

Dear John,



Dear John,

I had been friends with my lover for a year and a half before we ventured into a relationship. At first the transition was hard but we got used to it and fell in love. We still had our own lives, and at one point I traveled the world with my friends while he concentrated on his sports profession back home. It was hard being away from each other but emails and phone calls made things easier. He even flew to Italy to see me.

Things changed during this last year. He started having mild mental issues and I was supporting him emotionally when he wanted it, tip-toeing around him when he didn't. We had arguments and we cried about his mental state but I didn't think it would cause our relationship to end.

We had made plans for me to travel less and be together more, and I never felt that he was falling out of love with me. Even now I still believe he is in love with me.

He broke up with me a week ago, saying he needed to get over his mental issues; but he told other people he broke up because he stopped loving me. I'm not sure who is hearing the truth. Maybe he is protecting his pride by electing not to tell people about his mental issues? After such a long time in love, it's hard to believe he fell out so quickly.

I haven't been eating or sleeping and my stomach turns with anxiety. We haven't spoken because I am still in shock. While he was breaking up he raised his voice because I just sat there and shook my head. He wanted me to respond, but there was nothing I could say.

Every moment of every day I want to call him but I am too scared about what I am going to say. He wants to be friends but obviously we will never be the best friends we once were. It hasn't been easy and I don't feel it will get better, but people tell me it will. I feel like my security blanket has been taken away and there is nothing I can do about it. I'm literally just waiting for time to pass.

I'm trying to do all the right things to distract myself but something always reminds me of him and time stands still again. People speak like he has died and to be honest it feels like I am trying to recover from a death. I can only hope that someday love will find me again and I'll feel as special as he had made me feel.

I know I have to keep going, but it is so hard. What else can I do but wait it out, right?

Signed,

Waitin' it Out

Dear Waitin' it Out

When a lover tells us it's over, we sometimes try convincing ourselves (and even our lover) that he didn't mean it. But if he broke up, chances are he meant it. And if he told his friends he's fallen out of love, you can bet he meant that, too.

In your case, while I'm sure your ex-boyfriend wants to get over his mental issues, it sounds like he's sane enough to know he isn't in love anymore. And while I agree that it takes time to fall out of love, you weren't privy to his thought process as he was falling out. It felt like it happened overnight, but most likely he'd been contemplating it for quite some time.

No doubt there's a lot to contend with when we get our heart broken. We feel rejected and our confidence dips. We need to dig deep to find the inner strength to move forward; otherwise, we get caught up in the "time stands still" phenomenon you mention. But time standing still won't help us get over what needs getting over. If you feel time standing still, most likely it's because you're wallowing in self-pity. We all deserve a few mornings in bed eating Hagen-das; but when the carton is empty, it's time to put the spoon down and get the wheels moving again.

What concerns me about your letter is the passive picture you paint of yourself. Do you really think there was nothing to talk about when he was breaking up? Do you think you're avoiding calling him now because you are scared of what you'd say? My guess is you didn't speak then or now because you are too timid to discuss the issues between you. For some of us, it's easier to let things happen than to be proactive, but being overly timid puts too much responsibility for the relationship on our partner.

About him being a security blanket, I can understand needing security. We all want emotional support, and most of us hope for a warm body to cuddle with. But we shouldn't expect a security blanket. You are a 21st century woman after all. Take control of your own security. Relying on your mate more than yourself will only weaken the relationship.

It is time for you to acknowledge that the relationship is gone. Remind yourself that it was the combination of the two of you that didn't work, not just you alone. Then dust yourself off, focus on being more confident, and get back into the game. It may be true that love finds us when we aren't looking, but we have to be out there to be found. So put the ice cream away and go find somebody to spoon with.

Thanks for playing,

John