

Breaking up is Hard to Do

Susan Peabody

"Success lies in being able to retreat at the right moment and in the right manner. The success is made possible by the fact that the retreat is not the forced flight of a weak person but the voluntary withdrawal of a strong one." *The I Ching or Book of Changes*

Now and then, no matter how hard you try to turn an addictive relationship into a healthy one, you have to admit defeat and call it quits. The following suggestions may prove helpful if this is the case.

1. Face your fears:

Fear of loneliness

I'll never find anyone else

I can't make it alone

I'll be alone forever

Being alone is terrifying

Financial fears:

I can't take care of the kids alone

I won't find a job

Fear of being a failure:

Leaving is failing

I can't mess up another relationship

Fear of cultural pressures:

I'm a Christian. I can't get divorced.

Fear mixed with guilt:

I am abandoning him
She can't make it without me
I put up with him this long, why stop now
I can't bear to hurt her
I owe her for taking care of me

Fear of reprisal:

She won't let me go without a fight
He will hurt me
He will hurt the kids
She will tell our friends lies
He won't give me financial support

Fear of suffering:

I can't stand the pain of another ending

2. Projection:

I cannot let them suffer because I know how it feels to suffer loss and abandonment.

3. What to Do:

Plan ahead:

Find emotional support (group/therapist)

Be practical. Make plans regarding jobs and housing.

Leave: How you leave depends on your situation and what works. Some people, for the sake of their sanity or because they have children with their partner, have to ease off. Some people can only make the separation if they never see the person again. Some of people can become friends, but only after the grief is over.

4. Facing withdrawal after you have left:

Make a list of everything that supports your decision to leave.

Re-read it when you are tempted to go running back.

Write in your journal. Express your feelings.

Stay close to your friends:

To get advice

To remind you of why you left

For companionship

For reassurance

To listen to you

For assistance in re-entry

Separate thoughts from feelings.

Change "desperate" thoughts to "manageable" thoughts

Let go of thoughts that cause fear.

5. Deal with depression:

Depression will be part of your withdrawal symptoms. Emotional depression is experienced when love addicts are overloaded with anger, frustration, anxiety and fear. It is experienced midway between letting go and real acceptance. That is, when love addicts have let go in their conscious state (mind) but are still holding on in their unconscious state (heart), they are apt to become depressed. This is natural and part of the process of moving on. Usually their inner child is taking over at this point and they are feeling "blue" because their need to attach with someone has been thwarted once again. And they are also afraid. They feel abandoned and/or rejected. They feel alone and cut adrift from everybody and everything, so they shut down. Remember that depression is a secondary emotional state caused by the primary emotions of anger, fear, and hopelessness. Work on letting go of these feelings and the depression will lift.

6. Look at the bright side:

Think about what you have learned and what changes you will be making in the future.