

Mistress Manners

Dear Mistress Manners:

It has been years since I split up with my girlfriend and had to move out of the house we had together. I found out, toward the end, that she had been seeing someone else behind my back. The new girlfriend moved in just a month or so after I moved out. This was a real slap in the face since the two of us had been together for almost five years and I had spent all kinds of time and money renovating the house (her dad's) and landscaping a new garden. Of course, I rolled my eyes at her serial monogamy, which wasn't even monogamous; but the thing is that it has been a few years now and they're still together, and it bugs me. I saw them shopping for a new lawnmower recently and it made me want to hurl. I don't know how to let it go.

~ Impatiently Hanging On

Dear Impatiently Hanging On:

If this were a Shirley Jackson story, you'd have clipped the rose bushes you once planted and ripped up the entire yard. As it stands, it sounds like you left with integrity and tried to move on peacefully. For this, you deserve more than just a pat on the back. It's not easy to come to terms with infidelity, particularly when the result is that you're out of your home and someone else has taken over the spot. There's nothing quite as awful as feeling replaced. And, on top of that, it sounds like you invested a great deal into creating a sense of home in the space you once shared.

Mistress Manners has noticed a huge amount of pressure—probably because queer communities are small and often tightly knit—to “let it go.” The truth is that you'll let things go when you're ready, and there's not a whole lot you can do to speed up the process except work through your feelings. It sounds like you've maintained a healthy distance, which is probably the best. All too often, there is a lot of pressure on us to become friends right away, and sometimes that's just too much of a strain. It's great when it happens; but it doesn't have to happen.

Perhaps the answer lies in doing what works well for you. If you're a crafty gardener and gardening makes you feel at home, hopefully you have created a situation where you can do that for yourself now. Hopefully, you have made a home for yourself that reflects who you are. And, if you're not totally comfortable with where your ex is at, maybe it's a good opportunity to throw some of that energy into creating something positive for yourself.

It might also be helpful to remember that exes are exes for a good reason—they have a way of getting under your skin more than anyone (except maybe family). Finally, Mistress Manners thinks you sound like a good catch and would like to urge you to think about the qualities you would like in a mate. Once we know what we're looking for, it becomes a lot easier to find.

Illustration: Perry Mah



Please contact Mistress Manners with your questions at: mistressmanners@gmail.com

Couch Talk References

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