

# Design for life

## I'm hurt because my ex is now with another woman

This week, clinical hypnotherapist **Fiona Brennan** advises a reader who feels humiliated by the aftermath of his break-up



### Dear Expert,

I'm a 50-year-old male who spent ten years in a relationship with my ex. When we broke up three years ago, it was extremely painful. But I thought we did it for the right reasons - we had grown apart, and were being honest with each other about that fact. In recent months, she has been everywhere on social media with her new partner, who is a woman. I'm very supportive of LGBTQ+ rights, but I've been shocked at how humiliated and hurt I feel. It has made me re-evaluate everything about our relationship, even though she never had an affair and we did not break up because of this. I'm struggling to get my head around everything.

### Dear Reader,

When a long-term relationship breaks up, it is akin to a grief. The loss can be profound. The life that you knew for ten years was literally turned on its head. By its nature, this is emotionally tumultuous and has forced a re-evaluation of who you are.

Before I help you with the current situation, let's rewind to three years ago. From what you have written, it sounds like you navigated this hard time to the best of your ability. However, I wonder if the split was totally mutual? Sometimes the person who instigated it can be the one who wants change most, even if the other person also thinks it is a good move. As much as you are now questioning your ex's reasons, be sure you fully examine your own.

Reading between the lines, it sounds like you still miss her. Three years is usually enough for a partner to have dealt with the pain and recovered.

I would pose the question: have you truly moved on? It appears that you genuinely thought you had, but when you heard about her new relationship this threw everything up in the air. That is totally understandable, as it feels like the goalposts have been moved and leads you to question the real reason why she broke up with you.

The current situation has not only brought you back to your initial pain, but added an element of confusion to the mix.

You say you separated not because she expressed an interest in anybody else, male or female, but because you both grew apart. Do you feel that perhaps she deceived you in some way and already knew she was interested in women? This could lead to a sense of betrayal.

However, it is highly possible that her sexual status only became apparent to her after you broke up. The ending of a relationship can lead people to explore their sexuality in a way they had not done before. Adopting the stance that your ex had no intention to deceive you is a mindset that will help you heal.

Either way, the fact remains that she has moved on. After three years, this is normal and healthy. Are you bothered that she has found someone else, or that she is now in a same-sex relationship? It seems you are shocked by your own feelings and perhaps this is keeping you stuck.

You say you are totally "supportive of LGBTQ+ rights", so why is the gender of your ex's new partner an issue? Is it this in particular that makes you feel "humiliated"? If so, it's time to compassionately examine your belief systems. You have no reason to be humiliated. You had a relationship and now it is over.

Social media has caused too many broken hearts. In the past, we were not privy to every move our exes made. We carried on without knowing what they had for breakfast with a new partner. I strongly recommend that you no longer follow her feed on any online platform. You don't have to unfriend her or bring attention to it, but simply remove your access to her updates - they are clearly damaging your emotional and mental wellbeing.

So, let's gently examine why you are drawn to keeping an eye on her current life. Perhaps there is a part of you that regrets breaking up? Or perhaps you thought you would get back together at some stage? If that's the case, give yourself permission to accept your feelings and work through them. By doing so, you can truly let go.

You don't mention if you have maintained contact with her. When you are stronger and have released your unnecessary sense of humiliation, it may be worth writing to ask if the break-up was partly because of her questioning her sexuality.

She is under no obligation to respond. But a letter that's written from your heart with no agenda is one that will help you to process the changes she has made, whether she replies or not.

All relationships need closure, and this could be what's causing your unwanted emotions. Something you thought had been closed was opened again. The reality, though, is that this situation has provided you with an opportunity to learn about yourself.

In order to help you feel liberated and at peace with yourself, it is worth exploring the theme of humiliation. Can you identify where this emotion lives in your body?

If so, can you notice if it is familiar from an earlier context in your life? Often, breakups can trigger deep-rooted and often unresolved childhood issues such as being abandoned. Once you have identified any such connections, it is time to offer yourself compassion and understanding - and then extend those to your ex-partner.

Last but not least, I really recommend that you explore ways of meeting new people. Join a walking club, or volunteer within your community. These experiences will help you to embrace a fresh start. ■

Got a problem or something you'd like advice on? Email anonymously by contacting us [tinyurl.com:designforlifebusinesspost](mailto:tinyurl.com:designforlifebusinesspost) and we'll match your query with the best expert we can find on the subject. You can also drop an email in confidence to [naeline@businesspost.ie](mailto:naeline@businesspost.ie)



**Fiona Brennan**

Fiona Brennan is a clinical hypnotherapist with a private clinic in Blackrock, Co Dublin. A bestselling author, she regularly delivers talks and workshops on a range of areas from stress and anxiety to building confidence and public speaking. In June she will be running Light Up 2022 - The Positive Habit, a therapeutic retreat on the island of Crete. Fiona writes a weekly blog with uplifting tips and has a weekly Instagram Live (@the\_positive\_habit) session called Therapy on the Couch every Wednesday evening. Full info can be found at [thepositivehabit.com](http://thepositivehabit.com).

## MY HOPE FOR 2022

To sustain and increase my health and positive outlook so that I can continue to be of service to my family, friends and the work I love so much.