) as our family grows!

... **CHILDCARE** is part-time! Our hope is for a blend of nanny-share, stay-at-home, & support of our family/friends. (Heather's dad recently retired!) Heather has a unique schedule that allows her to be home much of the time & will be taking full maternity leave — she grew up with a stay-at-home mom & is thrilled to be able to provide some semblance of the same. TJ is lucky to be in a practice where family & children are highly valued. His group works hard to make sure each has time for family. TJ plans on taking some paternity leave as well! He grew up with a grandmotherly German nanny, & hope we will be fortunate to find someone who is like an extension of our family!

... **FAITH & LOVE** are central! TJ was raised in the Episcopal Church, & Heather had a variety of spiritual exposures growing up - Lutheran, Episcopal, Young Life, Presbyterian, & non-denominational in college. Our views have grown & evolved over the years, we have more questions than answers, but we have both learned how important it is to have a strong sense of faith. It is hard in our professions not to! We met at a Jesuit university (GREAT school! Go Jays!), where they taught us that care of the whole person is of utmost importance — we know this will translate into the care of our future child! We will absolutely encourage and support exploration of faith in our children as they grow.

... **EDUCATION & LEARNING** are always exciting. We both grew up loving school (loving it so much that we went for a collective 43 years plus 7 years of training time, lol). We hope to instill a love of reading early on, as well as a love for learning both in & out of the school environment. We believe in both academic smarts & common sense smarts to thrive. There are so many ways to learn & cultivate knowledge — it is a joy to be a part of shaping a little one's eager & inquisitive mind! We are also excited about learning & continuing our education as parents — that is the beauty of being life-long learners & growing as parents from infancy!

... **HOBBIES** are diverse! We have a wide range of interests & pursuits. We are giddy to introduce our future child to our loves. Whether it be sports, music (Lord help us - we love music but neither of us can sing or play!), art, dance, or anything else under the sun, we can't wait to introduce & support new things as he/she grows up! TJ is looking forward to playing catch (he played soccer & football as a kid), & Heather loves doing crafts/creating (she danced & cheered)!

... **GRACE & HUMOR** are at the forefront always. You cannot get through life well without either ♥





# Heather's family

Heather has one younger brother who is recently married, & a very large extended family which makes for some pretty crazy (amazing) holidays...Heather is very close with her family, the majority of whom live in the PNW. Her family cannot wait to welcome baby! This will be her parents' FIRST grandbaby (they are over the moon!!)



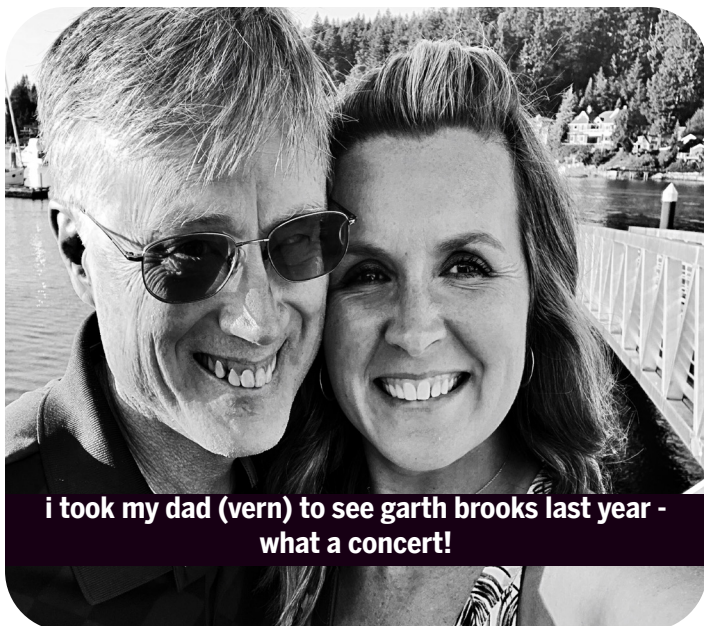
my mom (tina) & i at the mariners game!



my parents & brother (jordan) came to visit a lot when we couldn't make it anywhere for the holidays!



lunch date in gig harbor with my mom & dad!



i took my dad (vern) to see garth brooks last year - what a concert!



snorkeling in maui with my new SIL (sarah) & jordan (where they got married!!)





showing my parents (tom & kim) around  
puget sound this past summer!

## *tj's family*

TJ has one younger sister who just got married, & a small but awesome extended family... TJ is the oldest among the kids, & this will be the FIRST grandbaby & niece/nephew on his side of the family! Everyone is elated to welcome this baby!



i learned how to do our notorious pizza parties  
from my dad!



my sister (lindsay) & parents in colorado  
for my cousin's wedding



lindsay & her wife (steph) -  
they just got married in connecticut!



my mom's side includes her twin viki & uncle david,  
cousin whitney & her husband tom





Cooper is our sweet yellow (fox red) lab who joined us in 2017 right before we moved out to the PNW! He LOVES the water, going on runs, hiking with us, catching his frisbee & chuck-it, & begging for food with those expressive eyebrows! He is spoiled beyond measure & cannot wait to have a little sister or brother to welcome home ☺



MEET COOPER!





*welcome to our home!*



After many years of renting, we finally bought our first home on Fox Island in Washington. It is a small island connected by a bridge to beautiful Gig Harbor. It is perfect for us with room to grow — we have the cosiest baby room right next to ours!

We are close to the beach, mountains, & amazing schools. Our neighborhood is quiet & safe with a lot of room for riding bikes. We live on an acre with a huge backyard (you can see a tiny sliver of it above!) - perfect for BBQs & yard games. Cooper is holding down the fort until a kiddo can grow up here!

**This house is ready for baby!**





# notes on heather

**Hometown:** Bainbridge Island, Washington

**Nickname:** Ya-ya. My brother couldn't say my name — my parents & brother still call me that!

**Favorite food(s):** I can't pick one — watermelon, pasta, s'mores (major sweet tooth over here!), Chick-fil-A, pizza ...

**Favorite movie(s):** *Dirty Dancing*, *Top Gun*, *The Holiday*, *Love Actually*, *It's Complicated*...depends on the mood (I am a sucker for cheesy disaster movies too)

**Favorite ice cream:** Ben & Jerry's Vanilla Caramel Fudge

**Favorite hobbies:** Barre or Orange Theory, stand-up-paddleboarding, baking, reading, gardening, being outside

**Favorite TV show:** *FRIENDS* (still haven't found one I like better!)

**Favorite book:** *Anne of Green Gables* series, *The Poisonwood Bible*, *The Hunger Games* trilogy

**Favorite amusement park ride:** spinning ones & rollercoasters

**Favorite holiday:** Christmas! My mom made all the holidays so special & festive for us growing up & I cannot wait to do the same. I am big into celebrating & decorating! I have Thanksgiving down to a T for the meal & I love hosting... 4th of July is nostalgic for me for the old time parade in my hometown too.

**Happy place:** Either sitting by a bonfire on a summer night, the beach (any beach), or on a river float

**Item I can't live without:** Chapstick®

**Biggest accomplishment:** Besides my doctorate, getting TJ to like country music (only took 12 years!)

**App used the most:** Instagram

**Thoughts on faith:** There is totally something bigger than all of us out there. I briefly went to a Lutheran Sunday school as a kid before I was traumatized by the Christmas Nativity (I had to be a sheep & wanted to be an angel! #fiveyearoldproblems). My parents had mixed experiences with religion as children, so they decided to let my brother & me decide for ourselves. I connected with YoungLife in high school, was a student leader in the university ministry at UW in college (was baptized Presbyterian there). Now I consider myself to be non-denominational & question a lot of things — I don't think you necessarily need church to connect with God. I know we will support our child's exploration of faith, & hope to expose him or her to culturally & spiritually diverse ideas. I hope that faith will be important to our child, as it still is to us!

CLING TO JOY: AUDACIOUS & UNBRIDLED JOY,  
THAT LOOKS FOR LIGHT IN EVERYTHING,  
EVEN IN YOUR WAITING.

MORGAN H. NICHOLS







# SLOW IS SMOOTH & SMOOTH IS FAST

NAVY SEAL SAYING  
(THIS IS UP IN MY OFFICE TO REMIND ME SLOWING DOWN IS OK!)

**Hometown:** Colorado Springs, Colorado

**Nickname:** TJ. I am Thomas II (Jr). My middle name is Paul & my mom was going to nickname me TP. Thankfully my aunt saved me from this embarrassing fate & starting calling me TJ.

**Favorite food:** Pizza

**Favorite movie(s):** *Fast & Furious* series, *Out Cold*, anything Jack Ryan, *American Sniper*

**Favorite ice cream:** Chocolate peanut butter

**Favorite hobbies:** Building things, anything working with my hands, hiking/pretty much anything outside, cook (I love my soux vide I just got for Christmas!)

**Favorite TV show:** Really liking *Mysteries of the Abandoned* series right now; have to admit my guilty pleasure when Heather isn't around is *Cops*

**Favorite book:** *Mountains Beyond Mountains* — Dr. Paul Farmer inspired my early years heading into medicine, not to mention near & dear to my interests in medical missions to Haiti (have been twice!)

**Favorite amusement park ride:** Wooden rollercoasters. Heather & I are opposites here. I just can't hang on the spinning rides!

**Favorite holiday:** 4th of July - such a great summer holiday! Christmas is pretty awesome too since Heather goes all out (those Christmas cookies!)

**Happy place:** Home or in the mountains

**Item I can't live without:** Tablet or my pocket knife

**Biggest accomplishment:** Marrying Heather... she is the sweetest thing I have ever met in my life

**App used the most:** Flipboard. It brings me the news. It adapts the news to what I am interested in, so I don't have to hunt for stories & wade through stuff

**Thoughts on faith:** I believe in a higher power. I was raised in the Episcopal church (my parents are still members). In college, our Jesuit-based education taught us to question & always seek knowledge. For this reason, I now consider myself to be more of a spiritual person, not religious, so I will definitely encourage our child to seek out & develop his or her own ideas on faith & religion.

notes on tj

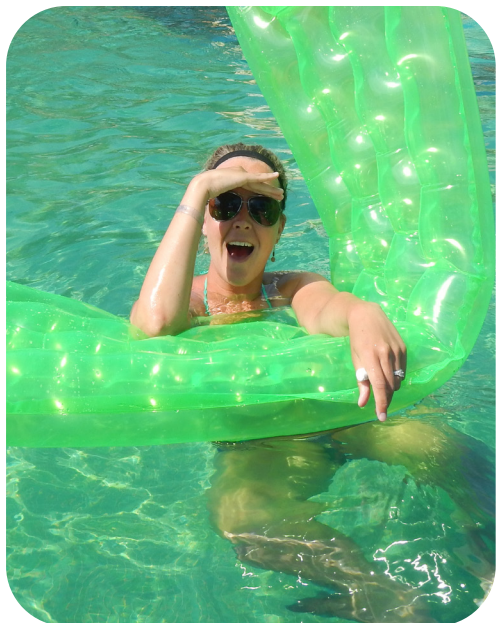




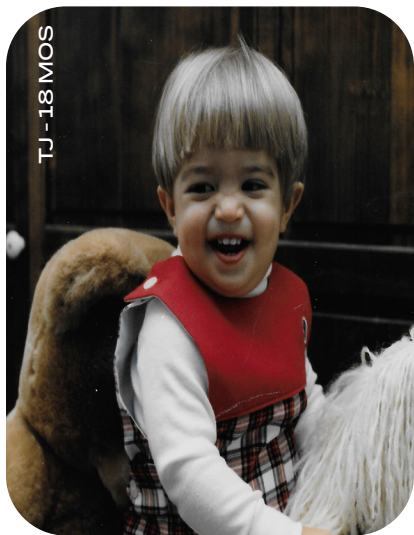
WE LOVE WHAT WE DO...







...BUT  
THERE IS SO  
MUCH ELSE  
TO LOVE  
ABOUT OUR  
LIFE!







*piggyback rides  
are always a  
good idea!*







We both enjoy going trap shooting, & Heather in particular experienced several firsts during their time in the Midwest — Wisconsin friends taught her how to shoot a compound bow, ice fish, & she even caught her first ever fish (it was HUGE☺) right before we moved out to the PNW.

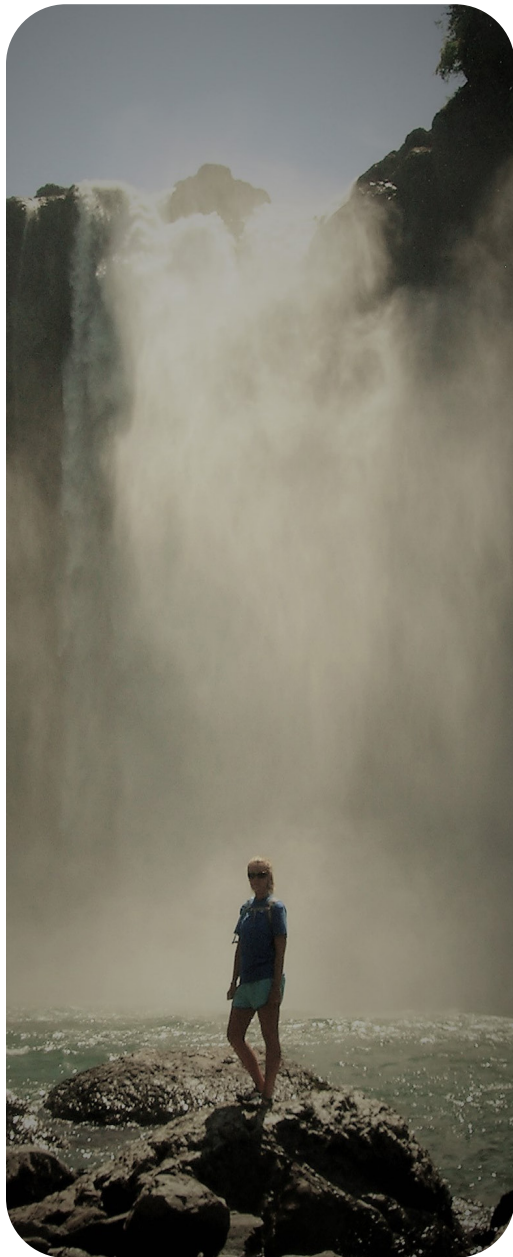
**We look forward to many more firsts!**



I (Heather) grew up camping & those are some of my favorite childhood memories. We took Cooper camping to a lake in Washington when we first moved back & lived to tell about it! ☺ We tried out our new hammock, & Cooper dumped me in a kayak in glacial water. Many s'mores were roasted & Uno games played.

**We are excited to go camping with kids & create memories in the outdoors!**





MAKING  
THE MOST  
OF THOSE  
SWEET  
SUMMER  
MONTHS!







WHISTLER, BC IS DEFINITELY  
ONE OF OUR HAPPY PLACES





The cool thing about our travels & life together is that we have developed strong friendships across the country — childhood friends who now live just down the road from us, work friends, school friends, friends with babies & kiddos, friends who are like second parents, roommate friends...

**WE HAVE SO MANY PEOPLE SURROUNDING US WITH LOVE & SUPPORT NO MATTER WHERE WE ARE ♡**







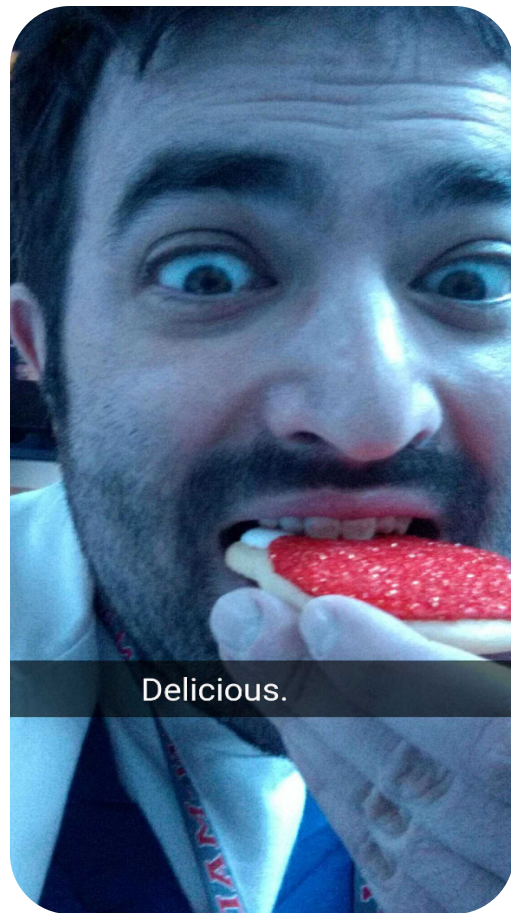
*Good friends ↪  
make the world  
go 'round ↪*







HEATHER  
BAKES & TJ  
CONSIDERS HIM-  
SELF TO BE THE  
WORLD'S BEST  
TASTE-TESTER!



Delicious.

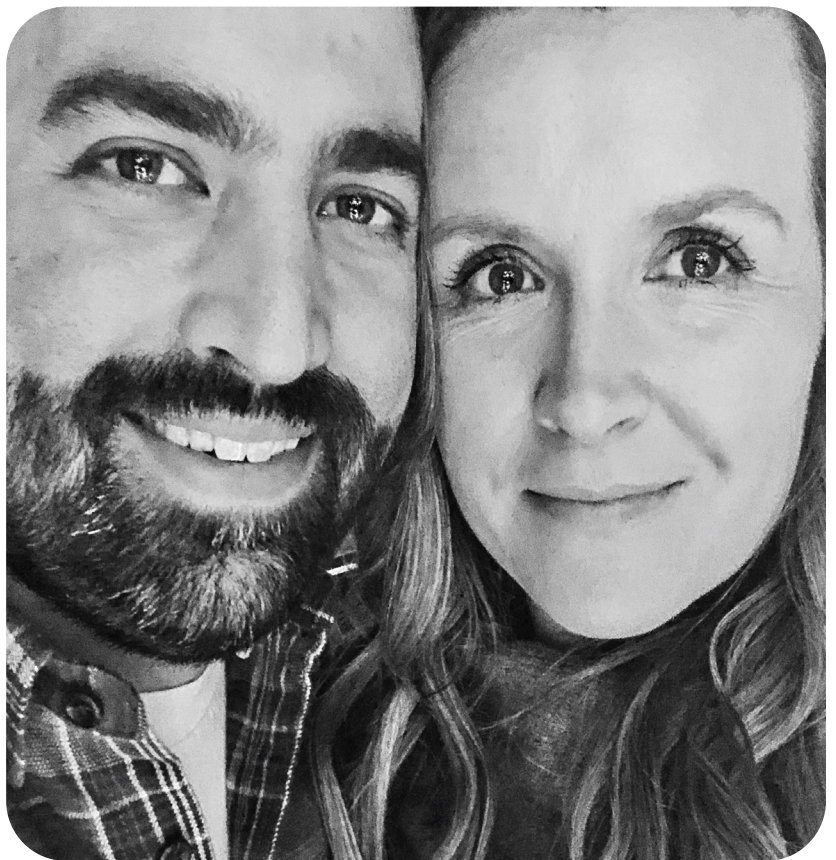


*surprise!*





FROM BABY-FACED 20'S TO 30-SOMETHINGS — DATE NIGHTS ARE PART OF THE GLUE!







*We love being aunts &  
uncles to all the babies  
& kiddos in our life!*







WE WORK REALLY HARD ON OUR MARRIAGE.  
IT IS IMPORTANT TO US THAT OUR FUTURE CHILD SEES OUR  
STRONG FOUNDATION (AND SILLINESS)









A golden retriever is running through a field of tall, dry grass. The dog is in the lower-left corner, facing right, with its mouth open and tongue out. The background is a dense forest of evergreen trees under a bright, slightly hazy sky. The overall tone is warm and nostalgic.

IT CHANGES HOW YOU LIVE  
WHEN YOU DECIDE TO LOVE EACH OTHER  
WITHOUT KNOWING HOW IT ENDS.

BRIAN ANDREAS



# THANK YOU

thank you so much for getting to know us through our book. know that we are rooting for you and pray for peace in the decisions you are making. we hope we get the chance to meet you face to face some day, though in case that does not happen, know that we are so grateful and humbled for this opportunity...and think **you are pretty darn amazing.**

love, tj, heather, & cooper



*DO THE THING YOUR HEART IS TELLING YOU TO DO, FRIENDS.  
EVEN WHEN IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE...  
DO IT, AND LET IT BREAK YOU WIDE OPEN AND THEN FILL YOU RIGHT BACK UP.*  
EMILY FLEMING