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**Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by Joey on Thu 03 Jul 2008 04:51 PM PDT | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi Al,

All this sounds like it makes good sense! I've been reading through the comments, and it seems like most of the people who comment are still in the throes of the hard times, which also makes sense. I'm just wondering how often these strategies do work. Must be a pretty good method, considering how many couples you've worked with, but reading the comments has me a little discouraged. And I'm sure it all depends on where couples are and how hard they work. Just curious, because in all the comments I don't see anyone who's written back to say "Hey, we're really happy now!" (You've possibly figured out by now that I am one of the many visiting your page in the throes of misery.) :)

Thank you!

Joey

[Reply](#)

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**Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by [Al Turtle](#) on Fri 04 Jul 2008 12:21 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Joey,

Sorry to hear that you are in hard times. Still I tend to look back on my life and come aware that "hard times" were just "painful learning" times. All the great learnings of mine seem to arise from "throes of misery" - not that that may help you much.

I gather you are looking for evidence that my suggestions work. Seems a good question. And I gather you are wondering about whether people write back about their success. Also a good question.

I rarely get people to write back when all is great. That seems to take some time and a lot of work and I guess people just don't take the time to let me know where my words helped.

I do get people to write about "what next." Their letters sound a bit like this. "Your ideas really work. And now that my partner has stopped leaving and is 'sniffing' around me, what do I do next?" (I love that image of a dog sniffing around someone's leg. Seems to fit.)

I have not written a specific article to address that question, though I have talked with by phone and emailed with many on the subject. Actually the answer is the same for the situation where "you woke up to trouble going on" before the leaving began.

My article of four steps does nothing. I've just found that the only things that work in that situation are those four steps. Remember, the person who is free to leave has all the power. Any "power" tactic won't work. So really, Joey, what I am saying is that you have very little choice, and here are four things that work.

Perhaps your note will inspire others to write. And thanks for the questions.

Al

[Reply](#)

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**Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by [EyesOnThePrize](#) on Fri 04 Jul 2008 12:42 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

I'm planning to update my tail in the near future. I saw my ex for the first time last week since she moved away almost 3 months ago. I'll say that the principles I've learned in this article have challenged me, and at the same time I think I've made a lot of progress, and my ex does appear to have stopped moving away and I am seeing signs that may be indicating she wants to return. Most of all, though, following these principles have allowed me to work on me, and I'm mentally in a much better space now.

[Reply](#)

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**Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

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by CH on Sun 06 Jul 2008 10:21 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

I have a question related to your article and this is really directed to AI, but I wouldn't mind any other inputs as well: I have "convinced" my girlfriend to stay with me several time, only to get back to the old patterns and have the "I am leaving you" hanging by my neck. She left again, I did my part to push her. Now I want to do things right and wait so she is the one who wants to be with me. I love her and she said she loves me too. I have kept the communication to a minimum, and I am actively working on myself. It must be working because I find myself more content with myself. What I want to know is, when is the right time to make that first attempt to talk?

[Reply](#)

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### Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by [AI Turtle](#) on Mon 07 Jul 2008 08:20 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

A couple of thoughts come to mind.

How much is "talking" or "over-talking" part of why she is "leaving?" If your talking or chatting style [drives her away](#) (mine did), then you are probably going to have to come up with a whole new way of talking - called "mostly listening:" perhaps mirroring, pulling, definitely [PreValidating and Validating](#) where you can, basically [empathic](#) interviewing.

Next thought is that you are going to have to give up the idea that there is a solid "right" anything. In this case "right" is probably what works - after you have done it. One way out of this dilemma is to ask her what is right for her. This is all about giving her sovereignty, respect, and autonomy.

My suggestion is that you give it several weeks. Move into action if she reaches out to you. Tell her you are working on better communication skills. That should take ONE sentence. Repeat it if necessary. Invite her to talk, and practice listening skills. Answer her questions in one sentence if you can. Keep it short. Be ready to cut the talk off gently at the first sign that she wants to get away.

If she doesn't reach out to you in two weeks, try a one line note (email, card, etc.). "Missing you." or something like that. If no response, wait another two weeks and try again. If no response, try a one line note in a month. If no response, use the [process in Getting An Answer](#).

Just some thinking.

[Reply](#)

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### Re: Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by CH on Mon 07 Jul 2008 11:05 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Thank you for your answer. I really appreciate it. There's a lot more work i need to do on my own and I would definitely wish I could do it with her. I am afraid of being rejected to be honest. My impulse is to seek her out and "explain" why want to be with her. in other words, to cling. To convince her. On one hand I am sure 100% that I love her and on the other hand my brain tell me that if she is unhappy with me then I need to love her and let her go. I am learning a lot right now, I intent to keep working on myself. I read the process in getting an answer and I think it is good sound advise, but at the same I find it very scary. My many thanks for the response.

[Reply](#)

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### Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by SweetTheSting on Wed 09 Jul 2008 11:53 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

AI,

I think I'm confused--I know the goal is to become a source of safety for your partner, even as they are leaving, or have already left. This makes great sense--I've read the map, reliable membership, biological dream, and so on. (All wonderful and insightful, by the way.) But what do you do if your now-former partner already has another source of safety? Should you still try to become a source of safety to your ex if they are already with someone else? Wouldnt this be counterproductive?

[Reply](#)

**Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by [Al Turtle](#) on Wed 09 Jul 2008 01:52 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Good question, (by the way, I love the names people have for themselves. SweetTheSting is cool.)

I like your last word, "counterproductive." It reminds me of the question, "Just what is it that we are all trying to produce?" You probably know that my answer to this question is [turning the Biological Dream into a living reality](#).

And so, looking at your question, what have we got. A partner who left because we/I/you didn't know how to effectively lead in the direction of Vintage Love. A distant partner who may think they have the Biological Dream with a new partner.

How valuable is it for you to learn the skills of making a partner feel safe? How valuable is it for you to learn how to be a source of safety? Those skills are transferable to any partner, even friends and associates. I think those skills are vital no matter what your situation.

Now, what about this (ex-)partner of yours? As long as they are with another person, there is not much you can do except improve yourself. Remember that their journey with another person is long and difficult. Try the Map of Relationship on what they are doing right now. Could be they are comparing a Romantic-Love-partner (new person) with a Power-Struggle-partner (you). Not much comparison. Stick with Romantic Lover ---- until it ends! And it always does.

Then how about the comparison of a Power-Struggle-partner (their new partner) who isn't working on themselves compared with a Power-Struggle\_ partner (you) who is visibly improving themselves, who is leading toward Vintage Love. Looks better for you.

I try to avoid the arena of "when to hold 'em, when to fold 'em." That decision of moving on is up to you. But I would suggest that no matter what things look like, learning new skills is never counterproductive.

Good luck.

Al

[Reply](#)

**Re: Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by SweetTheSting on Thu 10 Jul 2008 04:35 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Thanks, Al. Makes a lot of sense now. Oh, and I wish I could take credit for the username, but I can't. It's the name of a song by Tori Amos. Thanks again for the response.

[Reply](#)

**Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by JS on Mon 14 Jul 2008 08:41 PM PDT | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi Al,

I love your site! The four steps seem like a great plan. I've been trying to do them for a couple of weeks or so, and I think I screwed up pretty bad already. It seemed like the plan was maybe working very slowly or at least not making things worse, and then I found out I got a new job. I was excited, and he's been my best friend for so long, I emailed him to tell him I got it, and to thank him because he was the one who encouraged me to try for it. And (whoops) I dropped an "I miss you" in there. The response was very nice and he sounded excited for me, but it sounded sort of formal and definitely ignored the "I miss you" and the reference to him supporting me. I know he's been having a rough time (not with our break-up, from the looks of it, but with his life in general) and I'm worried me telling him about my success made him feel worse, and like he was right to be apart from me. My "lizard" as you call it, is panicking that I undid all my progress. I'm assuming I shouldn't write back, but another part of me wants to tell him how I know I crossed a line, and how hard I'm working to fix it. Then again he probably wouldn't want to hear I'm trying to "fix" anything, because it doesn't sound like "us" as anything more than casual acquaintances is in his mind at all. That has me completely freaking out too. And even writing him is probably crossing another line by invading his space again. I don't know what to do, because I so love this man and want to learn the tools you teach, but it's so frustrating to feel like I keep screwing everything up.

Thank you for your help,  
JS

[Reply](#)

**Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by [Al Turtle](#) on Tue 15 Jul 2008 08:11 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Oh. wow.

Thanks for letting us in. This sounds so much like a Lizard gone wild with a bright clinger brain to fuel it. I have often said that "fast thinkers" can really scare themselves in a relationship, if they do not have a superb communication system, if they live in a "fact void." This sounds like an example. A small clue, a very fast vivid imagination, a lizard observing all those "pictures," and that lizard picking the worst/scariest to believe.

Gotta calm that lizard first of all. Anything you can do to self-soothe seems in order.

Next you may be able, when calm, to notice how your email had "hooks" or "strings attached." You may not have consciously intended that, but a part of you expected a response to the "I miss you" or the "thanks." When the response didn't happen your lizard reacted. Oh, that sounds so much like my panicky lizard trying to grasp on to my wife. Had to give that up.

I think that people have, built into them, a bullshit detector. This BS detector instantly recognized "hooks" coming our way. Tis something to be recognized and dealt with. If I give my partner something, it really has to be a gift and "not a piece of bait." My clinger part is excellently skilled at "baiting hooks." Learned it as a kid. Still working on it.

In summary a) take charge of that lizard of yours and calm it and b) (long-term) move out of the fact void you live. Gotta fix that communication system you have with him. Long-term! The cool thing is that clingers have almost all the power to make the changes needed. Go for it.

[Reply](#)

**Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by Sarah on Sun 10 Aug 2008 07:55 PM PDT | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi Al!

Thank you so much for your site! Your method of what to do when someone leaves has worked great so far! I can't believe how much progress I've made (especially with pre-validating and validating people, and with learning to stay calm), and my ex is sniffing around again, although I definitely haven't gotten my relationship to the promised land yet. I have to say, improving my mental health is a lot less stressful than I thought it would be, and every day I feel more peaceful than the last.

One of our big problems before was that I was exhibiting typical Clinger behavior, and I've been doing much better at that lately, if I do say so myself. Problem is, now he's cool with going out occasionally for friendly drinks, but he's being super flaky. We went once and had a great time, then spent a week or so out of touch. Then I asked if I could buy him a drink for his birthday, he said yes and sent me a fairly long, chatty email. Last week he proceeded to postpone our drinks three times (granted, each time he had an excuse, but the excuses came about two hours before we were supposed to meet...). He then had promised to email to reschedule again yesterday, but he didn't do so.

I, trying to be a good space-giver and listener, sent him an email and offered that if he wasn't comfortable it was perfectly ok with me to not go and he should just let me know if when he felt like going, and he just wrote back a light-hearted response about how he was sorry, he'd just forgotten to email me because he got busy, and he'll write me again soon to reschedule. I know he's keeping plans with other people, so it seems something is up.

I'm guessing he either A) isn't ready or wanting to see me but can't/won't admit it, or B) is on some level compensating for the times when I was pushy by jerking me around now. There seems to me to be some Master/Slave going on here as I learn to give him space and am now maybe too accommodating, and he in turn

walks all over me. So my questions are: 'how do I establish the boundaries here and get across to him that I'm not ok with this without sounding like I'm reverting to being pushy and controlling and setting up rules?' and 'What the heck could he be doing?' I tried inviting him to share what was up with me when he's ready, but got nothing in response.

Thank you!  
Sarah

[Reply](#)

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### Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by [Al Turtle](#) on Tue 12 Aug 2008 07:39 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Sarah,

Thanks for the feedback and the compliments. I always learn a bit from letters like yours. I hope the learning is mutual.

After having been a clinger for a long time (remember, you are not a clinger when alone, only when someone else is present and acting in an avoiding role) your partner may follow some very interesting paths to "recovery" from their pattern. Keeping up with where they are moving next is often quite a chore - probably very long term. If you learn to make it "interesting" for yourself rather than "annoying," I think you will be better off.

What can make it so is the principle of PreValidation and Validation - that [All People Make Sense All The Time](#), and that [People Make Sense Before They Open Their Mouths To Tell You About It](#). This allows you to take their "new" behavior or their "shift" in behavior as a thing to be curious about, kind of like a plot twist in a detective novel. "Wonder what shift led him/her to do that?" Be reassured that the answer is always eventually there even if your partner can't explain themselves for a long time.

Using this method of "relaxing myself as I witness my partner's journey" I find that avoiders really often do things automatically without awareness. They, like us all, are driven by factors inside themselves that they don't YET know. A bit frustrating, but a good opportunity to practice patience - very educational.

Now, as to setting up boundaries. I find them a reliable requirement of living, and not something that you need help from your partner. Your boundaries are about you, not about your partner. [Personal Boundaries](#) are awarenesses and skills that are just simply necessary. Your partner doesn't need to be involved in either your learning or your practice of the skills. If you do well, they will pick up what you are doing. They have not choice.

On the other hand, modeling boundaries and practicing not invading their boundaries some of the time, is an art. You see, for them to learn to manage their own boundaries, someone has to try invading them. They need practice, too. You could, probably will, give them that practice. In a way, you want to stand alongside them while someone else invades them and make gentle suggestions as to how to handle it. You don't want to encourage them to depend on you to protect their boundaries. That way they don't learn.

If "he walks on you," that is your problem. Don't ever let him do that. But be careful. I've certainly met people who said, "My partner is invading my boundaries when he doesn't talk to me." or "He is invading my boundaries when he changes his mind at the last minute." Boy, is that confusing.

If he decides to be inconsistent, or cancel late, start planning for this. Prepare yourself for this behavior. [All People Are Chronically Disobedient. Learn To Live With It.](#)

Your work sounds good.

Al

[Reply](#)

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### Re: Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by Sarah on Mon 06 Oct 2008 08:44 PM PDT | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi Al!

I've been sticking to the five steps fairly religiously, and they're working for sure as far as getting him to get back in touch with me. He's up to writing me emails almost every day, and one day I got four of the suckers!

What's interesting now... well, a couple of things. First of all, he writes all the time, but he never says a word about hanging out. Maybe he's decided we should be pen pals. :) Anyway, apparently he's not ready for anything more right now, so cool, I can deal with that, as much as I'd like to see him. The other interesting thing is that all of a sudden he's begun sending me huge emails pouring out his heart about everything he's going through (and it is a very rough time in his life), but he very rarely says a word about me, and doesn't seem to wonder what's going on in my life at all. I'm actually pretty comfortable with this too, as it's certainly much better than trying to pry information out of him ever was. And perhaps he's getting all the reliable information about me that he needs right now from the new (much more effective!) ways in which I'm responding to him. I have to give myself credit on that front, because I've been doing super.

It seems to me he's trying to turn things around for himself by himself, and that me being very hands-off is just the kind of support he needs in this process. He's even doing things I used to nag him about (and about which I no longer say a word) and then telling me about them. Whatever is going on, it's much better than the silence of a few months ago, or even than the edgy panic of our relationship, although I do admit to missing the more present companionship very much.

I just wanted to give you an update, and perhaps find out if you think my interpretations sound reasonable. Thank you so much for all your help-- without your tools, there's no way I would have come this far!

Best wishes,  
Sarah

[Reply](#)

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### Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by Mike on Thu 02 Oct 2008 04:25 PM PDT | [Permanent Link](#)

Well I followed the steps and it was working!!! She invited me over and asked me to stay the night and I caved and stayed instead of leaving. We had a good weekend, then came Monday. I went into "we are together mode" got jealous and upset and flew off the handle TWICE in two days. Now she has said she is completely done and will never contact me again and not to contact her. She says I am not applying all the things I have learned in a consistent manner (which is true) and I never will. Now what??

Thanks,  
Mike

[Reply](#)

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### Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by [Al Turtle](#) on Fri 03 Oct 2008 09:59 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Mike,

Oh, that sounds so familiar. The driving issue is "hope." Does she have any hope that you will change? Do you have any hope that she will change? So to make things better I think you have to manage "hope." By that I mean you must make sure that neither becomes hopeless to your partner.

Sounds as if, at least temporarily, she is thinking you are hopeless ("I never will apply the things I've learned."). Well, I don't see that as true. You may be a slow learner (I was), you are not a zero learner.

So a possible direction to go, when and if you have a chance to be with her, is to speak about "progress" – slow or fast. Speak about commitment to do better and to learn from mistakes. At least it is worth a try.

By the way, thanks for sharing that the principles work - when you do 'em. That may be helpful to others.

Good luck.

Al

[Reply](#)**Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by Kiwi7070 on Sat 17 Jan 2009 08:52 AM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Wel AI,

Happy new year and thanks for continuing to be here for us, its been about a year now , and found out she never registered her car where ever she is now, her creditor for her car note contacted my neighbors lokking for her and the car, it appears her drivers license and other bills still have here living here so im amazed i dont really understand why she is still using this address as home when shhe is somewhere else, what type of sick joke is this so the neighbors both contacted me as well as the repo company lokking for her since all is still registered here , the advice you have provided as been great and i continue to move forward slowly but know see is looking over her shoulder , whats your thoughts

thanks

[Reply](#)**Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by EyesOnThePrize on Fri 23 Jan 2009 11:59 AM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

AI,

Its been a long time since I posted, and for a couple of reasons I thought today would be a good day to update folks on what's been going on for me. most of my story is in the "comments to July 8" portion, if memory serves me correctly, starting around Valentine's Day last year.

My ex has been living in Texas since early April, and is still with her boyfriend. However, she and I converse quite a bit these days. When we first started talking again, we would speak every week to 10 days, these days its closer to every 2-3 days, and sometimes daily. A "short" conversation for us is 1/2 an hour. From comments she has made, such as "well, we're still boyfriend/girlfriend, and if we broke up tomorrow there would be no hard feelings", I believe that they are more "keeping each other company" than anything else. Actually, my belief is that at some level they are using each other, her to avoid being alone, him for the "honor" of having the very pretty girlfriend.

I keep 20 of your posters on the wall in front of my desk (reduced to 4 to a page) and they are in my face all the time. The 4 most directly in front of me are "All people make sense all the time", "You will never get love by chasing a lizard", "I am trying to turn myself into someone you would like to get together with. Thanks for giving me the opportunity" and "My goal is to become a source of safety to your lizard. (period) What can I do right now that might help you feel safer." I believe that I have become a source of safety to her lizard, as she now comes to me with major questions, when she is close to panicking, or just when she needs someone to listen. I have worked a lot on my listening skills a lot over the last year. I believe that learning to be a source of safety to her lizard has had a MAJOR impact on our communication and our improved relationship.

As I believe I mentioned in some of my later posts, I believe that my ex suffers from borderline personality disorder (BPD) and I have spent a lot of time over the last eight months learning about the disorder and, perhaps more importantly, ways of effectively coping with the disorder. I have spent a lot of time on support boards for BPD and learning from others. I integrate what I learn there with what I learn here and have pointed others to this site because I have received so much value from your writings. If you're getting a lot of hits off of a google group, you can "blame" me. :) I believe that learning to deal with her probable disorder has also helped me address some of my own issues and make progress there. Whether or not we are ever together as a couple again, I believe the skills I have learned through this experience will serve me well throughout my life.

Tomorrow marks a year since our divorce went final, and as mentioned, we are not together now. However, I believe that our communication now is much better than it was during much of the marriage, especially at the end, and we have become close friends again. That was one reason I thought today would be a good day to post. The other relates to a conversation we had yesterday. She is, by her own admission, miserable in Texas. And yet she says it is very important for her to finish school and become self-sufficient, and although it is taking a tremendous toll on her, she is determined to see it through...at least today. During our conversation yesterday, things got a bit heated for reasons too long to go into here. At any rate, at one point she blurts out "Don't you understand that I am doing all of this so I can come back!?" Well, no, I didn't understand it, because although

she had hinted at this, she had never actually said this to me in these words. And what exactly she means by "come back" is still a bit unclear. Does she mean "to me", "to Las Vegas" or something else. I suspect the former, because as you point out in your writings "people don't leave a place where they feel safe." And there are a lot of questions as to when and how this would happen. And now I believe I can start a dialog on this to see if it is feasible.

All this does not mean I've given up on meeting someone else. I still date, although I haven't found someone who measures up to her, and am not assuming that she and I will have a happy ending. And today, more than I have been on any day in the last nine months, I'm hopeful.

[Reply](#)

### Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by teachergirl on Sun 08 Feb 2009 10:23 AM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Al, My situation is very difficult. Your essay made a lot of sense to me. I ended up leaving my husband after a nasty fight. He indicated that we had far too many problems in our marriage to be able to sort anything out and he told me he wanted a divorce and had wanted one since August (5 months into marriage) I left our home after only 9 months of marriage. We have been together for 4.5 years and lived together for two of those years. We had some rocky patches, he cheated on me at a bachelor party, but we got some counseling and things improved. However, I know that I am a clinger and he is definitely an avoider. That has caused many of our problems. Things improve for a bit and then get worse again. I gave my husband 4 weeks over the Christmas holidays to be completely alone. This was on the advice of a therapist who has known my husband for 7 years. I had minimal contact with him and then after 4 weeks he asked me to begin therapy with him (I had been in individual therapy for 8 weeks with the therapist who has know my husband for years and who helped us with his cheating incident earlier in the relationship) He wanted us to go together, so I agreed. I followed all of the rules and gave him lots of space. We sat down and agreed that we would work through a three month process to try to get to the root of our issues. In our therapy sessions we began to talk about our personal contributions to the demise of our relationship. We were making progress. I continued on with individual therapy with the counselor who was seeing both of us. My husband had no other therapy and refused to talk to friends and family about what was going on with us. My in-laws were very worried about their son and I opened up to them about his behaviour. I am sure that he resented this and now does not feel safe talking with his own family. We believe that he is depressed and has been for some time-he's just been self-medicating and avoiding everything. I found out one month after we were married that he owed three years worth of back taxes for his business and he didn't tell me about it. My husband carries a significant amount of pain in relation to his parents divorce when he was younger. He has never forgiven his father and has not spoken to him for 7 years. I believe that this pain has affected our marriage...he's operating from the "lizard" perspective. I have digressed here. After three very good therapy sessions, my husband and I took a walk and he asked me to be patient with him through this process and hoped that neither one of us would make a legal move for separation or divorce. I agreed. Through this process, I have built up my self-confidence again and I'm addressing my tendency to "cling" My husband told his parents that he was very attracted to the strong confident woman he had seen at therapy, but he couldn't trust that the change was permanent. So, he showed up for our next session, where we began by discussion our living arrangements. I asked him if I could be in our home for a couple of weeks because he had offered during our first session to move out for a while so that I could be at home. As soon as I brought this up, he told me that the marriage would never work and that he wanted to go forth with a legal separation. So, he saw me strong and confident again and then immediately tried to shut me out of his life. The day after our good therapy session the week prior, he went out and bought a book on divorce, changed all of the furniture in our house and made it look like a bachelor pad again. He threw a bunch of my belongings under the bed so that he wouldn't have to see them any more and says that he wants the legal separation ASAP. He wants to tell our friends that we are legally separating but working on the marriage. He still has not mentioned to his family that he wants a divorce from me. I am devastated. I followed all of the rules and gave him space. I worked on myself and showed him that I was regaining my sense of self and then he abandons therapy and wants a divorce! He says he had wanted a divorce since August. I finally conceded and told him on five different occasions over the past week that I would give him the divorce. His response is that he wants us to still go to marriage counseling (with a new therapist) just in case there is a glimmer of hope for the marriage and if there isn't he wants us to both feel good about the divorce (he did admit that he wants counseling so that he won't feel guilty about ending the marriage after such a short time) He hasn't contacted a lawyer yet, but I did and I told him about it on Friday. He still wants counseling though. I know 100% that this situation does NOT involve another woman, so I am not sure what to make of the quick shift right after such a positive interaction. So, I don't know what to do. Moving forward with a legal separation and going to see a marriage therapist seems ridiculous to me. Do I indulge in the counseling and continue on with the separation or should I just cut my losses, legally separate and move on with my life? My individual therapist feels that my husband has a tremendous amount of individual work to do and that it will only cause me more pain to sit through marriage (or divorce) counseling with him. (he was very erratic during our final session with the therapist and insulted both of us) Part of me feels that I should give the counseling with him a shot, as we have



had many many wonderful times in our relationship (doesn't sound like if from this post-I know) but we did. Or should I just give up? Things didn't really go according to the "rules" when he/she leaves.

[Reply](#)

#### Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by [Al Turtle](#) on Thu 12 Feb 2009 10:39 AM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Sorry for all this. Thanks for your sharing. The principles I share in "What to do when he/she leaves" are only about stopping the leaving process. Once, or whenever, the leaving is halted, then you have to learn and use other skills. Counseling (time spent with someone who has ideas on how to solve the problems you face) is never a waste of time. Learning is the way to go. Hiring a tutor (counselor) I think is always worth it. You may want to try another therapist. Some are better trained. Lots of people seem to offer support, but may not know how themselves. I wrote an article on [picking a therapist](#). Good luck.

[Reply](#)

#### Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by anna on Wed 04 Mar 2009 10:56 AM PST | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi Al,

I hope you are around to give me a quick response here. First, your website contains very wonderful advice... I realized I did so many things wrong--like using threat/emotional blackmail (although unintentional) to get love. And I did get love--for a while because the person caved in and didn't want to see me upset...but it didn't last. I am glad I find this website, as I now know what I did was only short term solution but will not get me anywhere near great, long lasting love.

Anyhow, I found your website too late. Like most people, I don't analyze my situation and work hard to find a solution until I hit rock bottom. In this case, I think it is already too late...and I am here to ask you what to do. I will try to be as brief as possible.

A. My situation: I got dumped by my college boyfriend. We were together for four years. During this time my then boyfriend took care of me like I was a family--but that was not right I guess. He paid for everything, paid for the housing, let me use his credit card, gave up his friends for me, spent all my time with me because I would get upset if he doesn't, while he didn't demand anything from me. Most issues are really on my end...I took him for granted. He told me he broke up because he was hurt too many times.

-He's plain worn out and just thinking about doing anything for me makes him feel tired.

- Our relationship was full of conflicts. He has so much resentment and his feelings are now governed by our past. He said that even thinking about going to dinner with me makes him feel frustrated--because in the past we always ended up fighting when we went on trip, and 70% of the trip we took he didn't want to go. I usually forced him to do things, rather than let him do things/show affection. He said loving me has become more like a job, not something he can freely choose to do and feel good doing.

- I spent all his money--6k in total. He said that I lean on him so much that he can't even stand on his feet any more. I was more like his kid than his girlfriend. He had to take care of housing, storage, etc.

- He was always unable to be honest when we talk about us, the relationship, how he feels, because whenever I get the answer I don't like I always went into panic mode, cried, and just forced him to feel the same way I do/commit at the level I want him to. So where there was any problem, he could not say he was not happy then sat down with me and solve problem. If he were to say he was unhappy then I would just panic and cry and he could not handle that so he just had to act ok.

Also I never gave him space to retreat to. I was always in his face. He had no space to be alone/see other people---I wanted to be around him all the time. Whenever there was any conflict he was forced to deal with it right then and there.

While for me I always felt safe around him, always felt like I could be honest with my feelings, I could be me, be free to hang out with any friends or pursue anything. After I read your website I realize how bad he must have been feeling while he was with me...the relationship lack the most important element--safety.

So right now I and my ex are grad students. I know that after you read what I said you probably think we both

are really immature people---and we are. But I think we mature up a lot--he learned to stand up for himself more, I looked back, saw my mistakes and I am trying to do everything right. So after the break up I did everything that he wanted from me in the past (the only thing I have been unable to give him is SPACE, plenty of space, and safety. The reasons why I can't give space and safety will be below:

**Here are the problems**

1. He fell so far out of love. He told me that I am doing all the right thing right now, and he would take me back if he had anything left in him. But he has nothing--doesn't feel the same way any more.
2. He said he is not ready--we have to spend a few months apart ...He said he could not will all that resentment, all the frustration/fear that comes up just at the thought of doing something with me, away. After some time apart we will see what happen.

but whenever he talks about the future with other people (so far as I overheard) he always talk about finding A NEW GIRL he can be happy with...there seems to be no thinking back about me and us in his mind...

3. It has been 4 months after the break up, we have been living together the whole time. ...I am moving, though..I will be abroad for a year or two...and I am so scared..we will be so far apart...so far that I don't see how I can have hope that we have a way forward together.

4. I know in order for him to come back to me he has to feel safe first. Feeling safe means he is free to talk about how he feels, what he thinks, free to open up to me about anything that is happening.

If we were still together and fundamentally want the same thing (each other) then I think I can be a safe harbor for him. However, I think it is a tall order for me to be able to sit there and hear him talk about how he doesn't feel anything for me, how he is having a crush on another girl, that he is thinking about finding a new girl I can be happy with, or ask me which city he should move to that will give him a good chance of meeting new people and perhaps find love?

And on top of that I don't feel safe around him. It seems that I will have to sacrifice my safety (can't talk to him about how I really feel) if I want to be his safe harbor. Right now whenever I am with him I dread something that hurt me will happen "will he find someone else today?", "Will he leave me behind again after the dance class we go together if the girl he has a crush on shows up like last time?"

5. Same as space. I can't just flip off the switch knowing he is still there and will come back. He already reached the leaving wall, and already left.

So here are questions for you.

1. I can see that your advice will help if the partner is only about to leave, still has some hope or love left. what if they already left? Fell out of love completely? What do I do now? What should I focus on if I want the person back? Do you think I have a chance?

You know because your advice 1-3 is about working on myself, which is ok. But what if 4 doesn't happen (my ex-partner doesn't come around to check on me?)

2. And your advice sounds like it is geared towards married couple who were once upon a time so sure that they want to commit to each other for a lifetime . Do you think your advice will apply to a relationship like mine? Sounds like married couples have bonds that are stronger that will always remain in the back of their mind, but I don't know if my relationship has that.

3. Biological Dream-- it starts with falling head over heels in love, right? I feel like even if I were to be able to fulfill my ex's biological dream right now (make him feel totally safe, accepted, encourage him towards his life goal, provide reliable membership, let him be himself), he could still just think of me as a good friend because he fell out of love. (He said to me "The feelings are not there any more.)

You know, because you could have a crush on someone and fulfill all their biological dream, and all you can be is just their best friend.....because they never liked you THAT way.

I guess if I want to be brief I am asking you if your advice will work in my case--and what I can do if I want a chance when things are totally broken like this--because it seems like I can do everything right (fulfill biological dream, give him all he wanted but never got from me in the past, get rid of resentment and heal the hurt), yet in the end he could just be like "Yes he feels great, feels good around me, but THAT FEELINGS are not there any more"

Looking forward to your response,

Ann

[Reply](#)

### Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by [Al Turtle](#) on Wed 04 Mar 2009 12:07 PM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Anna,

Thanks for sharing. What an amazingly painful, normal seeming situation.

First thoughts first. One thing I have noticed is that most people who "screw up" their relationships by being clingy, including me, tend to be amazingly a) wordy and b) fantasize that people want to listen or read. I personally found that people don't wanna listen or read my stuff very often. They want me to listen. That's ok with me, but I do control how long I listen, to remind my writers about their fantasy.

I was amused by how often you repeated the idea of being brief, sent me a 1500 word essay, and wanted a quick response. Woohoo. I am not trying to shame you at all. I wrote such letters in my past. I understand panic and urgency very very well. I am just amused.

What you wrote is wonderful. A second thought is to remind you that people generally don't start learning until they hit bottom. Therefore I believe that "doing it wrong," being willing to make a mistake, is a vital part of growing up and learning. So go for it.

To your questions (quickly :) you caught me at a good time)

*1. I can see that your advice will help if the partner is only about to leave, still has some hope or love left. what if they already left? Fell out of love completely? What do I do now? What should I focus on if I want the person back? Do you think I have a chance?*

With this partner? I have no idea. As you describe him, he sounds like a good Imago match – a good "dream partner." Of course, right now he is probably a "nightmare partner," but that is part of the learning process - the Power Struggle. You certainly seem to be coming across as a nightmare to him. So, from my position, he sounds like a good learning/growing-up partner. On the one hand I think he is worth working on (i.e. learning your part of what needs to be learned). I would not wait a minute in starting and continuing to learn your lessons. On the other hand, I would not wait forever for him to surface to join you in learning. Life is too short to waste it.

*You know because your advice 1-3 is about working on myself, which is ok. But what if 4 doesn't happen (my ex-partner doesn't come around to check on me?)*

He doesn't yet check on you because he fanaticizes about you just waiting to go back and continue to "eat him alive." Your job is to become a nurturing person, rather than a voracious person. Whenever he checks you want to appear non-voracious. You can't loose learning this. It is tough!

*2. And your advice sounds like it is geared towards married couple who were once upon a time so sure that they want to commit to each other for a lifetime . Do you think your advice will apply to a relationship like mine? Sounds like married couples have bonds that are stronger that will always remain in the back of their mind, but I don't know if my relationship has that.*

True, I write about committed long-term relationships, and I think it does take that to become fully mature. But friendships are great too, and have the same rules. You can eat a friend just as you can eat a partner, just probably not quite so quickly.

Besides people talk of the commitment in relationships as if this were some magical event. I find that mostly bull-whaa. Commitment is displayed in tons of little things. The four greatest commitment in relationships, I am told, are a) to yourself, to your partner's self, to the relationship's health, and to the process of making all of those better and better over time (i.e. learning). For example, I (a clinger) show my commitment to my partner by repeatedly making it easy and pleasant to get away from me.

*3. Biological Dream-- it starts with falling head over heels in love, right? I feel like even if I were to be able to*

*fulfill my ex's biological dream right now (make him feel totally safe, accepted, encourage him towards his life goal, provide reliable membership, let him be himself), he could still just think of me as a good friend because he fell out of love. (He said to me "The feelings are not there any more.)*

I see it differently. I believe humans are built around this Biological Dream. You can't lose it. The first time it emerges is when you are born. You want caretakers who will treat you with those skills. If they do not, you have trouble on your hands. The second time is whenever you come close to falling-in-love. The drive behind that passionate sensation is a hope, hope, hope, that finally people (a person) will treat you according to the Biological Dream skills. This is, I believe, almost completely unconscious. And the more dysfunctional your childhood, the hotter the falling-in-love seems to be.

He tells you his feelings are not there. Well, currently he knows enough about you to have no hope that you will change. You can destroy that hopelessness by proving, to a very doubting man, that you can and are changing. You can't lose by learning the Biological Dream skills.

*You know, because you could have a crush on someone and fulfill all their biological dream, and all you can be is just their best friend.....because they never liked you THAT way.*

Back to magic again. Believe me, I've been there. As a kid, parents are there to fulfill our Biological Dreams for about 7 years. Mine didn't, but still I needed it, was entitled to it. Now you are adult and you ain't entitled to anything. You have to earn all you get. To fulfill their biological dream, you have to participate in fulfilling yours as well. That is a major process for most people. I've been through it. It ain't magical. It is work. That's why I've written all the stuff on this website, to make it easier for you by sharing my experience.

*I guess if I want to be brief I am asking you if your advice will work in my case--and what I can do if I want a chance when things are totally broken like this--because it seems like I can do everything right (fulfill biological dream, give him all he wanted but never got from me in the past, get rid of resentment and heal the hurt), yet in the end he could just be like "Yes he feels great, feels good around me, but THAT FEELINGS are not there any more"*

I believe there is no way you can lose. I think you seek to live in the dream. You might lose this guy, but never will you lose the dream and the potential to achieve it. That is my belief.

Best wishes,

Al

[Reply](#)

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#### **Re: Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by Anonymous on Wed 04 Mar 2009 05:27 PM PST | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi Al,

Just shooting you a quick (this time really quick) reply. :) I am amazed by how you could read me like a book by just looking at my post. Everything you say about me are right...I am kind of put to shame with my rambling.

I will be reading and digesting your response. Thank you so much once again for taking the time!

btw I love the part where you said a clingy partner can be nurturing by helping their significant other to get away from them.. How true.

Ann

[Reply](#)

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#### **Re: Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by ann on Wed 04 Mar 2009 05:42 PM PST | [Permanent Link](#)

oops regarding quick response,

When I said quick, I meant you could just write me something short that won't take too much of your

time to write and I will be sooo happy already...totally didn't mean I want you to get back to me in a few minutes after I posted.

Sorry if I came out sounding super demanding. Thank you for understanding that I was/am in a panic mode....

You don't owe me anything, and I am really, really grateful for your response and glad you didn't get mad at me.

Ann

[Reply](#)

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**Re: Re: Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by Anonymous on Sun 10 May 2009 05:59 PM PDT | [Permanent Link](#)

Ann, I am going through your exact situation and if you see this I'd love to chat with you! Reply back here if you're interested...

[Reply](#)

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**Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by Jorge on Mon 16 Mar 2009 02:45 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi Al,

First, I want to thank you for having this site, it is very helpful. My name is Jorge and I've been married for almost 12 years and my wife left our apartment 8 days ago. She left a note on the table saying that she was not returning to the apartment that day and that she needed time to think and sort her feelings.

Last Saturday (7 days later) she sent me an email that said that she left the apartment because she was feeling very anxious and needed space to think and that even though we had good conversations Saturday night and that were meaningful for her; but recently she's been unhappy because she felt that I was controlling many of her decisions and actions. She also said that she imagines that I would like to know what she wants to do with regard to our relationship in general and that I may want to talk with her about that, but she is still sorting out her thoughts and emotions and that she needs more time.

Also in her email she requested and asked for a favor. Because of her new job she needed more of her work cloths. When she left she did not take that many things. She asked if her sister could get access to the apartment to pick up more of her work cloths and that also the request for me not to be there and have someone else (my cousin or friend) to be there instead of me so that we don't have any other problems.

Since she needed a respond to her request and I was not able to talk to her since she left the apartment I responded back to her email using some points of support and of course agreeing to both of her requests:

It reads: "I understand your feelings and I know that you need more time to think about our relationship in general. You know that I love you and love you very much and that I am willing to do anything necessary for our relationship to work. I am aware of the many things of my personality that have pushed you away from me, made you anxious, unhappy, and made you feel controlled. I want you to know that I have sought counseling and I trust that is going to help me channel my own emotions and communications and the way I express my views you. I have mentioned a couple of months ago that I am willing to go to couples counseling and that still stands. I am doing all these for myself and because I want to be ready for you in order to give you the support that you need. I want to make you feel save and make you feel comfortable being around me again. I do not want to control your decisions and actions, I would like that you share them with me and that you find in me the support that you need. Our relationship deserves a chance to be saved."

I actually read your article about What to do when she (he) leaves the same night that my wife left. I was feeling down and confused and in denial about her leaving. Since then I have been trying to give her space, follow the four steps in the article, but she has taken some other steps that I think were moving away further from the relationship. She closed some of her cc's which I was an authorized user for and transferred money (half of our savings) into a private account and also change her mailing address for those accounts. I understand that by her doing that she is trying to get control of her life and I respect that, but I still I think I made the mistake to call her. I said I understand you need your space, but I was concern about the changes of the accounts that I had

access before.

(I felt in the controlling part at this point) She said that she did not want to worry me about the accounts and she wanted to make sure they get pay on time, and that she left the other accounts that we shared as they are. She asked me not to call her so I said OK. I did not ask her anything else, not even about the relationship, but I still think I shot myself on the foot for asking about the accounts.

Right now I am working on myself. I do not have a new job like her, but I am in a different position. Position I have to perform, but I have been finding it very difficult to do especially when I can not stop thinking about us. I really hope that she gives me the chance to listen to her before she makes her decision and before it is too late.

It is hard try not to contact her specially because we also work a couple of blocks away from each other, so in order to avoid more problems I changed my scheduled hours so that we don't find each other by mistake and so that she does not think that I am trying to stalk her and by no means give her the impression I am trying to control her.

Do you have any comments on my situation? Thank you for posting the articles. They are very helpful. When I feel that I have the need to contact her, I keep going back to reading back the articles.

Jorge

[Reply](#)

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### **Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by [Al Turtle](#) on Tue 12 May 2009 05:35 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Jorge,

To me your situation seems so familiar, that I can't help chatting a bit about it.

What I think we are all experiencing, from different sides, is the waking up of married couples – both in America and in other industrialized countries. Sounds kind of dramatic, I know.

What I see is the slow awakening of many many people who have been “put to sleep” inappropriately in childhood. For years and years they have been quietly (secretly) obedient to the “orders” of their parents, older people, and their partners. They have silently (secretly) endured suffering, fear of pain (abandonment, physical/emotional hurt), for years. Thank God, they are starting to say, “No!” I think it is time for the suffering to end.

And this seems to be happening in relationships everywhere. I personally think it is part of the rise of democracy throughout the earth. And I see it as good news.

From the Clinger or Master point of view:

I am now going to speak from the point of view of the “Clingers” or the “Masters.” We are the people who are suddenly aware (out of the blue) that our partners are walking out, divorcing us, calling us names, joining with others, blaming us, refusing to take our phone calls. Some of us are men. Some are women. My guess is that all of us are bewildered.

What I hear are common comments. Our partners want “space,” “quiet time,” “distance.” They do not want to feel pushed. Once they get away to another house or apartment, they cannot make decisions quickly. Their decisions seem to be crude and clumsy – closing bank accounts, forgetting tax rebates, letting insurance policies lapse, etc.

What I see going on is the “awakening” of sleepy people. They have become used to having someone else give them directions and make decisions for them ever since they were little – say, three years old. Sometimes the person who taught this to them was a strong bully. Sometimes the person was a “fragile” adult that they learned to take care of. Sometimes both. This “obedience,” or codependence, or passivity has continued in their lives with us – until now. And now they are beginning to think for themselves, have concern for themselves, and to develop their Self – something their parents should have helped them do when they were little kids. Their clumsiness is just inexperience.

Sometimes they form new partnerships in which the new person seems to take over their lives and put them back to sleep again.

But, I believe that if this is a real awakening, those of us watching and participating are in for major excitement and, I think, a marvelous mission. What could be more rewarding than assisting another human to flourish! Often we feel delight at helping a child or a small animal. What more is the delight at assisting an un-grownup human, grow up! (Ok, ok, so that is a matter of taste, I know. Some would prefer to watch football.)

While the process they are going through, I believe, is natural for a child, it is a bit clumsy for an adult. And it will be clumsy for the partner, you, as well. This journey will also directly involve you. Seems to me that both people have equal amounts of maturing ahead of them.

A major complication for both is the issue of "responsibility." A grown-up is responsible for what they do, feel, and what they let happen to them. Usually these growing-up people have lived (with you) in a painful world of blame and guilt. Before you there were caretakers who did not have boundaries and who probably did that horrible thing about "Childhood Guilt and Parental Innocence." The journey ahead will involve many clumsy years of clarifying boundaries: what's mine and what's yours. The key is in taking responsibility for your parts of all problems and in not taking responsibility for their parts.

If you are a Clinger and / or a Master, in general the three things you need to get rid of are a) your neediness, b) reliance on your temper to get your way, c) your lack of empathy for others. Get to work. This journey also involves learning to speak dialogically after years and years of mis-speaking or of silence – passively lying. Candor is the goal, but clumsy sentences will be common. Anything that keeps you two from sharing everything, I find, will become a problem. Get rid of "interruption," "one person talking more than the other," and MasterTalk . Learn a lot about "inviting your partner to share their story(s)." Especially welcome them sharing their stories about you and the mistakes you made in the past.

I have written a whole bunch of papers about each of these topics as I journeyed along the way. Looking back, the most important concepts and skills to carry with you are PreValidation and Validation. I suggest that you graft into your thinking, your soul, the idea that people are doing their best at all times. You were doing your best in each event in your past. So was your partner. You are doing your best, and so is your partner. Seek to see the best in your partner and yourself and rejoice.

#### **Now some specific comments for you, Jorge.**

"she was feeling very anxious and needed space to think" Your goal is to give her the space she needs to think while she is with you. That is quite a skill

"she felt that I was controlling many of her decisions and actions." That is how she sees it. Of course, eventually she will learn to accept how much she created and maintained that controlling atmosphere.

"She asked if her sister could get access to the apartment." I would imagine she is fearful of betraying herself in your presence. The forward movement toward Selfhood can be fragile at this point. Of course should could be fearful of you, too.

'It reads: "I understand your feelings (Poor choice of words, since you have almost now way of understanding her feelings. You'll get better over time.) and I know (try to avoid using the word "know" when referring to other people. Tends to sound arrogant.) that you need more time to think about our relationship in general. You know that I love you and love you very much (Very poor choice of words. This is something you believe, but the evidence is that she doesn't know this. If she says she does know, I would not believe it for maybe a couple of years after you have validated why she is pulling back from you. Could be neither you nor she have a very solid definition of the word "love.") and that I am willing to do anything necessary for our relationship to work. I am aware of the many things of my personality that have pushed you away from me, made you anxious, unhappy, and made you feel controlled. I want you to know that I have sought counseling and I trust that is going to help me channel my own emotions and communications and the way I express my views you. (Good start.) I have mentioned a couple of months ago that I am willing to go to couples counseling and that still stands. I am doing all these for myself and because I want to be ready for you in order to give you the support that you need. I want to make you feel safe (typo, "safe") and make you feel comfortable being around me again. I do not want to control your decisions and actions, I would like that you share them with me and that you find in me the support that you need. Our relationship deserves a chance to be saved."

Sounds to me as if you are doing your best. Follow the 4 rules. Then study boundaries, Validation, Avoider/Clinger dynamics and the whole set of papers on power and control: Master/Slave, Power of Passivity, etc.

Take care of yourself. And try to enjoy the magnificence of the experiences you are now into. (Easier said than done.)

Al

[Reply](#)

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### Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by [Al Turtle](#) on Fri 12 Jun 2009 01:22 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi Al,

I like your marriage map. It makes a lot of sense.

I was wondering if you could shed some light on my situation. My wife hasn't left, but I believe she is strongly considering it.

My wife is having an Emotional and Physical Affair with a coworker. She shared it with me back in Oct 2008 and at that time she said it started in July 2008 (I admit that I took our marriage for granted for the past 2.5 years and didn't pay a lot of attn to her). Anyway, we both decided we would work on things and we were okay until Jan 2009. At that point, my wife said she didn't know if we would end up together. We had our ups and downs the last six months.

On 5/8/09, she said she wanted to be with the other man and that she didn't want to be in "this" relationship. Last week she told me she was going away for the weekend to Wash DC with the other man. Of course I was against that, and I told her that I didn't want her to go -- that she and I made a commitment -- but she went anyway. Except for going to a baseball game, I don't know what they did, but I'm 99% sure they stayed in the same hotel room.

We've been married for 5.5 years and have been together for 8.5. We have no kids. I used to be friends with the other man (we all worked together). In Nov 2008, I changed jobs and no longer work with the two of them.

I love my wife and I want to honor our commitment. I want to save our marriage. I do not want to do nothing. We still live in the same house, sleep in the same bed, and we still wear our wedding rings. There is however no intimacy or any physical touching. I do try to kiss her before she goes to work, but I can tell by her body language she is hesitant (or trying to avoid the kiss / physical touch).

When she returned from the weekend on Sunday, I just asked how the baseball game was. I didn't bring up again that it was wrong or that I was disappointed (since I said these things before she left). So far I am continuing to be nice to her and to be the best husband that I can. We still communicate and she still makes dinner for me (I wash the dishes and take care of the house). Any suggestions on what I should be doing that could help my situation would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your time,  
TryingToSaveMarriage

[Reply](#)

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### Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by Anonymous on Tue 04 Aug 2009 07:23 PM PDT | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi Al,

Bad news... my wife moved out of the house last Friday, 7/31 and moved in with the other man. I think I might have pushed her out of the house since I was asking her out to dinner and to do things (she was receptive 50% of the time, but I think she thought she was leading me on by doing things with me). She didn't say she was moving in with other man, but when I asked her where she was putting her stuff, she said, "Does it matter?" The boxes also had the other man's name on it and she was driving the other man's SUV last Sunday to pick up boxes. She will be back this Sunday to get the rest of her stuff. She took everything that she believed was hers... It's really sad... She left her wedding dress and our wedding albums here, but did take any bday, Valentine's Day, and anniversary cards that I gave her. I was hoping that she



would still go to baseball games that we had tickets for in Aug, Sep, and Oct, but she said she was splitting them up. She said she didn't want to go with me.

I was laid off of my job so she said she would be helping me with finding a new one (practicing interviews, sending me E-mails regarding new jobs she finds, etc.). I was hoping she would've gone to the baseball games with me so that she might stay overnight (our condo is close to the ball park), but that doesn't look like it will happen. I don't know when we'll spend time together again...

I like your ideas of not contacting the spouse that left, but we do communicate. She sends me E-mails regarding jobs, but that's about it. She doesn't initiate phone calls or send an E-mail unless it's job related. Perhaps I should not reach out as much as I'm doing now. I call her every morning to say good morning and tell her about something funny or interesting... She does say that she wants me to call or E-mail her regarding my job search (anything worth mentioning)... I do know that she has strong feelings for the other man. She said that the feelings are stronger than they ever were for me. However, she will say that we had a decent marriage -- were very much in love for the first few years of our marriage and then the last 2 or 3 it went down to a 5 out of 10 (maybe a 6 out of 10). She would say that there was no passion in our marriage and that it was kind of boring.

Now she said she just wants to be friends and she does love me like a spouse loves someone anymore. When I gave her a gift a couple of days ago she said she doesn't want me to buy her gifts and that it makes things "awkward" between us.

What are your thoughts?

Thanks for your time,  
TTSM

[Reply](#)

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### Re: Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by [Al Turtle](#) on Mon 17 Aug 2009 09:13 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear TTSM, Yep. It does sound awful and really sad. At the same time it sounds very normal. Many people reading this have already gone through the same tunnel. Many may be about to go through it. I went through the same thing years ago. [But, who can say?](#) I personally think that your tired and ineffectual relationship is in the process of ending. Can't something better rise from the ashes? Divorce that relationship, not the person.

Here are some thoughts that your letter stirred in me.

- "she thought she was leading me on" – well this is good. She seems aware that she is lying to you. I think the movement toward telling the truth, no matter how hard, is always better. Tis nice to say that truth gently.
- "it's really sad" – right on, my friend. The loss of the dreams is very painful. That hurt can take quite a time to process and metabolize. Don't try to rush it. Let it out.
- "I was hoping that she would still go to baseball games" – sure is tempting to hand onto those old "normal" days. Only problem is that they weren't normal, they were somehow blind.
- "she would be helping me" – hmmm, that seems actually hopeful. If you start vigorously to clean up your side of the relationship, you may still have contact. This idea is why I encourage people to drag their feet on Divorcing – gives time. It may sound really silly, but you might stretch out getting a new job. On the other hand, maybe not ☐
- "I don't know when we'll spend time" – yup. No predictability or reliability now. You have to live with the uncertainty and work to earn that reliability back, now. Of course for some years you may have been living with complete uncertainty and not knowing it. Think on that. How in the future will you be able to rely on someone?
- "I call her every morning" – oh, hey. Repeat with me, "Stop anything that looks like pushing." I bet we have a chorus of people reading this and singing along.
- "she has strong feelings for the other man" – at least this one is in your favor. Sounds as if she still

believes in "feeling for" someone as a magical measure of things. Well, in this case her feeling are for the "imagination she has of this other man" and as she gets to know him those will go away. You may want to work on yourself and be ready for the day with "the new man looks bad" and she comes by to chat with you.

- "maybe a 6 out of 10" – I love your scoring. This sounds so much the way I used to think. Have you considered a score for you and for her. While it was 6 for you what was it for her? Minus 8? Average score was probably dangerously low.
- "She would say that there was no passion" – hell, that's a pretty good indicator of what her score was and which you didn't know about. Gotta fix that communication system: her part that keeps her from telling you and your part that doesn't notice.
- "like a spouse loves someone" – yup. Sounds as if she has a fantasy of how marriage works. Nice fantasy. You both sound like a normal couple doing exactly what couples do during the power struggle stage of marriage. Sound really normal. Of course, you don't have to stay there. [See my Map of Relationships.](#)
- "When I gave her a gift a couple of days ago" – a beautiful example of both pushing and discovering that gifts often come across something really awful. Stop it. Only give her what she wants. You'll have to find out what that is.

Well, that's enough. I wish you luck. My website is full of things to learn. You may say you need help from her, but I say, "[It takes only one to make a marriage, two a divorce.](#)"

AI

[Reply](#)

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#### **Re: Re: Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by TryingToSaveMarriage on Tue 18 Aug 2009 06:00 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi AI,

Thanks for the response. I am debating on whether I should only call her once or twice a week versus every morning. When she first moved out, I called her once in the morning and once in the late afternoon (before she left work). Now I only call her once in the morning -- I give her an update on my job search and ask her how her day was... Do you suggest I contact her only a few times a week? I'm afraid that we'll lose the small connection we already have... Other therapists would suggest that I want to keep the line of communication open so that there would be the chance of somehow connecting... On the other side, she is in the "euphoria love stage", so maybe it doesn't matter. I don't call her on the weekends since she is probably living with the other man. I tried at first, but she never picked up on Sat or Sun.

I had a conversation with her a few weeks ago about our marriage -- we BOTH agreed it was a 5/10 (I thought maybe a 6/10). She said it was an average marriage that was dry and boring (no passion or little passion -- or she didn't feel any passion from me as she now feels from the other man). She didn't say our marriage was horrible. She said that she can "feel" the love from the other man and everything seems so much more exciting. She said that we were in love at the beginning and she felt the passion from me then, but she did admit that the passion she feels from the other man now was more than she felt with me (I don't know if it's the love drug talking, but I hope it is).

At one point a month or two ago I said to her that if you get married to the other man, you might still have the same issues with him (the "euphoria" will wear off, so will you then find someone else better again when the passion isn't there?). She said that she now knows what to do to fix a marriage -- she would work on the marriage with the other man so that wouldn't happen. So I said, "Why won't you work on the marriage with me? We have a history and we both know what to do." She said that she didn't want the marriage with me anymore. She added that she didn't know if we could find the passion again -- and didn't have faith that I would work on the marriage or if she even would. She said we always said we would, but didn't. Lastly she said that she was "on the boat", trying to fix our marriage for the past 2-3 years and she's sorry that I'm just getting on the boat now. She said that she is off the boat now and it's too late (this conversation took place in early June before she was going on a wknd rip with the other man).

She moved out on 7/31 and she sent me an E-mail yesterday, asking me if she can pick up the rest of her stuff this Saturday (8/22). I didn't respond yet, but probably will tell her tomorrow that it's fine. She wrote that she wants to talk to me about a few things too. I hope it's not about a legal separation or divorce... Any suggestions on how I should handle that conversation if the topic comes up?

I do like the idea of dragging my feet with the divorce and the job search. I have an interview this Friday and I asked her for help. She said she can on Wed maybe, but I didn't finalize anything. It would give us the opportunity to meet somewhere...

Thanks again for your insight. Any other insight or suggestions would be appreciated.

TTSM

[Reply](#)

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**Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by [Al Turtle](#) on Wed 19 Aug 2009 02:58 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear TTSM,

If you want more specific suggestions, you might want a personal session with a local counselor, take your experiences to one of the online groups, or maybe [make a phone consult](#) with me. I am glad you are debating what to do. Probably is good to debate that in front of someone who has experience with resolving such challenges.

One thing stuck out in your letter that is very familiar. "we BOTH agreed it was a 5/10" I am very used to not trusting/relying-on any agreement. My lesson was that "if two are agreeing, at least one is somehow lying - mebbe both".

Good luck.

Al

[Reply](#)

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**Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by [Chromaboy](#) on Wed 28 Oct 2009 12:18 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi Al, I am a 45 year old man from England, have known my wife for 25 years and been married 17 years. We have two lovely kids, 15 and 13. I am in a total confused state at the moment and would really like your help... I have read through alot of your articles, and am blown away with your thoughts, and amazed at how you seem to have the whole area of relationships worked out.

Your Map of Relationships seems so spot on it's almost uncanny!

My wife has been drifting away for a quite a while, but just over two weeks ago announced she didn't want sex anymore (and I could almost reach out and touch the revulsion in her look that night - and we haven't had sex for months anyway), has announced she "needs to be true to herself...whatever the cost" and sees me "more as a brother". She has stopped all physical contact of any type, doesn't reply to my texts or calls, and had been sleeping in another bedroom for over 6 months. (I have to go to work early...which was her excuse...)

Finally, last night, I looked at her mobile ( I guessed the lock-code!), and to my horror saw that she has been trying to meet up with a very old clubbing friend, who she came across on Facebook just under a year ago. I don't think they have been intimate, but the coversation seemed very relaxed with kisses etc..

So; until I can have a chat over the phone with you, I really need your help right now. I am so mixed up about whether to be open on all accounts (your inner circle), tell her I know all the other guy and force the issue...(and then have to leave the house and kids to get a flat etc etc) or just do what I told her I'd do, and hang around for the kids, help out where I can and pray she gets to see the light soon??

She's a very beautiful, determined, mixed-up woman, says she loves me (though hasn't said it recently...) and will see things through if needed... She also has taken on three day/evening courses to try and get back some

semblance of an interesting, independant life, and presumarably feels an affair with a long, lost "lover" (I don't think they ever had sex though...) would prove the same thing too...

I'm in a right mess, and now feel all the emotions you so obviously have listed...betrayal, hurt, fear, sadness, confusion etc etc.

I have been stupidly forward planning (up to 8 years!!!) our lives to try and pay off our mortgage etc etc, (to get to your Vintage Love phase!) that I didn't see what was slowly unwinding right in front of me...

Please help me out on my short term confusion, I'm afraid of a downward spiral of despair, and that I'll do the wrong thing...

So looking forward to hearing your thoughts...before I totally do the wrong thing...as usual!

Steve

[Reply](#)

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#### Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by [Al Turtle](#) on Thu 29 Oct 2009 02:38 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Steve,

Just some quick thoughts. Your situation sounds as if you two are popping out of Door #2 (reference my [Map of Relationships](#)). That is, to my way of thinking always a good step. You may have been thinking you were on your way to Vintage Love, but probably you've been a bit blind about what is going on inside your partner. She sounds as if she is restarting the process of Exploration, getting to know who she is. I like to think that when people pop (never seem to do it quietly) out of Door #2, they will notice that they have been "asleep" for a long time. I think it is wonderful to wake up.

I would not directly confront her as if she is doing something wrong. I would plan to connect with her eagerness to move forward and eventually prove to her that "moving forward" is easier with you than by leaving you. That's pretty abstract, but still good advice, I think. I bet she is starting to be more truthful with you and you might want to embrace her messages. And I've bet you've got some work ahead of you, too.

I suggest you see this as an upward spiral into a new way of relating that is a part of getting into Door #1, the University of Life and learning how to become a Vintage Lover.

We can always [talk on the phone](#),  
Good Luck

[Reply](#)

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#### Re: Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by [Chromaboy](#) on Mon 02 Nov 2009 09:18 PM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi Al, many thanks for your prompt and thoughtful reply. It came across exactly as I see it now, and I've been reading through many of your articles to turn myself around, and get the relationship back on track.

However, we just got back from a planned trip to Paris with the kids, which was nice but weird...We spent all three nights leaving the kids to watch TV, and then spending alot of time talking through things in the bar with a fair few glasses of Rose! I thought we were making some kind of progress, but since we got back I've overloaded her with more theories of how we are, who she is, her childhood and parents, and on Sunday she broke down saying she can't cope anymore, feels back at square one and feels absolutely nothing for me going forward. I'd mentioned your map and how it all made sense, and how I understand what is happening, but now she feels totally inadequate, left behind, annoyed and steam-rolled by my eagerness to push things forward...

I printed your Map of Relationships out, left it out for her, and she did actually read it. She said it's "interesting", but says it doesn't matter to her as "things are more complicated than that", and it has no effect on what is happening to us, as she can't help what she feels for me; hasn't "fancied me for years", and keeps saying she "just has to be true to herself" and I'm not a part of her future...

I then ignored your advice (sorry...I'm useless at this...) and dropped in that I knew about her attempts to meet up with an old boyfriend...and that I felt betrayed etc etc., but also that I understood her attempts to seek out new excitement (inc. other men), and ditch her old life (me!) She has flatly refused any type of couple counselling and says it's a waste of time as she is "too far down the road". (but is seeing her own personal counsellor for the 4th week on Wed)

So now we really are in trouble, as I've played my whole hand in what I thought was a relatively mature way, said it's fine for her to continue her journey, even if it means seeing other men, and I'm left with this awful choice of staying here, like some kind of emasculated, impotent, clingy home helper...(I'm finding this almost impossible to do..),or be a "real man" and move out of the house and get a flat, to get out of her hair and force the problem along. This, I know is a big gamble; will be awful for the kids, us, our friends and family; and seriously affect our health and financial position.

I'd really appreciate your comments, and am plucking up courage to call you soon.

Yours sincerely,  
Steve

[Reply](#)

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### Re: Re: Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by [Al Turtle](#) on Wed 04 Nov 2009 01:32 PM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Steve,

This sounds so familiar. One thing I've learned is that I have to do stupid things, see them fall apart all over the place, until I am willing to learn to do better. Another way of looking at it, doing dumb is a part of learning to do better. The step can't be skipped. You are going to have to learn to be a specialist at not pushing people, your partner for sure. Ignoring my advice is always a good idea. Either you have a better outcome that I could have predicted or you'll learn something. On the other hand, some of my advice might be worth paying attention to. You decide. Keep plugging always.

[Reply](#)

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### Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by Anonymous on Sat 21 Nov 2009 02:54 PM PST | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi Al,

I have just read some of your articles, and Reliable Membership (The Two Walls) REALLY struck a chord with me. I was definitely the clinger in the relationship and unfortunately pushed my lover to the leaving wall. after almost 4 years he basically told me that he didnt love me anymore, it was just a 'feeling' inside him (i guess kind of like a switch) and that he used to see us together forever and now he cant. its been 4weeks since we broke up, i tried to convince him to work on it, then we didnt speak and he initiated all contact and i responded, but he jst wanted to be friends, then he was very keen on ringin me and when he did we chatted for a while but i then told him that we couldnt be friends, it was best if we let eachother go if this is what he wanted, but that i love him and understand him and am not angry at him'. so he said he didnt want to say goodbye and was very upset by this but agreed. so that was on monday and its now friday and i havnt heard from him.

I'm so annoyed i didnt read your article before it came to this because now i feel equipped to deal with it and i dnt think we would have broken up!

what should I do now?? and its his birthday in 3 weeks - should i wish him a happy birthday or jst leave it.

[Reply](#)

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### Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by jennifer on Fri 08 Jan 2010 07:00 PM PST | [Permanent Link](#)

My husband had to go back to Austria and I stayed behind with our two boys. I saw this as a way to fix our marriage. He needed to find a job and I couldn't afford to pay for him. He hasn't had to pay any child support because the exchange rates are terrible and his money goes back into his business expenses. So basically, I am paying all the child care as well as all the basic bills. Four months in to are time apart he stopped communicating.

I sent him emails and he sent nothing back. I am also thinking that he spends his weekends now with "friends." He claims that I am the problem for having feelings. So I have this gutt feeling I should give him the space he wants. Apparently I am not allowed to be happy or have feelings. It goes beyond this. Basically I am going to follow your steps and continue to work on me now. I have a 5 year old and 6 year old, both boys who love and need me.

We have been married 8 years and he has never really told me his feelings. He bottles it up and then accuses me of not caring. I didn't know he had a bleeding ulcer until 3 am when I had to call 911. The boys were in diapers then. Kind of difficult to know what he is feeling if he isn't telling me.

[Reply](#)

### Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by Anonymous on Wed 17 Feb 2010 05:53 PM PST | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Al,

A friend of mine referred me to your site after my girlfriend broke up with me. Your advice is exactly what I need! I'm just beginning to explore all of your articles and I am grateful that you took the time post this information.

It's been a week since my girlfriend of almost two years decided to break it off. I was semi-surprised, and of course she had been dwelling on it for a few months. We live in a semi-long-distance relationship; she goes to college about 90 miles from our hometown.

I had not seen her since she left for school, which was 3 and a half weeks prior. This is what she told me when she came home last week: She was stressed out with her workload from school, she said that I loved her more than I love myself, that our age difference (she's 20, I'm 24) made her reconsider what she wants, and that I wasn't as adept at making her feel happy as she could for me. I told I wished I could have been involved in her decision-making, but I learned that she probably felt unsafe in telling me, because she knows I'm pretty sensitive. I asked her what would happen when she comes back to our hometown in 3 months for summer break and she said she wasn't sure. After about 40 minutes of talking and crying, she collected all of her things out of my room and left.

For the record, she's my best friend, I'm in love with her, our relationship was steady and strong up until the last 3 months or so.

I know I am a clinger, but I've been staying faithful to the 4 steps so far. In three months, she will be on summer break and back in our hometown, most likely feeling less pressure and stress. This is my dilemma right now: When she does decide to initiate contact with me while she's at school, how much do I divulge to her? As you said, minimal contact is necessary, but soon she'll be back home and within minutes of my house. Do I follow your examples regardless, whether she's 90 miles away or 3 miles away? If her stress level is lower when she's home, can I be more open with her? I really want to tell her all that I've learned from your site, how I want to communicate better, be a better person, validate her resentments, make her feel safe again, all that good stuff. Your advice instantly clicked with me, this is a huge wake up call on my part. I really don't want to lose her, I feel like she is the one for me, and from our conversations, I believe she thinks the same way, but she just got way too overwhelmed. I want to do everything I can to save our relationship. Anything you could suggest or say or reiterate would be so helpful to me. Thank you so much!

-Johnny

[Reply](#)

### Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by [Al Turtle](#) on Thu 18 Feb 2010 05:06 PM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Well, Johnny, I really keep on saying the same things. I wonder what a set of marriage vows would sound like if they included the [Biological Dream](#)? Hmmm.

I, John to take you (fill in name) to be my partner in life. I commit myself to becoming a source of Safety to you. I will continue to grow until I know how to create safety/trust and recover it when it is lost. I guarantee I will get there with you.

I commit to your needs for space - even from me. I will continue to work so that whenever you need a break from anyone or from me, I will help you get it. I commit myself to your connection needs. I will continue to

work so that even when we are away you will be able to trust that I will come back to you. I guarantee I will get there with you.

I commit myself to your needs to be different and to sharing your differing ways of seeing and valuing everything. I will continue to work until we both feel safely connected in a space where we treasure how different we are and will always be. I guarantee I will get there with you.

I commit myself to respecting your need to always make your own choices for yourself, your body, your property, your thoughts, your emotions, your time and your worth. I will continue to work until both of us experience full respect whenever we are together. I guarantee I will get there with you.

And I commit myself to being a source of nurturance to your soul, its passage and journey on this earth, its purpose. I will continue to work to help make this world a better place for us both having been in it, together and severally. I guarantee I will get there with you.

I commit myself to building love with you for the rest of our lives. I guarantee I will get there with you.

Well, that was fun. Not very long. Good luck.

Al

[Reply](#)

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**Re: Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by johnny123 on Thu 18 Feb 2010 08:44 PM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Al,

I appreciate the quick reply. I value your creative response to my queries, I could imagine the repetition in your work to be frustrating at times. I feel that sometimes, I know the answer, but it helps to hear another rational voice echo it. I will continue to do my work.

Thanks again,

Johnny

[Reply](#)

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**Re: Re: Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by johnny123 on Fri 04 Jun 2010 12:37 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Al,

It's been about 3 & 1/2 months since I began using your logic to help with my breakup. So far I feel like I've adhered pretty well to the rules you have set. I've limited my contact, worked on myself, stayed busy. I have not physically seen or spoken to my ex-gf since then, though we have had small text conversations to sort of check-in with each other. In one recent conversation I told her I missed her and was thinking about her. She said the same thing, that she missed me, and that she was thinking about me and would like to meetup. She said she would get back to me with her work schedule. It's been more than 3 weeks since she said she would get back to me. Now I understand she may just not be ready yet, and that is fine. But I'm also thinking perhaps she really is avoiding me because she just doesn't really want to meet with me and only said that to satisfy my feelings for the time being, until I get the hint, from the passage of time, that she isn't interested anymore. I was wondering, in your opinion, if there is a safe way to phrase a question or statement in that I might find out her motives; send out a sort of "feeler" to see where she is at. Is this asking too much of her? Am I breaking my discipline by giving in and wanting to see where she is at? I want to be patient and disciplined, but I also want to be realistic and not cling to false hopes.

Sincerely,

Johnny

[Reply](#)

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**Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by [Al Turtle](#) on Fri 18 Jun 2010 09:14 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Johnny, A couple of thoughts.

The whole purpose of the 4 steps in this article are to "turn around" or "slow down" the leaving person. Once, or whenever, they "turn" or "slow" then is the time to display how much you have learned - Step 3. Little text messages are a tough way to display this, but they seem to me better than nothing.

When she says "I miss you," that seems a clear sign of "slowing or turning." The length of time suggests that she needs much more before she will "turn around." And so you continue to practice patience. [How long you wait is up to you](#) and is not an easy decision.

For you to be curious is really healthy. Is there a safe way to get a response? Tricky question. Since she's pulled away so far, I imagine her thoughts of you (without you doing anything) are full of scary memories. And so your question is more, "how to I speak through the noise of her memories in a way that she'll feel safe?" My guess is that all you can do is act very lightly curious and invitational. Phrases like, "love to hear what's going on for you?" "What's up" "How's it going" come to mind. If you say any of those phrases many times, they will sound pushy and scary. And so one invitational phrase spread across 4 messages might be a good rule.

[Reply](#)

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### Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by Surku on Mon 08 Mar 2010 05:59 AM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Hey Al,

I've been reading your articles for the past couple of weeks now and first of all I'll have to thank you for the invaluable information you have given. My girlfriend left me a month ago and your articles have given me a good insight on things and how I should act from now on.

I still have some questions and I'd love to hear your opinion on some things.

First of all, what are your thoughts on rekindling the flame that has been lost, how to possibly bring back the love after a break up? How should one approach the rekindling of love? Do you think that after the love has been lost it is easier to rekindle it since the deep emotions and love have once been there or is it harder the second time around?

In my situation my ex said that she had fallen out of love and she didn't know the reason to it. I myself am a clinger and after doing a whole lot of thinking I came to the conclusion that my clinging drove her out of love. Often after panicking I became jealous very easily and easily hurt and she also said that I also sounded very accusing which in turn hurt her. I think that my own assumption is pretty valid?

After following the four steps I think that the right way to go is to make myself a source of safety to her again. I think that I should try to build the relationship anew with the biological dream in mind and I should start with the safety. What are your thoughts on this?

Thanks!

[Reply](#)

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### Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by Al Turtle on Mon 08 Mar 2010 09:30 AM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Hey there, Surku,

I think you are on track. Good for you. I would have suggested that you devour the [Map of Relationships](#), but I think you have. So go for it! Maybe I can reiterate what I've said in the Map a bit differently and it will help.

First love, infatuation, romantic love, those-deep-feelings, always comes to an end, in my experience - always. This has to happen. (Nice and reliable stuff here. I suggest you look around and see how business



people make money off of this.)

Those wonderful feelings seem based on a wide-open dreamy view of a) living in the "Biological Dream" and b) Vintage Love - same thing I guess. But it is not based on the reality of the journey ahead, and all the work needed to make the Biological Dream a reality.

And thus "data" kills romance. Your behavior (pushy, panic or whatever) finally got through to her Lizard and it gave up producing that dreamy cocktail of drugs. She says, "I fell out of love." Same thing.

Can you "rekindle it"? No way in hell! You can't go back, nor can she, to being stupid. Knowledge is terminal. Once you got it you can't go back to not knowing it. Our brains are not designed to forget.

Can you still get to Vintage Love? Sure. And it is truly wonderful! And we are designed to get there, I believe. "Life is Beautiful," as a friend had entitled her website. Easier to get there with this person that having to find another and start all over. Still we are all free (even designed to be free) so all you can do is buckle down and lead the way. Or go find someone else, fall in love, fall out of love and then buckle down and lead the way. Or find two someone elses, etc. etc.

Good luck. All I can do is suggest the way.

[Reply](#)

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### **Re: Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by Surku on Mon 08 Mar 2010 11:43 AM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Thank you for your reply Al, you really gave me so much to think about!

So basically the purpose of the first romantic love is to get people together but other than that it serves no purpose, am I right? The "fall out of love" to the reality that relationships need work to get to the vintage love seems to be the thing that scares us when we fall out of love.

It is funny how I have always considered the "falling out of love" as some kind of point of no return but it seems that it is necessary and unavoidable, is it not? Basically we should start working towards the vintage love as soon as we fall out of the romantic love or we get scared away.

So after a break up you should really start to work towards the vintage love and show your ex that you are willing and able to get to it with him/her? It seems that that usually after break up people try to get back to the romance state when they actually should work beyond that because the romance state is long gone.

So I take it that all you will have to do is to invite the other to share and work on the biological dream, it seems it is the only way to go and luckily, to me it also seems that break up after the romantic love isn't that big of a problem as long as you are showing you are working on yourself and are willing and able to work in a relationship.

Thank you Al for opening my eyes to new things!

[Reply](#)

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### **Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by Surku on Thu 18 Mar 2010 09:45 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Hey al, I just feel like sharing and venting a bit of my current situation since I feel a bit stumped at the moment.

About a week ago I initiated contact with my ex girlfriend, as she hoped I would do when I felt ready for it. We have met couple times and chatted on instant messenger, I have kept the conversations light and funny and I have been mirroring, validating and prevalidating as much as possible with her. I has been nice to feel that our conversations still flow nicely as they did before and everything has been enjoyable. Even though I have done the major part of initiating contact I have tried to not be pushy.

Now, for the past few days some thoughts and fears have been on my mind and they've got my mood down quite a bit.

First thing I've been thinking about is what if it isn't possible to progress beyond the friend-stage? When we broke up my ex told me that she really would like to have me as a friend still and that of course is one of the worst things someone can say to the other when breaking up, it hurts pretty damn bad. Still to my knowledge friendship can progress to a romantic relationship, that is how my relationships have started in the past but still I catch myself thinking that what if all my efforts are in vain? Do you have any thoughts on this?

My current task on hand is to rebuild safety and trust through your methods, I am trying to form a durable foundation to build on. I have also been trying to keep the contact between us as reliable and consistent as I can, do you think this is the right thing to do at the moment?

I have been feeling a bit anxious for some days after we opened contact again, I have noticed that in my panicky states I have started to feel the need for some kind of instant gratification. At those times I feel like there really should be some visible progress but afterwards when my lizard calms down I am able to see the bigger picture and the facts. We have been talking to each other for a week now for crying out loud, nothing can come out of it so fast. I guess I am just so eager to see some results so I could tell that I am making progress. Patience truly is the greatest virtue.

Also I have been thinking a lot about the differences between relationships that progress from the friendship stage and relationships that start through the attraction process and I would really like to hear your opinion on this.

I myself have come to the conclusion that relationships that progress from friendships seem to be more about the biological dream from the start. My relationships have progressed from friendships and before the romantic relationship we had that trust and safety which I think is a great factor in these situations, or is it? Could this relation be revoked and can it possibly lead to a romantic relationship on the second time?

When I think about the traditional attraction induced relationships it seems that it is what people try to get back to after breaking up which seems to be a wrong thing to do since the data has killed this kind of attraction, what are your thoughts on this?

Some of these things might be close to some of the things I've asked earlier but I felt like clearing my thoughts and these things have been bugging me for a while.

Thanks!

[Reply](#)

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### Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by [Al Turtle](#) on Mon 22 Mar 2010 01:26 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Surki, I do have some thoughts (always see to have thoughts),

First is that all relationships are based on Friend relationships and ideally progress from shallow friendships to deeper and deeper ones. I often think that an enemy is just a friend with whom you have negative stuff to solve.

A romantic relationship, thus is just a friend relationship with the added juices of the Imago, the Biological Dream, and PEA - the infatuation drug. I fear that most believe that PEA, and all the infatuation drugs, are for most people the indication of a perfect soul mate. I think this is profoundly silly, but then I believed it for many many years before I received so much data and changed my beliefs.

I wrote a clumsy article on finding Mr. & Ms Right to illustrate these problems.

So if this EX was someone you fell in love with and they fell in love with you, then I think them to be a perfectly good candidate to build Vintage Love with. And I think they will probably always be a good candidate - way into the future.

Your curiosity as to whether it is worth it, to pursue this person, is up to you. I think if you have someone else to work on/with, then "No." But if you don't have anyone else, you might want to invest the little bit in trying to reconnect.

Reading your note, I think the real enemy is "panic" - your panic and the kinds of things you will do when panicked. Your goal is to handle all issues so that you eventually almost never get panicked. And remember that people cannot panic you. Learn about Boundaries.

Oh, one thing. I don't see patience as a virtue. I see it as a set of skills, skills that keep you calm when you cannot control the clock. I think people call it a virtue because those who haven't learned it are a bit of a pain in the neck.

I also like your thinking about calmer-starting relationships and the hot starting ones. My guess, like yours, is that in calmer relationship the actuality of Biological Dream Skills is probably higher. In hot relationship, the "promise" of those skills and feelings is higher. Thus hot relationships probably feel wilder and crash bigger.

Also I like your thoughts about moving from friendships to Romantic Love. I think that people really really want Romantic Love. And I think they are missing the point. Romantic Love is a promise w/o skills. It always crashes due to the lack of skills. Sure it is nice, but cannot last. Mebbe it is better to go for Vintage Love rather than Romantic Love from the beginning.

Could be. And good luck.

### Reply

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#### **Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by Tangs on Wed 24 Mar 2010 02:40 PM PDT | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi Al

First of all great advice!

After four years in a great relationship, often described as perfect by our friends, my girlfriend ended it 3 weeks ago. She told me that the "spark" we once had had died and she wants to do her own thing (@ 19 years old, im 21). Up until this point we were still doing fine, not fighting, not arguing and still being together. It wasn't BAD as per say. She says she still and always will love me and still cares alot about me.

She is still communicating with me and has told me she wants to continue to "hang out". Right now I am working on giving her space and keeping communication to a minimum, i.e not to pressure her. I will continue to see her often as we have the same circle of friends and we will both be friendly to each other as we still care about each other.

I think I let her down in the past year or so and now Im regretting it! I need to convince her that we still have a spark and we still have a good thing going. I feel that by holding off alot of contact may give her the feeling that we are both moving on, that there isn't anything there, and that it can be easy for us to move on - something I dont want!

Time seems to me making this easier for me but I do not want to let go. I honestly feel that this is worth keeping but telling her this isn't going to change things as she thinks ill be acting out on desperation and fear of change (maybe months down the track me telling her might have some effect as she might realise how much I do love her and want to be with her)

Also I think I should mention she does have small feelings for another guy but she doesn't plan to take it up with him anytime soon. He wasn't the reason for the break up but I feel it may have been a final kicker and I also worry it may harm my chances of getting back together.

I definately feel your advice here is awesome and I believe it will work to some degree but I feel the only way we will get back together is if she realises that as "us" we are worth hanging on to and there is something special STILL there.

### Reply

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#### **Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?**

by MantaRei on Mon 05 Apr 2010 09:56 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi Al,

Really interesting website. I have been reading it for a while and am perhaps coming round (I am the eternal skeptic) And I have a few pretty specific questions that seem to be repeated quite often on this site.

After a partner leaves, I understand the logic that their lizard has been frightened and for an avoider (it seems to me as well according to your logic it will usually be the avoider who leaves and the clinger who is left) the situation is best dealt with by leaving. Their biological dream is dead. The clinger clings ever harder to the dream. Its a bit of a trainwreck.

And I understand the logic behind your advice about what to do when the partner leaves. Here is where I run into trouble:

Sure, be available to a partner minimally when they leave. But under what context? So often a partner will say 'i want to be freinds' (and im sure i echo so many people when i ask WHY DO THEY SAY THIS?? GUILT?) If you become available to them as friends, is this not just pandering to their newly expressed needs and so why would they ever come around to wanting a romantic relationship again?

Im sure alot of us clingers feel as though this is continuing to 'cling' and be a pushover to what the leaving partner wants. If we continue to pander in this manner, why on earth would the leaving partner want to change the status quo? I have often heard the notion that one should NEVER attempt to be freinds with a leaving partner in an attempt to win them back. it only ends in tears.

I would really like to hear Turtle logic on this one.

Yours,  
Mantarei

[Reply](#)

### Re: Re: What to do when He/She Leaves?

by [Al Turtle](#) on Thu 08 Apr 2010 05:21 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear MantaRei,

It's taken me a while to get back to you. Actually your question so interested me, that I sat on it for a while and even took it to a group of men I meet with weekly, who generally like my material. I wanted their input. I will just share my thoughts point by point from your letter.

- (*am perhaps coming round I am the eternal skeptic*) I, too, took a long time to "come around." Enjoy being a skeptic and salute you.
- (*your logic it will usually be the avoider who leaves and the clinger who is left*). Actually that is not my only experience and this may be useful in this situation. Certainly someone who is leaving is more into their avoider mode. But both people have clinger and avoider modes. The paper that attracts most people to my website, What to do when He/She Leaves?, certainly is addressed to those frantic clingers out there. My experience is that there are other reasons why people leave. For instance, a person who clings fruitlessly long enough will sometimes give up and walk away. But another reason is the issue of power and Autonomy (Master/Slave, etc.). This issue is often a factor in the relationship which must be solved eventually. But that solving process won't happen as long at the Clinger/Avoider stuff is going on. First things first.
- (*Their biological dream is dead.*) My men's group jumped on this one – rather loudly. Their exact phrases include the word "Bullshit" quite often. As I see it, the Biological Dream is still alive, very alive. Just their hope of getting it with this person has critically diminished. Maybe the hope is dead. It takes quite a while to destroy all hope, often years. The goal is to rebuild it – the hope of the Biological Dream by changing behavior. The only people where the Biological Dream is dead are those in Door #2, and they, too, can awaken.
- (*Its a bit of a trainwreck.*) The guys laughed at this idea. Trainwrecks, disasters, etc. seem almost the only way that stubborn people learn. I see this as a magnificent opportunity to learn. The trainwreck was what was going on in the relationship before it got to this stage. Now things are looking up!
- (*partner will say 'I want to be friends' (and I'm sure I echo so many people when I ask WHY DO THEY SAY THIS?? GUILT?)*) This one is fun and may go directly to the heart of your example. What is the difference between Romantic Love and Vintage Love? The former is a dreamy state in which people try to maintain delusions of deep-long-lasting friendship. The latter is a reliable state of deep-long-lasting friendship. Generally a person who says they just want to be "friends" is somehow rejecting the insane portion of Romantic Love. Generally I find they are rejecting the intense loss-of-self that occurs, or that did occur for

them, in an Enmeshed Romantic Relationship. Friendship seems, to them, healthier than what was going on. Might be good to look over the paper I call Map of Relationship, short form. People moving this way are usually trying to avoid the feeling of being possessed by their partner. A Clinging and Power person can easily generate this feeling in others.

- *(If you become available to them as friends, is this not just pandering to their newly expressed needs and so why would they ever come around to wanting a romantic relationship again?)* Two things came out of this. 1) Your goal is to rekindle in them the hope of obtaining Vintage Love with you. The best way to do that is to start leading the way. If they were in Romantic Love with you for any time, they are a good candidate to achieve that goal with. So don't throw 'em away. Get to work. 2) The word Pander just sticks out as I read it. The guys said, "Oh, watch him. He's a selfish power guy. He wants his way and screw her needs. And he's competitive. Thinks that either he wins or loses - the words "pander" or "pushover". Either that or he fears being dominated by her." They are a bit blunt and all they have to go by is you note. But their guesses seemed valuable to me. What the heck is Pandering? Seems to me you want to build a relationship where both pander to each other, kindly and gently and nobody dominates the other and nobody loses. My guess is the lessons about Power: Master/Slave, Power of Passivity, Passivity in the Foundations might be useful. One guy suggested you read the paper on Are you a Controller. Tis not all about Clinger Avoider.

- *(one should NEVER attempt to be friends)* My guess is that the people who say this are not seriously looking for Vintage Love. I don't think the issue is "being friends." I think the issue is that type of long term friendship that Romantic Love attracts us to go for – Vintage Love partners. The word "friend" just doesn't do it for me. Seems kind of boring after the excitement of Romantic Love. And losing that excitement is a good cause for tears and I believe a wonderful opportunity to go 4 it.

Hope this bit of Turtle Logic helps.