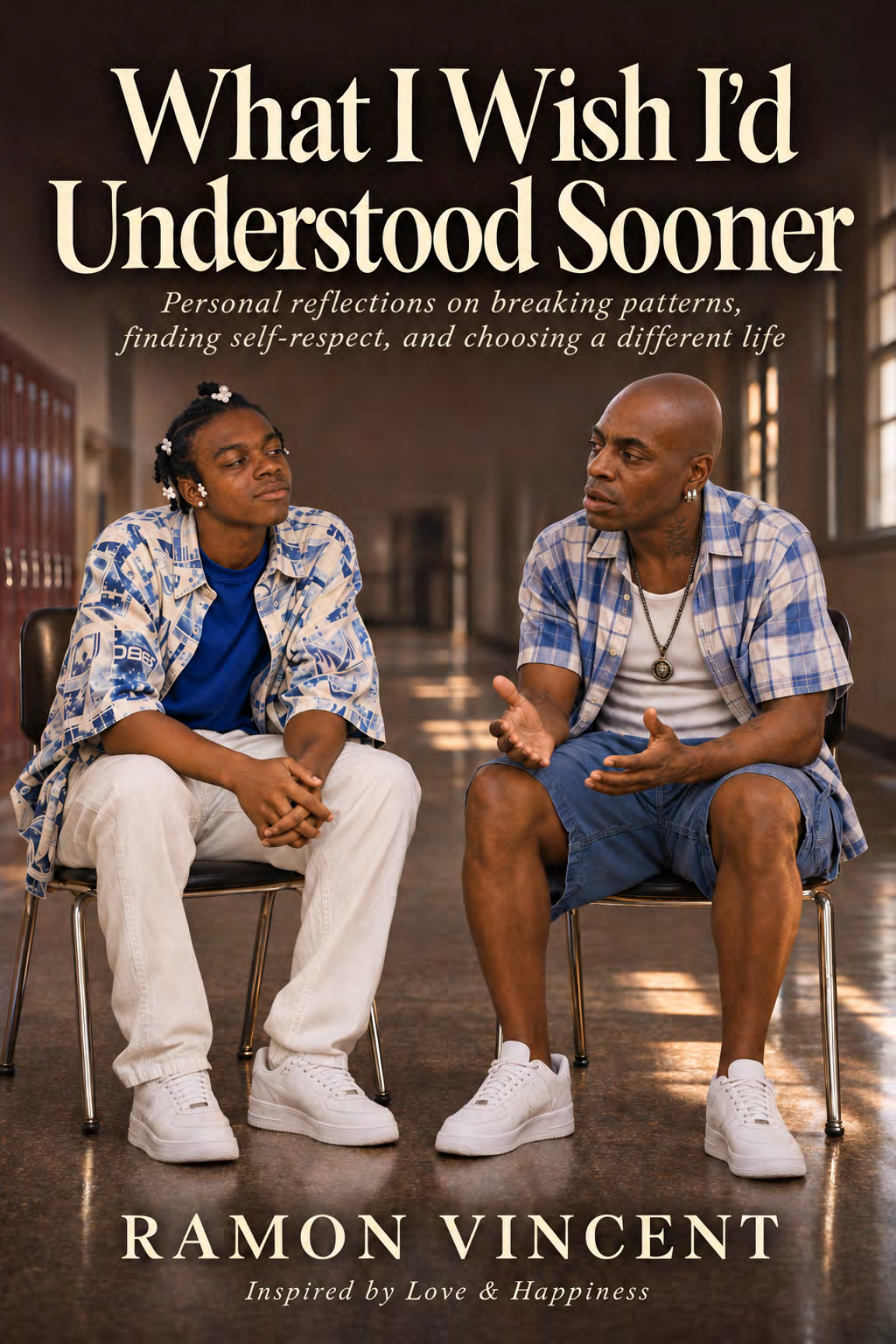
What I Wish I'd Understood Sooner

Personal reflections on breaking patterns, finding self-respect, and choosing a different life



RAMON VINCENT

Inspired by Love & Happiness

What I Wish I'd Understood Sooner

Personal reflections on breaking patterns, finding self-respect, and choosing a different life

Ramon Vincent

Inspired by Love & Happiness

A note to the reader

These pages share personal experiences and reflections. I am not writing as a doctor, counselor, or therapist. This book does not provide mental health treatment or diagnose anyone. The questions are optional invitations to reflect; you can skip any that do not feel right for you.

Family experiences are described from my perspective and recollection.

© 2026 Ramon Vincent. All rights reserved.

Cover: AI-created illustration of a conversation between my younger and older selves. Interior photographs supplied by the author.

Before you begin

I’m sharing a little of my story because something I learned might help you recognize something in yours. These are selected experiences and reflections, not my full life story.

If I could sit down with the younger version of me, there are some things I wish I could help him understand.

I would ask him about the life he wants. I would listen to his plans. Then I would ask what he knows about himself, about relationships, and about the things he has learned to accept without questioning them.

When I left school, I had ambition. I worked at Del Taco and had a warehouse job, too. I was staying with my parents and trying to stack my money. Later, I moved to Colorado. I was ready to work, have some fun, and build a life.

I expected that I would get married and have a family. I had grown up with both my parents in the house. I thought I had a picture of how that was supposed to work.

Years later, after relationships ended and I spent so much time fighting to be involved with my children, I found myself asking how I had gotten so far from the life I imagined. I kept having to start over. Sometimes that meant leaving with a bag of clothes and trying to put my life back together.

Eventually I had to ask questions about my own choices. What was I looking for? What was I accepting? What did I believe about myself? What could I change?

Those questions are part of the story behind my music, including Love & Happiness. They are also the reason for these pages.

I still have family relationships that are unresolved. There is grief in that. There is also a life I value, a marriage I am committed to, work I care about, and music I have found my way back to.

You can take these pages at your own pace. Use the questions that fit your life. You can keep your answers private. A conversation with someone you trust or a qualified counselor can be a next step if that is what you want. You get to decide whether, when, and how to have difficult conversations with family.

“I still mattered.”

1. What I thought was normal

I grew up in a Christian home. My parents moved us from Los Angeles to Fontana, looking for a better place to raise us. We went to church, and we were also outside kids who learned about the streets through the neighborhood, school, and family.

People would tell me I had it good because both of my parents were there. I understood why they said it. A lot of people I knew were growing up with one parent or a grandmother.

But there were things happening inside our home that I did not understand the same way then as I do now.

I remember very little affection between my parents. I remember arguments and criticism. I also witnessed my mother verbally and physically mistreat my father. Living around it, I became accustomed to it. I did not have the language or perspective I would develop later.

My father had a part in the conflict that affected us, too. He complained about my mother to us as his children, and I remember him taking those complaints to his brothers and other people in his life. I came to feel he was seeking sympathy while continuing the same pattern at home. I cannot know everything he felt about the relationship. What I experienced was being repeatedly drawn into it.

From my mother, I heard things like, “Ramon, you’re just like your dad.” From my father, I heard, “You know your mom’s crazy. She ain’t right in the head.” Those were the kinds of comments we were asked to carry. As a child, and later as an

adult, I felt used by both parents in their disagreements with each other.

They stayed together, but I felt pressure to take sides. Their complaints became part of our relationships with each of them. I wanted them to address what was happening between them and learn to give and receive affection, instead of continuing to involve us.

I heard negative things about my dad and his side of the family throughout my childhood. We grew up close to my mother's family. We did not get the same opportunity to build relationships with my father's relatives until we became adults.

Looking back, I had heard a lot about people before I had the chance to know them for myself.

I loved my grandmother. I remember going places with her, walking and taking the bus around Los Angeles. She was honest about how she wanted to live, including saying she did not want a husband. As I grew older, I could respect her honesty and recognize that I wanted a different kind of relationship for myself.

That distinction took time. Loving the people who raised me did not answer every question about the kind of life I wanted to build.

One of my biggest realizations concerned what I admired in a woman. I once thought seeing a woman curse somebody out or get into a physical fight meant she was a "real one." A ride-or-die woman. I interpreted that behavior as a sign that she would stand by me.

Later, I began looking for strength expressed through confidence, self-respect, and how someone treated people

during disagreement. I had to reconsider what I was calling loyalty.

Questions I invite you to consider

- What behavior did I see regularly growing up that I assumed every family accepted?
- What did I learn about how people express love, anger, or loyalty?
- Whose opinions about a relative did I hear before I had my own relationship with that person?
- Was I asked to take sides in an adult relationship, and how did that affect me?

A little space to reflect

Choose one memory. Write what happened as specifically as you can. On the next line, write what you understood it to mean at the time. Then write how you understand it today. You can leave room for uncertainty.

Continue the story

Thank you for reading this free preview.

The complete 30-page PDF includes six chapters,
personal photographs, reflection questions,
and links to sources and the music behind it.

What I Wish I'd Understood Sooner
by Ramon Vincent

Complete digital book: $7.99 USD

GetFascinatedNow.com

Visit the website for availability and purchase details.

Personal reflections, shared from lived experience.