

# Dear John,



Dear John,

*I have recently been dumped after six years and am finding it hard to move on. I've tried everything, from therapy and reading self-help books, to surrounding myself with positive people and focusing on my anger. Nothing has worked. The most recent blow came when he told me he's now seeing someone else. I feel cheated on, even though we are broken up. I can't think of anything other than him. I have a tough time finding passion in my life because he is always on my mind. I know I must move on, but I am stuck.*

*Do you have any tips to get me over the hump? Any advice would be greatly appreciated.*

*Signed,*

*Badly Bruised*

Dear Badly Bruised

If you've read self-help books, no doubt you've come across the aphorism, "Pain is inevitable, but suffering is optional." This line may sound cliché, but if you choose to believe it, you can also choose to end your suffering.

To get beyond grief, we must first accept it, and then release it. Of the two, accepting is far easier than releasing. In fact, accepting grief can be so easy that we sometimes wallow in it and forget to release it altogether. This is what you have chosen to do.

But why wallow when wallowing brings pain? The reason is wallowing lets us hold onto the experience. If we release our grief, we say goodbye to the experience, and the thought of saying goodbye is more painful than holding on. But only by saying goodbye to the past can we say hello to the future.

Think of it similarly to what happens when you cut your toe. Your immediate reaction is to clamp your hand around the toe. This helps for a moment, but continuing to clamp also reminds you of your pain. By removing your hand, you have a better chance at releasing the knowledge of pain. Then a band aid can be placed on the toe and the healing process can begin.

I don't mean to get all Zen on you, so here is a practical technique that will help you along your way.

I am sure there have been moments during your break up when you have forgotten about your pain. You were distracted from it in one way or another, and the pain went away momentarily. Later, when the distraction ended, the pain came back. Therefore, learn to shift your attention more often, and keep reminding yourself to shift your attention until the shifting becomes the norm. Your pain will dissipate with each shift of attention, and the more you shift, the easier the shifting will become.

This distraction technique is not always simple, and it takes time. But if you practice it faithfully--while also remembering that you are in control of your own suffering--you will soon begin to be on the mend. And instead of limping through life wallowing in pain, you will walk down easy street with a spring in your step.

Thanks for playing,

John