**Minding Mendocino**

By Jessica Maness, LCSW, Long Valley Health Center

**Dear Jessi,**

I am in the beginning of a break-up of a long term relationship. My partner of 18 years has fallen in love with another. I love this person very much so this is a serious heartbreak for me. I am so sad.

My question is: what is the best way to take the high road in this breaking up process? What is okay emotionally and what is not okay? Is anger okay? Is sadness okay? Do I try to work it out even though it appears that those first stages of “I am in Love” are evident?

Is there a process like: first there is sadness, then anger, etc? What is appropriate in terms of emotional hurt and expression of it? What is the best way?

Thank you Jessi,

--Very Sad

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Dear Very Sad,

There are many people who seem to be breaking up right now, and I am very glad you wrote in. Your loss is significant and worthy of grieving. We know that when we grieve, all the emotions we feel are valid from doubt to guilt; anger to sadness; pain to depression; acceptance and everywhere in between. What we forget is that someone does not have to pass away for us to go into a grieving process. A loss is a loss. Therefore, every emotion that arises is acceptable and it is important for our healing that there is a way to express those emotions. To bury them can be harmful. To ignore them can be harmful, and make the process take longer. To express them inappropriately can be harmful to us and to the other person. To isolate (by pushing others out or by staying “too busy” to acknowledge our pain) can be one of the most harmful things we could do.

Writing “no send” letters can be a helpful way to express how we are feeling without reaping the regret afterwards, or the repercussions. Write letters stating exactly how you are feeling and thinking right now, and then dispose of them in any way that makes you feel complete. Talking with someone can be wonderfully helpful, if there is a person who will not create more issues afterwards. Laytonville has several options of professionals and healers to choose from, one of which may be perfect for you to talk with honestly about your feelings. “Taking the high road” as you put it, may involve expressing your emotions completely in another manner so that when you are having conversations with your changing relationship partner, it remains positive and productive. It is perfectly alright and natural to ask for a break if the emotions begin to rise, so long as there is agreement to continue in a while. During this break, perhaps do some writing or take a walk and focus on healing.

“Working it out” may mean that the communications focus on fostering positive connections and not necessarily that the relationship will go back to the way it was. Remember your hobbies and stay involved. Try to practice daily self-care: take a hot bath, make a playlist for your emotional expressions, get a massage, take a walk, call an old friend, and get some good sleep. Know that you are supported by a various and vast community, which is waiting for you to reach out.

Remember Laytonville, if there is a topic you would like to read about write in questions to: Long Valley Health Center, PO Box 870, Laytonville, CA 95454 ATTN: Jessi Maness.