



Not everyone will be celebrating Valentine's.

If you need to talk to someone about relationship troubles, compassionate and discreet counsel is just a phone call away.

"What's going on, Jill?"
"What are you talking about?"
"About the texts on your phone last night at two in the morning!"
"What are you talking about?"
"I opened them, and who is Earl?"
"While I was sleeping! You opened my texts? That's private!"
"I opened your emails, too, and there were nine from Earl. Who the hell is he?"
"You're hacking into my emails, Jack! How dare you!"
"I'm not hacking - I got your password. Just tell me what this is all about. I think you're cheating on me."
"Oh for God's sake, Jack. Don't be ridiculous. Because I receive a few messages from someone you don't know you can't just assume..."

"I can and I do! You've been coming home from work later than usual"
"We have a new contract I've been assigned to and..."
"And you've been pulling away from me in bed for months, and now I find messages from someone I've never met. Who is he?"
"He's someone I met on Facebook; he's been helping me with this new contract..."
"Why is he messaging you at two in the morning about a contract? Get real! And this isn't the first time, Jill. I've heard your phone buzzing, several times over the last few weeks, late at night. At first I acted like I was asleep and I just didn't bother to..."
"To what, Jack? Pay any attention to me? Not until someone else does, then you..."
"So it IS someone else! Another man is paying attention to you so you go sneaking around..."

"I haven't sneaked around at all!"

"Yes, you have. He said he was so excited to finally meet you last Sunday night. You weren't at work Sunday night and you weren't at your sister's because I phoned and you weren't there. You two had it planned."

"So you HAVE been reading my private messages, and for a while! Not just last night! You're lying to me, Jack!"

"I'm lying to you! What have you been doing!?"

"The truth is I want a divorce, Jack. There. It's out in the open. I don't want to talk about it anymore because you always have all the answers. You're always "Mister Right" and I'm always too demanding. You don't like talking about everything, getting into feelings, blah blah blah. We've been through this a thousand times and I'm finished!"

"So this is your way of working out our problems?"

"You're the one, Jack, who refused to go to counseling two years ago when I asked. And refused again last fall, and again over Christmas. No. Enough is enough. When you're finally good and ready then I'm supposed to drop everything..."

"Drop everything! What are you dropping? I demand to know how far this thing with Earl has gone!"

"You demand! You don't have any right to demand. You broke our trust seven years ago when I was pregnant!"

"And what? You never got over it, never forgave me. I tried to..."

"Give it up, Jack! Every time you drink too much you flirt with any woman who..."

"Oh, I see; so now I have a drinking problem, is that what you're saying?"

"What I'm saying, Jack, is I'm finished. It's over. The flame has gone out. How else must I say it?"

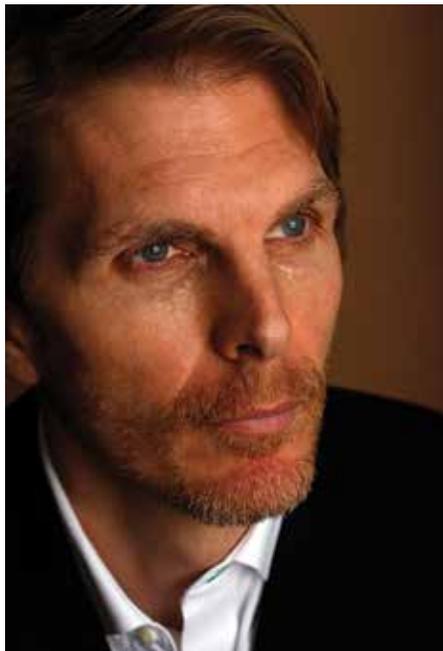
"Well, thanks for the wonderful Valentine's gift, Jill. I had booked a surprise trip to Las Vegas for Valentine's Day and now I'll just cancel it!"

"I have never had any interest in Las Vegas, Jack, or didn't you notice? I don't gamble, I hate glitz, and I'm tired of pretending that a of couple nights with a bottle of champagne in a motel room is my idea of a real relationship..."

Jack and Jill both fell down the hill, and won't be spending Valentine's Day together. In fact, millions of people won't, and not all because their relationships fell apart. Being alone can be difficult at any time of the year. It can also be a time for personal growth, with many possibilities for learning if we reach out to family, friends and others we trust. When we feel stuck, it is an opportunity to become involved with counselling.

SURVIVING VALENTINE'S DAY

Being on your own on Valentine's Day is challenging enough, but going through a break up when the 14th of February rolls around is just unfair. Relationship break ups, like any grief and loss, have some predictable stages. People may skip stages, get stuck in a stage, or go back and forth between stages. There is no predictable pattern. However, chances are you will experience at least some of the following:



The Grieving Stage

After the initial shock and denial, feelings of grief and loss set in. This is the stage people most want to skip. You hurt, the pain is crushing and it feels like life will never be the same. As much as you may be tempted to rush through this stage or ignore it altogether, it's important to take the time to feel your sadness. Don't be afraid to get it all out: cry, write in your journal, talk to friends. Really experiencing this stage is key to moving through this stage intact.



The Angry Stage

If you're the one being left, you will likely go through a period of admitting to every personal flaw and defect. You are only too willing to accept all the blame, especially if you believe this will bring your ex back. After a period of berating yourself, and the realization that your ex is not returning, no matter how much you change, you probably will become angry. You will realize that everything wasn't your fault. You'll come

to remember everything he or she did or said that was wrong, and how they've ruined your life. If you are the one who left, you may use your anger to ease your conscience for hurting your ex or to resist pleas for reconciliation. Anger is natural. It hurts less than grief and can be a relief from the pain. However, you don't want to get stuck in this stage. Accept it as normal. Avoid doing something you'll regret. Use your anger to help accept that the relationship is over.

The Remaking of Yourself Stage

This is also called the preoccupied stage because you become preoccupied with trying to create a new, exciting life for yourself. You're also focused on creating a new and exciting you! You may throw yourself into every activity under the sun— joining groups, taking classes, and keeping busy day and night. It's the fear of never meeting anyone else, of being boring and unlovable and of being lonely that drives you. Rebuilding your confidence is necessary, but it's also important that you don't immerse yourself in activities as a way of avoiding your feelings.



The Lonely Stage

Despite the new hobbies and groups, you find yourself feeling lonely. Everywhere you look, couples are holding hands. You feel depressed and pessimistic about the future. All the activities haven't produced a new partner. This is the time to reflect on what you really want and need. Reconnect with old friends. Develop deeper intimacy in the relationships you have now.

The Blame Stage

During this stage you are developing your story of the relationship, what went wrong, and who was to blame. You may create a version where you accept total blame or another where your ex is entirely at fault. Try letting go of the blame game. Objectivity will take several years. Don't rush your story.



Let it unfold for you, with the wisdom of a few more years. Avoid focusing on who was right and who was wrong, and instead concentrate on what you need and want from a relationship in the future. How do you want to be? What worked in this relationship and what didn't? Consider what respect, integrity and intimacy means to you.

The Learning Stage

During this stage you will let go of blame and regret and in its place develop peace around the relationship. You'll take away from it what was good, and learn what went bad. You will have a clear picture of how you want to be in a relationship, and be clearer still on how you want to be treated.

The Single Stage

Now that you have healed and moved on, you will discover that being single has its advantages. You can focus on yourself and do things you've always wanted to do. You may still hope to be in a relationship one day, but now appreciate the benefits of being single. You know your worth and truly understand you are better off alone than in an unsatisfactory relationship.

Your friendships are deeper and mean more than ever. You have learned about your likes and dislikes, developed new interests, and find enjoyment in your time alone. Most importantly, you enjoy who you have become.

A break up can be the most painful experience you go through in your life. It is important you not go through it alone. Talk to friends and family. Consider talking to a counsellor to move you through the stages.

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