



Chapter Twelve: Grieve your losses and learn whatever lessons you can from this relationship

This does NOT mean that you should wallow in self-loathing or seethe in anger at your ex and dissect the relationship and its ending in excruciating detail. Most people already do way too much of that during and after a break-up. But it can be very useful to take a good hard look at the “bigger picture” of this

relationship, and learn as much as you can about yourself, your beliefs, your behavior, and your needs.

What drew you into this relationship in the first place? What made you stay in this relationship as long as you did? Think about which of your most important needs were met through this relationship, and what qualities and behaviors you loved about your partner. As difficult as it may be right now, try to cultivate some semblance of gratitude for the joy you experienced and the love and companionship you received. The pain you are going through now does not erase all the good things you experienced with your partner.

A poly relationship that ends doesn't have to be viewed as a “failure,” because longevity is not the only proof of a successful relationship. In an open relationship, it is not realistic to expect that every new relationship will last a lifetime, and losing some poly partners along the way is inevitable.

There were probably a lot of wonderful experiences you had in this relationship, and it may be comforting to remind yourself that you received a lot more love and pleasure than pain throughout the relationship. Rachel said, “I was so depressed when Jenny left me that I literally forgot about the ten years of happiness we had. I was trashing her all over the community, and I was convinced our entire relationship was a sham. One of my friends got sick of my ranting, and she grabs my phone and scrolls through my photos: Jenny and me in Hawaii backpacking, us marching in the Gay Pride Parade, us riding our bikes in the AIDS Life Cycle ride together looking ridiculous in shorts and matching “Lesbian Avengers” tee-shirts and our hairy legs! My friend says, ‘You should be grateful you had such a great life together for so long, you moron! Lots of people never get that lucky!’ I had to admit that a decade of a great relationship totally outweighed the six months of fighting and misery before we broke up, and the three months I had spent recovering.” She was still sad and lonely for another month while she moved through her grieving process, but she could feel herself becoming more accepting of the new reality rather than raging against the unfairness of it and seeing herself as a victim.

It is normal to experience sadness and a bruised ego after any break-up. However, an honest appraisal of the relationship and the causes of its demise can be very educational, and is likely to help you in any future relationships.