

# Dear John,



Dear John,

*A long time ago I was in a relationship with a great girl. I was head over heels in love with her, and in my opinion, I was the model boyfriend. But at some point she thought otherwise, and broke us off. Since that time I've had many relationships, some short, some longer, but none where I felt the same intensity. Even when a girl is cute and fun and totally into me, I never let myself fully connect. Eventually I end up breaking up with all of them, and even get some twisted pleasure from doing so. I'm not sure why I do this, but I've come to realize it's a pattern. What do you think is the cause of this pattern, and how do I break it?*

*Signed,*

*All Alone*

Dear All Alone

The most painful heartbreaks come at the hands of genuinely loving people. Unlike being jilted by a girl we find out later is a heartless tramp, being jilted by a sweet girl takes far more out of us. It's easy to place blame on the tramp, but when a neat gal turns us down we're left feeling that our best wasn't good enough, and we take the break up all the more personally.

Because of our gender-unique wiring, guys and gals differ in how they react to broken hearts. Girls tend to lie in the grass licking their wounds awhile before venturing into the big bad jungle again, whereas guys like to play the field.

Contrary to the "player" moniker that some guys wear almost as a badge of honor, I believe the majority of men have very big hearts. From the tone of your letter, I suspect you're among the big-hearted majority. That being the case, the girl-hopping you're doing is surely a defense mechanism one that can be directly traced to that great girl who broke your heart in the past.

Defensive dating--when we date with our eyes on our own heart instead of our partner's--is typical of both sexes, but it may be even more typical of men than women. This is because we men have off-the-chart egos and ridiculous senses of pride...which kick in big time after a heart break. It may have happened in college, it may have happened in high school, it may have happened in second grade when little Sally Sue said "yuk!" when we tried kissing her on the playground; but whenever the heartbreak happened, a man's massive ego gets the best of him and he soon puts up a wall.

For every guy who's had his heart broken, I bet there'll be at least one girl in his future who'll end up with an equally broken heart because he's resorted to defensive dating. But far worse than defensive dating--which is at least understandable--is something we might call embittered bedding, which happens when we become so disillusioned or angry after a break up that all we want is sex from then on; and if our actions hurt a gal or two or twenty, well, the gender had it coming. Better them than us, right Natch? Stop me if any of this sounds familiar.

These two remedies of heartbreak--defensive dating and embittered bedding--can only create a vicious cycle that will lead to more heartbreak. The mentality of, "I got hurt, so now I'll hurt someone else" is nothing but immoral; and the rational of, "I got hurt once, so I won't give my all again" is a cut-your-nose-off-to-spite-your-face solution that prevents the ultimate goal from being realized, which, in your case, I assume is finding true love again.

Here's the scoop in a nutshell, Natch. If you aren't willing to have your heart broken, there's zero chance you'll feel true love again. After all, "The love you take is equal to the love you make," is more than a sweet rhyming ditty. It's a philosophy to live by.

I'm not suggesting you go into your next relationship blindly or without a healthy degree of trepidation. There's way too much at stake for that (and way too many defensive daters, too). But the smart lover, the one who wins biggest in the end, goes into relationships headfirst, with eyes wide open; and then, when he realizes his mate is worthy of the risk, he mans up and follows his head with an equally open heart.

So swallow your pride, and open your heart. It's the only way to break the pattern you've created.

Thanks for playing,

John