



*Lesson One:
Conscious Wedding Message
Board Archives
On
“What’s Wrong With Me?”
or
An Overview of the
Wedding Transition and Your
Personality Type*

Table of Contents

Acknowledging the Transition Vs Actually Transitioning	3
Conscious Fiancé	10
Favorite Posts	14
Fear of Loss	21
Grief and Family Ties	36
Grieving the End of Single Life	49
Birthdays, Mortality, and Engaged Encounter	66
Letting Go	68
Question about the Men in our Lives	73
Painful Choices and the Advantage of Closing a Few Doors	81
Best Friend Got Engaged	83
Transitions	87
What An Engagement “Should” Be	96

Acknowledging the transition v. ACTUALLY transitioning/letting go

Author	Comment
<p>confusedofcourse</p> <p>Posts: 40 (06/10/08 06:28:13)</p>	<p>Acknowledging the transition v. ACTUALLY transitioning/letting go</p> <p>TAGS [EDIT]: None</p> <p>Hi ladies --</p> <p>Sorry I haven't been on in a few days. Life has been insane getting ready for the wedding, orchestrating a move to a new city, preparing to change jobs, etc. For awhile, I was doing so much better. With the help of the boards, a counselor, and a lot of good friends, I was really moving into a good place. Unfortunately, I am not in that good place anymore, and I was wondering if I could ask your advice. Throughout my engagement, I have had trouble with transitions involving:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) letting go of single life(2) adjusting family ties (my own, and being very scared of joining his family in any way)(3) letting go of ex-boyfriends (old feelings for them, comparing my fiancé to them, worrying about their feelings about my marriage)(4) accepting what it means (and doesn't?) to be a wife(5) letting go of all my millions of subconscious fantasies about my engagement, my wedding and my marriage(6) letting go of what I perceive to be others' expectations/judging views of my life, my fiancé, my wedding, my marriage <p>So I have journaled about these, cried about these, screamed about these. In other words, I THOUGHT I HAD GRIEVED THEM. Well, now I'm 11 days out, and every single last one of them is hitting me like a ton of bricks. Some are harder than others (for</p>

example, I'm realizing just how much I was clinging on to things re: old boyfriends and to fantasies about engagement and marriage, and so letting go is particularly hard

I've realized that these things are issues for me. I thought I'd addressed them. But here they are, again, and stronger than ever, making me not only scared to get married, but downright gloomy about getting married. I feel like Eeyore -- walking around with a big rain cloud above my head.

So my question is this: HOW do you TRULY TRULY let go? Perhaps it's unrealistic (and tied up in my fantasy) that I'll totally let go by the wedding. But I'd at least like to make progress, lest I look like a misanthrope as I trudge, dirge-like, down the aisle. So I ask you ladies, if you don't mind, HOW did you let things go? Once and for all? (Or at least well enough to not be in the dumps)?

THANK YOU!!!!

Nenya14

Posts: 339
(06/10/08 06:58:32)

Short but sweet

Hi there confused--- First, I'm sorry to hear you are feeling a rough spot again and are feeling very challenged. That must feel so hard given the timing and circumstances which is no doubt hugely compounded by the logistics of getting so close to the wedding with planning and details and such. Take a breather!!

My thoughts on this are going to be very short and sweet because at the moment I cannot surmise anything more than.....that at some point in the game, one has to take a leap of faith into marriage. Leaps of faith can be about anything---but I think in taking a leap of faith you are CHOOSING to cast your doubts aside and just go with it. The way I feel is, if everyone truly took the time and consciousness to realize what marriage is and what it entails---everyone would be freaked out to some degree. It feels like a big deal because it IS a big deal. I think getting married is one of the most courageous things one can do in this day and age really (and not only get married---but stay married--for the right reasons).

At some point you just have to TRUST that things are going to

4

work out for you. I know for me--I didn't have a whole lot of self-trust in my judgment and stuff and that had a lot to do with my engagement struggles.

Also let go of the idea that you are going to be 100% perfect on your wedding day. Nothing can prepare you for marriage except marriage itself...so you just have to dive in and learn to swim. All the things you listed don't HAVE to be "all tied up in a neat package" by your wedding day. I think Sheryl says on the front page of this website something about the first few years of marriage transition. Yes, for you, your transition greatly started in engagement but that doesn't mean it has to be DONE by your wedding day. I have been married a little over 1.5 years now and I would say that my transition FINALLY seems to be pretty cooled down. I'm now immersed in this next transition of going back to grad school and becoming a mother in the next 3-5 years. Hey there is always more change waiting for you around the corner, hehehe.

My point is, growth is a process, sometimes it ebbs and flows and starts and stalls but be patient with yourself. You are only human! I think that as you forgive yourself more for not being totally perfect right now, you will feel calmer and more centered, as you let go of how you HAVE to feel, you will begin to naturally feel the imminent joy. Lastly you will so not be trudging down the aisle!! I smiled so hard it looks like veins are going to pop in my neck because I was trying not to completely bawl from emotion and happiness. Oh and get a massage PRONTO. That was the best practical thing I did for myself--that and a date night with then-FH without any wedding discussion allowed (or thoughts!). Take care, NENYA

confusedofcourse

Posts: 41
(06/10/08 07:09:08)

thanks, nENYA

Hi NENYA -- thank you so much for your kind response. I think it's ironic that I'm being a perfectionist about not being a perfectionist (i.e., "I must perfectly get over my perfectionist instinct!") HA!

I have a massage scheduled for next week (unfortunately, I'm

stuck at work through this week trying to finish 800 things before I hand over the reins).

I just so didn't want marriage to have a "dark underbelly." But it does. It's a tough transition, and even though when you're moving toward engagement you think it will be all china patterns and blissful romps through the flowers or something, it's really not like that. I wish I'd known that when I was 4 or 5, when it seems these ideas got implanted in my subconscious (that's as far back as I can remember, and my "expectations" seem to go back to the beginning of time....) . I don't know where I 'learned' all this (probably lots of places), but it seems that I was trained not only to "be perfect," but to "feel perfect" (and the way to "feel perfect" was to work hard enough such that I would "be perfect.") So right now, my instinct is to "DO" something -- journal, yoga, go on a spiritual retreat in Bali -- to get to that "perfect" place. As I said in the beginning, being perfectionistic about not being perfectionistic. Sigh. I will try to just be, and not do.

Thanks, Nanya...I hope I can get some of your "zen."

Nenya14

Posts: 340
(06/10/08 07:32:04)

Honestly why doesn't anyone tell us!!

Seriously---why did no one really tell us about how engagement really would be!! I was talking to a friend's fiancé a couple weeks ago and she was having a hard time and they were arguing more/not getting along as well (this is a couple that have been together FOREVER and have always treated each other beautifully) and she confided in her FMIL and her FMIL said that engagement can be the toughest time for a relationship (she's still happily married almost 30 years). I laughed and said, yeah how come no one told us about that?? It's funny though that now that I am married and love being married, I have to catch myself from getting all crazy and excited when someone gets engaged (are you so happy, isn't this so exciting, etc.) which is hilarious since a lot of my engagement was really lonely and hard...so I also remember to tell the person that they can always share with me and that it's okay to feel scared and that it's important to recognize this as a

huge transition and know that transitions can be very challenging.

I seriously think getting engaged was the most life and growth propelling action I have taken in my whole life. And that says a lot. I know you will probably cringe a little when I say this but if you can find a way to be GRATEFUL for your struggles, I think you will find yourself letting go of your perfectionism. Perfect is boring anyhow!!

Real life is not the movies. It is not choreographed, directed, touched up and edited. Real life is messy and painful and beautiful and tender. I cherish my love way more than I could some movie-perfect love that came all too easily....

learning

Posts: 64
(06/10/08 07:46:24)

Hi confusedofcourse, Oh, I have felt so much of what you wrote, and I'm so sorry it's come back like this at this particular moment. I'm imagining for you to have come this far that you probably leaned on your fiancé a good deal. If that's the case, and he knows what the anxiety is all about (b/c the two of you have been through it before), and is feeling pretty solid/ steady himself, then you might consider leaning on him again now. Not pouring out your every 'what if' question to him of course, but simply letting him hold you, take you to the movies (if you have any time?!), anything that is familiar to the two of you. For me, even if I felt like running or hiding under the blankets, I found it was incredibly liberating when I finally did let myself surrender to his support. Does this make sense? Of course, this is only what worked for me, and it may or may not make sense for you.

But, as Nanya said, knowing that you don't have to be perfect anytime soon (or EVER!) is the real key. And knowing that you really want to grow up, embrace this new phase of life, and embrace your partner in it, no matter how you might be 'feeling' at a particular moment. Finally, if you have a therapist who you are able to see more frequently during this time I think that could be really helpful. I saw that someone on here called her therapist the day before and the day of her wedding. I'm thinking of asking mine for her cell phone number just in case. It

is okay to need help, and it is wonderful to accept the help that you need, whether it is from your fiancé, your therapist, your friends, or anyone else. I never knew how much help I needed until I got engaged. At first that was the worst realization in the world I could have ever had (that I couldn't 'handle' this on my own); but now I realize what a gift it is to learn how to accept the help we need. Be gentle with yourself. Thinking of you...

Letsbehappy

Posts: 279
(06/10/08 14:23:06)

Hi confused

I was where you are a couple of years ago and I had all of your transition issues. Like Nanya said, the force that the transitions have in our life ebbs and flows.

I am still transitioning two years into being married. I won't say it's a constant struggle, but more like a learning experience. The first few months were particularly hard, not at all blissful. This being said, there is something that I have been working on in the transition department. Currently, we want to start a family soon and I am full of fear. "What ifs" seem to replace the joyous thoughts of having children. However, the main issue in all of this is identity. Regardless of if I am a mom, a wife, a sister a daughter, a teacher, a coach, a friend, a professional, a stay-at-home mom.....I am always ME!!!! You never have to completely "let go" of everything you once were. All of your past (for better or worse) shapes who you are today. Slowly the power of your thoughts will have less control over you and you will be able to become more in line with your life now as a married woman. Again, however, married or not, you are always you. I know this may sound quite simplistic and cliché, but it's helped me tremendously. It's replaced the obsessive thoughts with peace and calm because no matter how I am feeling, I know they are just thoughts and I am the only one giving them power.

You are in such a gray area right now. So many changes- I think Sheryl calls it liminality? No wonder you feel out of sorts. Treat yourself kindly. Celebrate all that is good with you. The emotional work has started. It should never end. However, you will be able to handle future transitions with much greater grace

and ease.

Nobody is perfect so you should never expect your thoughts to be perfect. Live in the now and try to not attach your thoughts to anything or think they are signs. You are doing fabulous! I hope your special day is wonderful!

Conscious fiancé?

Author	Comment
<p>GettingMarried</p> <p>Posts: 19 (05/14/08 10:26:09)</p>	<p>Conscious fiancé?</p> <p>TAGS [EDIT]: None</p> <p>Hi everyone – I thought I would pose this question for discussion as it’s something I’ve been thinking about. How do you feel about having a conscious engagement and what you are going through vs. what your FI is going through? For example, I feel as though I’ve been doing so much reading and self-reflection about marriage and my expectations. I occasionally talk to him about this, and we did read one book together which was good. He is different from me in that his parents were great marriage role models so he doesn’t have any issues there (where as I did/do!), and he has been on his own, out of the house for 12 years, so he’s not really making the separating from family transition at this time. But sometimes I feel like, if he’s not doing the same work as me, how will he be ready? I guess one answer would be pre-marital counseling but I couldn’t find a program that I liked in my area (looking for something non-religious) and at this point we are 6 weeks away. Can some people be really ready for marriage without doing any of this reflection?</p>
<p>babyofsix</p> <p>Posts: 938 (05/14/08 10:35:55)</p>	<p>Re: Conscious fiancé?</p> <p>Hi GettingMarried...</p> <p>I didn't have a conscious fiancé. But, what helped me... and continues in this first year of marriage... is that my husband fully supports my introspection. He didn't do it the same way I did, but I know he did experience some "changes." We've both talked about how surreal the wedding experience seemed. We've both talked about our expectations of marriage. Some of those talks happen on an "as needed" basis, some are brought up by me when I feel the need to talk.</p> <p>There's a book that someone bought for me prior to my</p>

wedding called "The Hard Questions." Here's a link for it on Amazon:

www.amazon.com/Hard-Quest...760&sr=8-3

It provides 100 questions on various topics... family, home, money, sex, religion, etc. I know some of what you're doing for yourself is deeper than these issues, but I found scanning the questions helped calm me. It helped me realize that I was able to answer for both me and DH. We did sit down and discuss some of them, but it wasn't at the best time. I had high expectations about how the discussions would go (go figure) and DH was picking up on that, making him not super receptive. But, you could look through the questions and if there's something that you're concerned about, talk to him about it.

As for self-reflection on marriage, don't think he's not doing some himself in his own way. Even if he had a good model, your marriage will be different from his parents because he's marrying you. Guys think in a much more simplistic way than women do. Wouldn't it be nice to think like a man for a day? My guess... he's thought about what marriage means to him in his own way. Maybe just ask him an open ended question, such as "So, what do think it will be like once we're married?" See what his response is. If it's super simple and generic, maybe ask a little more specific question. "Do you think we'll be like Donna Reed or the Heffernan's (King of Queens)?"

Just some suggestions.

ChristmasBride2006

Posts: 1355
(05/14/08 10:40:18)

Re: Conscious fiancé?

Haha, I definitely had these questions when I was engaged! I used to think to myself "I'm absolutely obsessing over this, trying to make sure that everything is aligned so that our marriage has the best chance of success that we can give it... how is he not taking this so seriously?!" I was worried we would get into marriage and he would freak out or not want to be married, or because HE hadn't worked through some issues,

that we would end up miserable.

The only advice I really have is to just trust your fiancé. I know my husband did all of his thinking before we got engaged... it was that decision/conversation he had with himself when he decided that he wanted to propose (according to my DH, he just always knew we would get married and never questioned it). We did do pre-marital counseling through our church, but I think it's wise to do it with any couple... we'd been together for nearly 3 years when we did the counseling but we still gained so much from it. Just having an expert in that area to guide you towards important topics (that you THINK you might know about your future spouse, but you may not!) was so helpful. We still use the listening exercises that we learned from time to time. It's so beneficial, in my opinion.

But back to your original question... just trust him. And if he freaks out sometime during marriage.... you've been there. You know how to handle the fears. You're almost an expert in them! So he can turn to you to help him work through. Right now, he is trusting that you are working hard on your fears to be as prepared for marriage as you can be... if he hasn't indicated there are any fears on his part, then the thing to do is just move forward and look ahead!

[sillygoosegirl](#)

Posts: 322

(05/14/08 12:06:43)

Re: Conscious fiancé?

I've wondered about that a lot myself, both before we got married and since. Like, when is the other shoe going to drop?? It's been almost 3 years now, and I'm finally starting to trust that it isn't going to. Though all the good times and bad times, since the very first time we "talked about us" (3 months after becoming a couple), he has just had this confidence in us that I don't get... I mean, it's irrational sometimes. You'd think an angel came to him and told him we were soul mates. Since I could never be that way, since I find it irrational, it's hard to trust... like surely he will wake up some day and realize that actually he doesn't **have to** make it work with me, he could be with someone prettier than I am?

I think, like a lot of more practical things in marriage, you have to accept that you each do things your own way. You take care of your half of the marriage in your own way, and he will take

care of his half in his own way. So long as it works, it doesn't matter that his way is different. Of course, it's scary, because you are sitting there wondering if his way will work because you feel like you haven't seen it yet... but that's just one more part of the leap of faith that is marriage. Some people do get married only to find that their partner really just wasn't prepared for it, just like some people get married only to find that their partner gets cancer and dies the next year. Tragedy strikes randomly, but we can't deny ourselves the opportunity to live our lives to the fullest because of what *might* happen.

For the record, we did religious premarital counseling even though we aren't religious. Some parts of it were pretty hokey (to us), but it was still worthwhile. I've read that statistically speaking (as far as lowering your odds of divorce down the road), couples who do premarital counseling anytime during their first year of marriage get just as much out of it as couples who do it before marriage. So guess what? You really have 58 weeks! I'd strongly encourage you to do it, even if all you can find in your area are religious programs... or maybe with a year, you'll find time to travel for something you'd be more comfortable with.

old posts (please add your favorites)

Author	Comment
<p>learning</p> <p>Posts: 88 (05/08/08 06:23:30)</p>	<p>old posts (please add your favorites)</p> <p>TAGS [EDIT]: None</p> <p>So this thread is for cutting and pasting our favorite old posts for Sheryl to sort through and perhaps highlight, especially for newcomers. I'll start - here are just a few posts I've really appreciated over time...</p> <p>ChristmasBride2006 4/16/08 Re:</p> <p>Quote: “However, today I could really use some support on the 'feelings' piece, especially from the married ladies (CB? Nanya?) and others. After the anxiety set in, did any of you feel almost nothing - like a numbness, disconnectedness, who is this person next to me and where have all of my feelings gone? It's just so frightening not to feel. And once I'm feeling 'nothing,' that's when the 'what if's' jump in - what if you've fallen out of love, what if you are incapable of real, lasting love, etc. etc. etc. My rational mind knows that this response is just the nature of anxiety. But have any of you had experience with the kind of emptiness I'm describing and feel like sharing?”</p> <p>Oh yes, absolutely. I had all those thoughts and more. And the worst part was, I had no idea what was normal and what wasn't. I had never been in such a healthy, respectful and long term relationship like the one I'm in with my husband. So there were a lot of questions on my part about what was normal. I had no idea. I had never been in a relationship that lasted longer than 6 months, so I didn't know that it was normal. It's funny, because before I started feeling fear, I NEVER thought about if I "felt" in love or not. It just wasn't a question or an issue. I loved my boyfriend. He loved me. Life was simple! But</p>

then we got engaged and all these crazy feelings started coming in. I remember a few weeks after we got engaged that the thought hit me - what if I don't love him? that set off a long, painful journey for pretty much the rest of our engagement of me trying to figure out what love really was and who is this guy sitting next to me and why don't I feel all those warm, gushy, loving feelings for him?

After I got married I went to therapy to treat my anxiety disorder because it wasn't about my relationship anymore, it was focusing on other things. I have always been an anxious person and in therapy I started learning how to undo basically 25 years of making decisions based on my feelings.

I look back now on the things I did, especially as a teenager-22 yrs old (and even now at 26 yrs old!) where I did crazy things because of my emotions. Made crazy decisions. My emotions used to (and sometimes still do) get the best of me. I am learning to appreciate my emotional nature and how it shapes me as a person but I also am learning how to make decisions logically and rationally, based on facts. I learned just because I feel something does not make it true or reality. I may feel like I want to punch my DH in the face sometimes when he irritates me, but does that mean I stopped loving him? Nope.

I also learned that love is not about feelings. seems simple enough but hard when you're an emotionally driven person. My personal mantra is that love is action. I love my husband by the actions that I do. Sometimes those actions can produce loving feelings - and when that happens, it's great! But I also remind myself that I will be learning how to love my husband 50 years from now still. It's a never ending learning process. Like I said in my last post, I love the idea of thinking "how can I love my husband today in a way that he has never been loved before?" Then, I just try to be on the lookout for opportunities to love my husband - whether that's by servitude, or just shutting up and listening to him talk about his day, or taking him up on his offer to do something that he likes to do (hobby-wise) or fixing his favorite meal for dinner... love is best spoken in the quiet moments.

So to answer your question about numbness - yes I felt it. I was either feeling anxiety, or nothing at all, both of which I mistook the absence of feelings to signify that I must not love him. Those feelings were still there, though, they were just hidden under layer upon layer of fear. I think the numbness is the body's response to feeling so much intense anxiety. This is why I really advocate getting exercise daily. All that pent up anxiety needs a place to go. I had no idea the damage it was doing to my body by just letting it sit there. When I was engaged, my therapist had me do this relaxation exercise, and while he was practicing it with me, my arms and legs were twitching badly. Once the exercise was over, I asked him what was going on, and he said that my body was so used to holding onto all this stress and anxiety, that it was having a hard time letting it go physically. To this day I practice the same relaxation technique when I feel my body is too stressed to sleep. Anxiety not only has profound impact on your ability to feel certain emotions, but also physically.

Nenya14

4/16/08

Re:

Hi there Learning,

I would love to expound upon my experience but I am in the middle of a research paper that is due TOMORROW that I totally procrastinated on, yikes!

I will give you this QUICK rundown though...

Met and fell in love with DH in January '04...got engaged 12/04...the anxiety started almost right away--even though we had a blissful previous year of dating, and I had felt CERTAIN that I had found my person. Life was so great and I just was so at peace. Engagement changed all that SO much. I got so bad that I ended up going back into therapy to work more on my childhood (I had PTSD from years of sexual abuse) and after some intense 9 months of CBT therapy I treated a LOT of my underlying anxiety. In retrospect, I can see that if I didn't have an anxiety disorder (PTSD in my case, OCD or GAD for others)

I probably wouldn't have gotten SO anxious over making a commitment, but I'm sure I still would have gotten anxious, just not to the degree, as I am a very conscious person...and as Sheryl has said, it happens to every woman that gets married, whether she is conscious of it or not.

Anyhow I needed to back away from the pressure of the engagement for a little awhile, so DH and I "disengaged" for a few months while I intensely focused on myself in therapy---we never broke up--we just took the ring off for a little while to "chill". We had only been together a year when he proposed, and at 25-26...that was probably too soon anyhow so what was the harm in waiting a little longer anyhow? Anyhow we got re-engaged and while I still had some doubts and lingering what if's...they were DRASTICALLY reduced after treatment and we went on to be married in October '06...so about 22 months of engagement.

During that time, I also would have to say that I experienced basically everything Christmas Bride has spoken of. She was like my twin during engagement and it was SO great to talk to her and share with her--she is AMAZING obviously! I did so much reading up on marriage and love and commitment...I got so many books, haha, and really just educated myself on WHAT a good marriage looked like. I also learned how many of my so called issues with hubby had to do with ME and areas that I needed to look at and grow. I definitely had commitment issues and Getting to Commitment is a good one (same author as He's Scared She's Scared). It really was a spiritual journey that forced me to grow SO much. In the end, it was the best thing to happen to me...it made me face so many things that I had repressed and ignored.

Today I am happily married to my best friend and soul mate (I believe we have many soul mates--and I also believe that you "become" soul mates with the furthering of intimacy and soul growth which yes, does take time and effort) and while we definitely have our ups and downs and issues from time to time, I have all intentions of staying and working together to make our marriage the best it can be. Taking the leap did reduce things a lot...it was so great to just have the limbo

period OVER. I enjoy being married way more than being engaged!

That's not to say that I haven't had doubts from time to time...mostly after we have a fight or when I'm feeling bored in my life. So I still have little commitmentphobe impulses but I have learned how to manage them and not let them run my life. The more I face them, the more fulfilled I feel.

I'm happy to report that I just got into a master's in counseling psychology program starting this August and am finally going to fulfill a dream I've been having for years. A few years ago I don't think I would have ever believed that my life would be coming together so well, I am so glad that I worked to get to this place.

Wow that's longer than I thought...and kinda scattered!

ThinkBee

Posts: 661
(05/10/08
10:47:21)

Some Faves

#5

[-]

ON CONSCIOUS "BRIDE PRIDE"

Sheryl wrote:

In general, my clients are:

Highly intelligent

Highly introspective

Prone to anxiety or depression - over-analyzers

Compassionate

Does that sound familiar?

Nenya wrote:

Ladies, I think most of you already know this but it is a huge COMPLIMENT to be a conscious bride. Yes, it may mean that the transition to marriage is REALLY hard and painful...but look at the type of person that Sheryl describes...and yes, I know anxiety/depression isn't something you want to put on your life resume, but I think the people that do suffer from it are wiser and stronger in the end for having been through it.

So on the days when you are cursing this process, the "why can't I just

float in fields of tulle and tiaras like other brides during my engagement" bring yourself to a place of gratitude for who you are!

ON WHAT MARRIAGE IS

babyofsix wrote:

I think marriage, overall, is two people living independent lives and come home and share those lives with each other. Then, every so often, these two people choose to spend an evening, or a couple evenings, together... still kind of doing their own thing, but together.

What do you all think? Marriage = two independent people living their own lives, only to come home to someone and share those independent lives with, and build a life together.

ON THE MYTH OF PERFECT COMPATIBILITY

I wrote:

Usually I'm fixated on one issue and today it's the fact that I'm terrified that my fiancé and I are not intellectually compatible and that we will not be happy with him because of this...I am a very deep and constant thinker, and I talk a lot, and he is the opposite. He is very smart and successful, in fact his IQ is probably even a bit higher than mine, but he would rather relax in silence or do something active most of the time than sit and discuss the meaning of life or literature.

Strangerheremyself responded:

I had that exact fear with my husband. I even got mad at him one night when we were engaged over this issue. I remember standing in the street, shouting, "I cannot BELIEVE you don't CARE about the meaning of *LIFE*!!!!" And he said, "I cannot BELIEVE you are MAD at me because I don't spend every second worrying about it!!!"

It totally cracks me up now, thinking about it.

Pirate Jenny wrote:

Years ago, before I was even contemplating marriage, my mom passed on this piece of wisdom (probably while I was bitching about one of my boyfriends). She said, "You cannot expect any one person to meet all of your needs. If you find a partner that meets a large number of them, then you're doing great. Look to the other people in your life to meet those other needs." It's another reason to work hard keep your relationships

strong with your girlfriends and family, even after you're married, even though it's tempting to have your husband be #1 in everything.

I was watching a great episode of M*A*S*H the other day in which Hawkeye and Margaret are talking about relationships. He says to her, "You know what our problem is? We're looking for a custom fit in an off-the-rack world." It's so true. Even the most compatible people don't fit perfectly.

AND LASTLY, MY FAVORITE ARTICLE

psychologytoday.com/artic...-3300.html

Fear of Loss

Author	Comment
<p>ThinkBee</p> <p>Posts: 348 (10/30/08 08:24:10)</p>	<p>Fear of Loss</p> <p>TAGS [EDIT]: None</p> <p><i>Last Edited By: ThinkBee 10/30/08 09:12:03. Edited 1 time.</i></p>
<p>babyofsix</p> <p>Posts: 644 (10/30/08 09:12:59)</p>	<p>You know, until this discussion started in the other thread, I hadn't really given it much thought. For me, I don't know that I ever thought "Wow, I'm going to lose him someday." For me, it was more, "Something could end this someday." And, during my anxious periods, it's never been death or an accident... it's been actions, either mine or his, that I've worried about. I'll do something stupid, he'll fall out of love with me, he'll find me less attractive... things like that.</p> <p>But, now that you all have brought this up (and maybe this is my "easily influenced brain" talking, but so what), I wonder if it's a fear of failure on my part. Actually, I've thought this before. I've always been afraid of failing at things, of letting others down, of screwing things up. So, during my high anxiety, the underlying thought I bet I had was, "If I don't get married, I can't fail at it or do something to screw it up." In a much simpler sense, it's this fear of failure that prevented me from doing many sports or putting myself out there in activities. Recently, it's this fear of failure that is holding me back from getting into a regular exercise routine and diet plan just to stay healthy because I'm afraid I'll do it wrong, I won't see the results I want, and (and this one is totally illogical in my relationship and I know this) I'll let DH down if I don't stick with it. Letting people down and failing miserably at something is BIG for me.</p>

I even worry if I'm good at my job. I have a hard time believing people when I'm feeling down about something if they compliment me.

So while this isn't exactly what ThinkBee stated... fear of loss of a loved one... in a way, it's similar. I'm afraid of losing someone because I let them down, because I failed.

Now, that being said... I'm also afraid of death and dying... more so within myself than losing those around me. But, the thought of losing loved ones has been coming and going lately. It's just not a main thought. Since I can remember, I've had a hard time with my own mortality, to the point of having panic attacks in the form of depersonalization/derealization when I think about "how it will feel" after I die. This was a big one for me during engagement, because getting married meant getting older, which meant I was closer to finding out what it "feels like" to be dead. Morbid, I know... but it's been this way since I was at least a teenager.

I've had less and less thoughts and attacks about death since I've been able to openly admit it. And, when I feel that feeling come on, I'm able to eliminate it quicker.

Interesting stuff. Who else has something?

ThinkBee

Posts: 349
(10/30/08 10:34:10)

Oh doh, I deleted my post by accident! Haha. OK well basically I was just saying how losing my husband is a big fear of mine (like I mentioned in previous thread and Topanga also mentioned) and doubting is almost a way of protecting myself from this fear. Whenever I'm filled with certainty, my anxious mind immediately jumps to the worry that my husband will die. I guess loss is inevitable and it sometimes takes a lot of emotional strength to commit to loving someone so completely with the knowledge that you cannot count on them being there forever. Divorce is actually similar because it is something I fear because I'd be losing him and I'm terrified of that. I was curious

as to how other people cope with this fear.

ChristmasBride2006

Posts: 1300
(10/30/08 11:51:18)

We all have already dealt with loss - the loss of a single life, the loss of the possibility of other guys, the shedding of an identity as a single woman; the loss of things in exchange for a gain. I think we deal with loss whenever we choose one thing over another. They can be as simple as "losing time." Right now I'm studying for my comps in two weeks, and I lose time with my husband and friends when I choose studying over spending time with them. Now this is a temporary loss... I gain a degree and my sanity again in 15 days, and that time back with people I love. So, I mean really, we deal with loss and gain on a daily basis. Right now I wish the bathroom scale would give me more loss.

The fear of loss of my husband... I have this. I wouldn't even know what to do with myself if he left me or died. I mean, I'm not really talking about logistics (paying bills, mowing the lawn, etc), but a good part of my identity is being a wife and being in a relationship with my husband. What would I do with myself? How would I go on? Oddly I have thought about this before. I know I would sell our house and move back to the midwest to be near my family because I wouldn't know what else to do with myself. I mean, I have only been with my husband for five years and I don't know how I could pick up the pieces. My husband's grandfather passed away and they had been married for 62 years. I can't even imagine how you go on with life when someone has been the other half of your life for 62 years. I feel weird for thinking about it, but then again I always tend to think of the worst case scenarios. At the same time I hope that my consideration about the possibility of loss urges me to spend my time wisely that I have with my husband. For all I know, he could die tomorrow. DH just went out of town for a week and being alone always reminds me a little of what life would be like without him, and I cannot stand it.

I think it's normal to have a fear of being alone or fear of losing someone you love. Part of getting older is coping with the

"sudden" realization that you're not getting any younger, that people around you can succumb to disease or old age or car accidents - anything that can cut life short. I went through this very much when I turned 26 almost six months ago. I thought a lot about how when I was younger (college age), I didn't worry about aches or pains, or suspicious moles or breast cancer. I just lived life. You kind of have this "I'm never going to die" mentality (at least I did) and the older you get, the more that mentality becomes a distant unrealistic memory. Even my husband who has been the model fitness expert since I've known him, has recently noticed that it's harder to get rid of his "marriage belly." He used to be able to give up soda or work out for a few weeks, and all the flab would be gone (men suck when it comes to dieting!) Now he laments over losing "only" 2 lbs a week and that his tummy isn't shrinking as fast as it used to. Welcome to quarter life, buddy.

Coping.. well, I made a list of 52 things I wanted to do before I turned 27, because I knew I didn't want to have a week go by where I didn't take time out to spend time doing something I've always wanted to do, or spend quality time with DH. My list has little things like "carve a pumpkin" or "learn to make jam," and big things like do the Race for the Cure 5k and hiking a 14er. I didn't want another year to go by with the majority of my time spent on school and work, because the older I get, the faster time flies by, and it's not going to get any slower when we have kids.

ThinkBee

Posts: 350
(10/31/08 07:20:41)

BoS...I have that fear of failure, too. I guess my worst fear is that if something happened to my marriage down the road I would blame myself and think "I should have listened to that anxiety." But I do think it helps to realize that while you do have some control and marriage is what you make of it, there are a million things beyond your control and you can't predict the future. You just can't. I guess there really is some dumb luck involved in taking these kind of risks and making big decisions. I know this was the biggest risk I ever took, since I'm afraid to fail I don't take to many chances, but I think it's about time I

changed that. And if I fail, I'm not a failure.

CB...that is an interesting and helpful way of looking at it. I never think of myself as someone who has had much experience with loss. I still have all four grandparents, and I married my first serious boyfriend, so I've never even been through any bad break ups. I think this made getting married even harder for me, it was probably my first big experience with change and loss. I hope that doesn't sound overly dramatic, but it really did feel like a death, even though I gained so much. I am just realizing that it really helps to let yourself feel sad. I'm sad that I'll never have the excitement of new love again, or get to be crazy and single. But I had to make a choice and the right choice is now pretty obvious to me. I'd be more sad if I ever lost my guy. And in life, I guess there are always going to be experiences some people don't have. Some people don't get to have the experience of true love, or marriage or children....or even things like freedom, good health or prosperity. It makes me feel very grateful.

See, ever since I can remember I was very conscious of my mortality and I have absolutely no good reason why. Like I said, I never had much direct experience with death, it isn't like I had a parent or sibling die when I was young or anything. But even as a small child I thought about death constantly...what happened? what it feel like? And it freaked me out. When I was in college I went through a bad period of anxiety during which I was in a constant state of fear and derealization/depersonalization because all I could think about was how everyone was going to die, and if nothing happened when we died (if there was not a continuation of individual consciousness/mind at least), did anything that was happening now even matter, since I wouldn't remember it? I remember thinking about my husband who was my boyfriend at the time, and being so sad because I wondered if all the love we felt for one another was meaningless, since eventually we would die. I eventually got over that. But I can even remember the moment I decided I wanted to get married, and that too had to do with sudden awareness of my mortality that put things in perspective. For some reason there has always been this connection with me. My parents actually decided to get married after a near-death experience in a car accident that left them unable to walk for 6

months. I can't help but wonder if it's all somehow related...

So I'm not sure why I am this way. Well, I think focusing on the little things helps, just being present, being grateful, cherishing each moment, not sweating the small stuff.

By the way, Happy Halloween!

ChristmasBride2006

Posts: 1301
(10/31/08 09:39:58)

Sounds like what you went through in college is what I went through the first few months after I turned 26. I also had those thoughts like, what's the point of doing all this stuff if we are going to just die in the end? Why work hard and buy stuff, get married have kids if we just die? Almost like a meaning of life journey, and it was scary and hard. I think this - for me - also coincided with being "done" with some major transitions/growth in my life - graduating college, getting my first real job, getting married, purchasing a house, and so on. The things we are "supposed" to do - I had done them all within a period of 3 years. That's a lot to do in 3 years!

Like you, all four of my grandparents are still alive and I have never experienced someone close to me dying. When DH's grandfather died earlier this year, it was a very new experience for me and yet I still didn't really grieve because I didn't know him that well and didn't have an attachment to him like I do with other people in my life. While I went through a pretty bad breakup prior to meeting my husband, I realize what I "knew" and "loved" about my ex boyfriend was nothing like the knowledge and love I have with/have experienced with my husband - not as nearly in depth or as extensive.

I spent probably the first month after turning 26 just grieving and being quasi-depressed. I enjoyed my early 20s so much that it was difficult for me to let go and move on from them. I really missed the lack of responsibility I had as a young adult. It's not that I don't enjoy life now, but I wish I had known how taxing it can be sometimes to work a 40+ hr a week job, how frustrating bills can be, how sometimes you forgo the fun stuff because you

need to be more responsible, just so I would really not take for granted the lack of responsibility I had when I was younger. Part of what holds me back from taking the next step into motherhood is knowing I will be closing another chapter of my life. I would no longer be "childless," I worry about losing my identity, my free time, my sanity (only kidding - sort of!), my relationship, and so on. I feel motherhood and growing up in general is forcing me into an uncomfortable world of loss that can very well be a reality at any given time - the loss of my husband, parents, sibling, friends, etc. When I was younger, I felt immune to this. Now, not so much.

It does help to just let yourself grieve and feel sad over it. It also helps to be proactive. I can't tell you how much I have growing and gained from making my own "things to do" list. It makes me feel like each week I spend at least some time not thinking about work, school, problems in life, problems in the world, death, getting older, whatever. I just enjoy being alive and being around people I love. It pushes me to do things I would never do normally because I'd be too busy or too concerned with other things in life.

ThinkBee

Posts: 351
(10/31/08 10:20:30)

You've made a very compelling case for the "things to do" list, I think I might get started on one!

I am still struggling with some depression. After my wedding the anxiety decreased and decreased but the depression increased. I've had a lot of these spells of "what now?" "what do I even enjoy doing?" It's almost like I forgot, or became so consumed with marriage, wedding, being a wife (whatever that means) that it took over my entire identity. Also, exactly what you said CB...I'm 25 and I've already done some major things in life. I sometimes see my life stretched before me...it seems happy but predictable. There's not a lot of "who knows...I could end up being this...how exciting!" I am excited to start a family someday and I guess that's the next big exciting thing but for me it won't be for a while. Sometimes I do get very excited about that but I'm just not ready yet to take on that kind of responsibility. I'm

definitely in a weird place. We've certainly chatted about this before on here, but it's that whole being young/but not too young, responsible/but not too responsible, married/but no kids yet. I want to enjoy this time because I feel like someday I will look back and think about how great it was and how I should have appreciated it more, yet I keep longing for the past or wishing it was the future already.

It sure doesn't help that I feel very funny being my age and married/responsible sometimes! I went to rehearse with a band I play violin with last night. They are a bunch of 20- and 30-something musicians living in Brooklyn and they find me to be such an oddity because I am married and have a "real job." The one guy always calls me "wife." Like, "hey there WIFE!" It's really annoying, ha. They all also make remarks about my "corporate" job (even though it's not even that corporate, really, just by their bohemian standards). I don't know that anyone else on here gets this much where they live? But I cannot figure out why, especially the marriage thing, is so remarkable to these people. I'm proud of my marriage and my job...but I hate constantly having to defend it and explain it to people who look down on marriage or think that you're "stuffy" or "boring" for working hard as a young person and not just partying and being reckless all the time. That's another reason I like coming here...I feel normal and enjoy talking to other interesting and fun married ladies like myself

[babyofsix](#)

Posts: 645
(10/31/08 14:29:27)

It's honestly threads like this that keep pulling me back to this site.

There is definitely a change as you hit those "should be doing" moments in life. I've hit the graduated college, gotten my master's, started working, and am married milestones. We still don't own a house and aren't quite ready to have children yet... but those things will likely happen within the next 5 years.

There is a loss that comes with every stage of life. And, I can't speak for the early 30s crowd, but those of us in our mid to late

20s, I personally feel it's a period of major change. We're no longer teenagers or young adults in college who rely on our parents to help us with some responsibilities. But, we're not quite comfortable in the "grown up," married with responsibilities world yet. Some might be, but I started a thread on this topic a while ago (I wonder if I can find it?) and several women on here stated as much. It's like the 20s are the new teens as far as finding our identity and figuring out who we are. With that comes loss... loss of childhood, separation from family, etc. We all know what it is, and CB wrote it much better than I ever could.

Add into that mortality issues, anxiety, depression, plain old battles with our inner teenager about not wanting to grow up... it's bound to tie us up in knots.

The fact is, as has been stated many many times on this board... we can't really let these fears of loss or failure plague us. We are who we are NOW. We are living the life we're supposed to live TODAY. We can't control an hour from now, let alone tomorrow. As daunting as some of those statements can seem, it's true. It's scary to think of life changing, losing loved ones, having life not be what we envision it to be... but what can we do about it? Nothing.

It's so nice to have this community to talk through all of these things with. I'm so grateful for our "e-relationships" as we all go through this transition of our lives. I don't know what I'd do without this support and understanding.

learning

Posts: 82
(10/31/08 17:17:17)

Yes, I think earlier this year we had a great thread going at some point about loss, and I remember noticing that so many of us who experienced severe engagement anxiety also had a history of anxiety around death and dying and other kinds of potential loss (abandonment, etc.). For me, it turns out it was related to my dad's illness, but as a child and teenager I had no idea why I was so obsessed with these things - especially when it seemed like everyone around me was as content as could be (probably wasn't true though!).

Anyway, I just wanted to chime in response to ThinkBee's last post - for most of the past decade I *was* one of those 20-somethings who loved (and loved to love) my single life. In fact, ThinkBee, I was living in Brooklyn for most of it and was pretty involved on the music scene. Today, I wouldn't change a thing that happened, and yet at the same time, looking back, I was probably in a fair amount of denial about why I was ending relationships, always moving on, always planning the next trip, the next project, pulling myself in a million directions, exhausted and probably not living so healthfully, etc, etc, etc. Anyway, I hate to say it, but on the inside I was not all that understanding (perhaps a bit of subconscious envy) of those of my friends who got married in their mid 20s. In the (painful) wake of some serious break-ups (including a five-year relationship we had thought would end in marriage) I had developed all sorts of theories and spiritual philosophies about why it was important to live a long, rich single life, etc. etc. which I readily shared with others (okay, don't hate me!).

But the lesson here is that by the time I did get engaged, at 30, I had ALL the same anxiety, if not worse, that you guys had. The first few months of marriage have been wonderful, and yet this month I find myself in a wave of married in-between-ness similar to what some of you have mentioned. I have to say my whole engagement experience has taught me SO much about life. And now I would never give the kind of categorical relationship advice to friends of mine in the way that I used to. I finally realized (late, I know) that there are *so many ways* to live life, and to live life well. And there is no reason that my way is better than anyone else's, or vice versa. It's easiest to realize this when I can locate the paradoxes in my own life - the ways my own mind has expanded over time, as one layer of experience adds to another.

What I've realized is that most of this is not linear at all. Yes, we get older, and that happens in a certain way, but it's not like the 20s are the only time when you may feel 'in between.' In the midst of my adventures, in some ways I grew up pretty fast in my 20s - experienced a whole lot of up and down, including caring for my father until his passing, bought and sold a house on my own, did endless graduate work and launched a career -

and was, it would seem, comfortable with tons of responsibility and "ready" for the rest of my life; and yet anxiety around love and marriage in particular brought me to my knees and completely incapacitated me for months (as many of you know all too well). This all says to me there is no "right" way. Or, what they say in Buddhist teachings: one truth, many paths.

I think these periods of vulnerability and movement and in-between-ness come and go in cycles. What I love about this board is that we are not all at the same exact point or context, and yet we have in common this experience of coming face to face with our absolute vulnerability. That is really phenomenal and, when you think about it, the best possible foundation for honest and trusting relationships. Thanks so much to everyone for sharing so beautifully.

babyofsix

Posts: 646
(10/31/08 18:19:49)

But the lesson here is that by the time I did get engaged, at 30, I had ALL the same anxiety, if not worse, that you guys had. The first few months of marriage have been wonderful, and yet this month I find myself in a wave of married in-between-ness similar to what some of you have mentioned. I have to say my whole engagement experience has taught me SO much about life. And now I would never give the kind of categorical relationship advice to friends of mine in the way that I used to. I finally realized (late, I know) that there are *so many ways* to live life, and to live life well. And there is no reason that my way is better than anyone else's, or vice versa. It's easiest to realize this when I can locate the paradoxes in my own life - the ways my own mind has expanded over time, as one layer of experience adds to another. This paragraph stood out to me. It's so easy, when you haven't gone through a stage of your own life, to be a little (dare I say) judgmental. How many of us who aren't parents have rolled our eyes when a child seems out of control in public? Have we ever walked in the parental shoes? Do we know that the child doesn't

have some underlying issue? Or maybe something bad just happened. It's so easy to think "marriage should be ____" until you really get into it. It's kind of sad that it takes us developing and evolving on your own to come to these realizations... but at the same time, it makes total sense to me.

Learning, I want to thank you for your viewpoint. I anticipate that my 30s will still be a little bit of my developing and evolving... just because turning 30 seems "old" to me... even though I know it's not. 30 just seems like such a milestone age where so much "should" happen. But, at the same time, maybe when I get to that point, I'll be a little calmer because of going through this transition at 26/27.

I love this thread!

consciousbride

Posts: 195
(10/31/08 20:28:19)

Great thread. Two things:

1. I hope I have all of your current email addresses because this is exactly the kind of topics I'll be writing about in my Conscious Transitions Newsletter.

2. And some quotes:

from When Things Fall Apart, Pema Chodron

p.43--

"All anxiety, all dissatisfaction, all the reason for hoping our experience could be different are rooted in our fear of death. Fear of death is always in the background... "Trungpa Rinpoche once gave a public lecture titled "Death in Everyday Life." We are raised in a culture that fear death and hides it from us. Nevertheless, we experience it all the time. We experience it in the form of disappointment, in the form of things not working out. We experience it in the form of things always being in a process of change. When the day ends, when the second ends, when we breathe out, that's death in everyday life...

p.44-

"We're always trying to deny that it's a natural occurrence that things change, that the sand is slipping through our fingers. Time is passing. It's as natural as the seasons changing and day turning into night. But getting old, getting sick, losing what we love--we don't see those events as natural occurrences. We want to ward off that sense of death, no matter what.

"When we have reminders of death, we panic...

"Relaxing with the present moment, relaxing with hopelessness, relaxing with death, not resisting the fact that things end, that things pass, that things have no lasting substance, that everything is changing all the time--that is the basic message...

p.45--

"Fear of death is the background of the whole thing. It's why we feel restless, why we panic, why there's anxiety. But if we totally experience hopelessness, giving up all hope of alternatives to the present moment, we can have a joyful relationship with our lives, an honest, direct relationship, one that no longer ignores the reality of impermanence and death.

Fear of Loss

Author	Comment
<p><u>ThinkBee</u></p> <p>Posts: 352 (11/03/08 06:56:04)</p>	<p>Wow I love this thread! I love Pema Chodron, Sheryl. Those quotes...which I have read before I realize...ring so true to me. You know what is funny is I used to have anxiety that my husband would never propose to me. I wanted to get married very badly at one point because I felt that life was so short and I didn't want to waste any time! This knowing that things will end...it makes you want to maximize your experience here on earth, be as happy as possible, be the best, make perfect decisions. I think that is what makes decisions very hard for me...this pressure to get it all right and perfect with limited time. At the same time I think I am able to have a richer experience of life sometimes since I am acutely aware of the impermanence of all things. I just have to learn that I can't make perfect decisions since I myself am not perfect</p>

Learning thank you for your post! You were my artist friends in Brooklyn, hah! That same quote that BoS highlighted struck me, too. Engagement also taught me so much about life, and marriage is teaching me even more as time goes on. I am so much less judgmental. And there are so many ways to live happily. Yesterday at one point I was thinking that I could be living a totally different life right now...single, maybe in a different country, with a totally different career, or maybe living just like my bohemian friends...and I would probably be happier in some ways and less happy in others. But my life is my life and it's a good one with many good points and a few that are less-than-ideal...like any life.

taraplum

Posts: 65
(11/03/08 12:43:01)

Great Post

Fantastic post. I never thought of myself as someone who had a fear of loss, possibly because I didn't think I'd experienced much loss. My grandmother's death when I was 12 was really my only "technical" experience with loss. But, like so many of you, the engagement period reopened my eyes to past experiences and made me look at them in new ways. I've always known that fear of failure and fear of abandonment were huge for me, but I realized that fear of abandonment was really a fear of loss, packaged in a different way. From the time my husband and I started dating, I was always terrified that he would break up with me. Even after a year of dating, I would get worried if he hadn't called by a certain time, thinking that would be the night he wouldn't call and would "leave" me. I freaked out after every fight, every difference in opinion, thinking for sure that meant he wanted to break up. I know now that my engagement fears of me not loving him and of wanting to leave him were really self-protective mechanisms - the real fear was of him not loving me and leaving me. Of me LOSING him. I'm still struggling with some of those fears, but being married has helped quiet them a little. There's that permanence and added commitment to marriage that gives me a little more security.

But I found myself dealing with the issue of loss again when my

grandfather passed away in August. I was completely distraught and depressed, particularly in the days after the funeral, and I couldn't figure out why my feelings were so intense. I loved my grandfather and had a good relationship with him, but we had not been close in many years, because of both the physical distance between us (we lived in different states) and his poor medical condition. My grief seemed out of alignment with the depth of our relationship. It wasn't until a few weeks after the funeral that I realized it was the fear of losing my own parents that was causing my sadness. While I was genuinely upset about my grandfather, it was the realization that my parents aren't going to live forever and that I will lose them at some point in the future that really got me.

The death of my husband is not something that has caused me anxiety (at least, not yet!). To be honest, this was something that concerned me during my engagement. I was very scared that I could imagine my life going on without him, while the thought of living without my parents was something I literally could not wrap my brain around (which I think is why my grandfather's death was so hard - I had to wrap my brain around it!). But the more figurative loss of him, as in a break-up, has always caused much anxiety. Here's to hoping the fear of figurative loss doesn't mutate into fear of actual loss! Conscious thinking helps.

Grief and dealing with family ties

Author	Comment
<p data-bbox="94 317 293 352">Letsbehappy</p> <p data-bbox="94 394 380 457">Posts: 279 (05/12/08 14:13:44)</p>	<p data-bbox="548 317 1110 352">Grief and dealing with family ties</p> <p data-bbox="548 394 829 426">TAGS [EDIT]: None</p> <p data-bbox="548 457 721 489">Hello girls,</p> <p data-bbox="548 531 1604 678">I am posting to possibly start a thread regarding many of Sheryl's issues regarding loss and the conscious rituals and practices we must go through as we approach and experience our wedding day.</p> <p data-bbox="548 720 1604 867">Many of you may not see this as a necessity, but reading Sheryl's book and truly working through these losses will bring about an amazing transformation in how you work toward your wedding day and afterward.</p> <p data-bbox="548 909 1604 1297">For those of you haven't read the book yet, please do and in the process, please journal as much as you can. Writing tends to clear the mind and with nobody looking, can truly let you evaluate your soul. Many of you are also probably seeing a therapist for your anxiety and I commend you for that. I, too, deal with anxiety and I hope that it provides you with more clarity. I also did the counseling sessions with Sheryl and my skepticism was received with her empathy, comfort and wisdom. As I look back on my wedding transition, I can see how the work she wants us to commit to has paid off.</p> <p data-bbox="548 1339 1604 1728">One of my greatest sources of grief came from losing my maiden name. It was if changing my name met changing my identity. At times, it still feels awkward, as several of my former students still use my maiden name, but more than ever, I now feel stronger because I chose to change my name. My identity can never really change because of marriage. My truths and ideals will always remain the same. Now, I feel as if I am challenged with an even greater identity as I take on the role of wife. This is truly an awesome commitment and in that, we find a way to explore even great truths about ourselves.</p> <p data-bbox="548 1770 1604 1801">I also was incredibly sad about "leaving" my parents. My wedding</p>

was truly a moment of leaving my family of origin, as I moved across the country after our honeymoon. Talk about a whirlwind of emotions. My closeness and connection with my family has brought us back to my hometown, but I still feel a separation from my parents that saddens me at times.

My mom takes transitions very hard and my dad is quite stoic. I was nervous for those emotions as well as my own tumultuous feelings. Really, before the wedding I wanted to have my mom around all the time and none of the time. What a paradox it was! I created battles just so she couldn't get sentimental on me. We still have some growth to do as she feels I need to share all aspects of my life with her. The transition from me sharing everything with my parents and having them as my main consultants in all major decision makings was difficult, but necessary to give my marriage and husband the respect and trust it deserves.

I didn't know how my dad would suddenly treat me- after all, I was going to be a "wife" - what did all this mean? I did not want any alone time with my parents yet craved their comforting ways. It was a crazy time and if you are experiencing any of these feelings, please feel them.

Sheryl and others on this board encouraged me to write letters to those who were close to me. I chose to give these letters to my mom and dad and it helped me tremendously. I felt quite at peace when I did.

I will say this many more times. You are truly experiencing a loss of some kind; a death. It may sound quite dramatic, but I am sure the angst that you are feeling would support the drama of it all.

Because of this, expect a true rebirth. Just as in a hero's journey, there are many challenges along the way. Hopefully, The Conscious Bride is your revelation and true transformation can occur. You will return from your journey with a much greater truth about yourself.

As Sheryl asked me at the end of our first counseling session, "Is

it a yes or a no?" Even if it was a 50 percent yes, it was time to move forward and work on these losses. It was a strong yes with a weak voice. By moving forward the voice changed to one of strength and pride.

I hope you continue to work through this passage and I would love to hear your thoughts on the loss of family origins.

consciousbride

Posts: 255
(05/12/08 14:37:00)

Re: Grief and dealing with family ties

Great thread, LBH. Thank you very much for starting it and I look forward to reading responses. As you say, it can be hard for many to think of transitions as a death of sorts, but until we embrace that truth we're skirting around the fundamental reality and we're not really dealing with the issues that need attention. And, as you beautifully express, there is always always a rebirth after a death, and a full rebirth can only arise after a complete death. As a culture, we shy away from the word death, but death is loss and loss is part of life. It truly is a heroine's journey to walk through transitions with this consciousness and do the hard and painful work that comes with it.

I'm so glad you're back on the boards!

Sheryl

GettingMarried

Posts: 19
(05/12/08 17:48:08)

This has been hardest for me

LBH - I'm also glad you started this thread. This has been the hardest transition for me and during the beginning of our engagement I felt very sad about this all the time. Months have gone by but after this past weekend with my family (home for my bridal shower!) it is hitting me again.

One major thing is that I have finally decided to drop my last name, take my FI's last name and keep my middle name as my middle name. A conversation with my paternal grandfather helped me decide and the fact that I share my middle name with my dad as well. This is really what I wanted all along, but I can't

help but feel guilty and like I'm letting my Dad down by not honoring my current last name and taking that as my middle name (I have no brothers).

Another issue is also how will my father treat me once I'm married and a wife. I'm not sure what to expect or what will change if anything. I know he's feeling very emotional about the wedding itself and has warned me that he'll probably lose it (he SOBBED at my cousins wedding a few month ago and I think it was mainly thinking about OUR relationship and my wedding coming, and not really about my cousin!). My dad and I haven't always showed deep emotion with each other, and the thought of it (esp with a lot of people there) makes me nervous. I cried all the way to work today thinking about the father-daughter dance.

A third issue is my expectations of how my FI interacts with my family. I always had this image that my FI would seamlessly fit into family, be best buds with my dad, and want to see my family all the time. WELL, that is not always the case. I know he loves my family, but he definitely doesn't want to spend every second with them. I've learned to prioritize what family events I ask him to attend (a cousin's wedding over another cousin's 9th bday or something). Also, he and his family are very organized, punctual, tactful, etc. My family is late, loud, messy, my mom somehow manages to make a scene wherever she goes. I can see my FI get anxious in these settings and he can only take it for so long. At first I didn't understand and felt bad because I LOVE spending time with his family... they are an extension of him of course! BUT they are much farther away so whenever we visit it's more of a vacation, and visiting times are far between. (His mom doesn't work and has everything in the house perfect and ready for our arrival.) Well, I've started accepting this about my FI and not making him come to something at this point if he's not up to it... Also, I can't change my family or control every situation, so when my Mom is making a scene or the house is a mess when we get there, I just try to breath and remember he's an adult and he'll get through it. LBH - I actually DID grieve this for a while, that the whole family interaction was not exactly how I had always pictured it. BUT although it's not perfect, it's still good, and I'm thankful for the times my FI does spend with my family.

Anyways, knowing that it's okay to feel this way has helped me a lot. My FI and I have had many talks about our families differences and what we expect from each other. I let myself cry over it when I need to, about letting go of them... and the feelings have lessened over time. I NEVER thought this would be something I would feel during my engagement. Does anyone else have similar experiences?

Thanks again for starting this LBH!

babyofsix

Posts: 938
(05/12/08 18:23:24)

Re: This has been hardest for me

What a great thread. Thanks for starting it, LBH.

Separating from my family wasn't the hardest part for me. However, what GettingMarried described... wishing her FI was a "seamless fit" into her family... is what I've experienced. DH likes my family, but it's different from his. His family is much more outwardly supportive, more inclined to just hang out without a plan, etc. My family, although very caring, doesn't always express support verbally. But they're good people. DH mainly doesn't like the traveling it takes to spend time with my family.

Changing my name was difficult for a day. It was never a big issue for me for some reason, but I can totally understand why it is for some women.

I'm so glad these discussions are happening. They still help me, 9 months after the wedding.

Letsbehappy

Posts: 279
(05/13/08 07:52:39)

Re: This has been hardest for me

Hi Getting Married and Bof6!

Thanks Sheryl for responding.

Getting Married-

My dad and I do not show emotion toward each other either. I

was terrified of what it would be like to walk down the aisle with him and the father daughter dance. It all worked out quite well. The power went out right before our dance so my cousin came up and sang a beautiful song. It was quite emotional on many levels, but I was glad it ended up that way. As soon as the song ended, the power came back on! He was actually very sweet and it wasn't awkward like I expected it to be. He wanted to hold my hand as we walked down the aisle and basically he walked so fast, people were laughing!

I understand your thoughts as well about having your husband fit perfectly with your family. Sometimes I still freak out about that a little bit, but that's part of a transition as well and the understanding that nobody is judging you. I think that my parents are always looking at us and judging and what not, but it really isn't an issue.

Keep crying and get those emotions out there. If you haven't, you may consider writing a letter that expresses your thoughts and in a sense your good-byes. You may never give them to your parents, but it may help.

Please keep sharing. I would love to hear more of your thoughts. This was a huge struggle for me and one that I was extremely worried about. It all worked out great, though!

Unregistered(d)

Posts: 0
(05/13/08 10:32:30)

re:

Hi everyone,

This is my first time responding to the boards, though I've been reading incognito for a couple weeks I am in the process of reading the Conscious Bride and so far the piece that has sparked the biggest chord in me is the issue of grieving my single life. I am newly engaged (in February) and on most fronts I am very happy to have found the man I want to marry, and I look forward to a new level of love, support, and consistency in my life. By no means do I wish I could still "play the field" or anything like that, but being single is what I know, it's what I'm used to, and in some ways it feels so comfortable. The thing about being single

is that your options are always open. If things don't work out, no problem - spend some time alone, and on to the next adventure. So getting engaged, and ultimately married, changes that. I'll eventually have to work on a relationship, and I know at times it will be hard. This is something I don't have much experience with, and that I will have to learn as I go along. Because of the book and these posts, I'm starting to realize that it's okay, and natural, to experience some grief over this and it doesn't mean I'm not ready or I need to question my decision.

I also just want to say I appreciate everyone's honesty here - and I love that there is a place for us to express our emotions - both positive and negative. I imagine that I continue through my engagement, I may feel some other aspects of grief, such as losing my last name, or changes in my relationships with other people. I'm so thankful that you all are here sharing your stories to help each other, and now me, through this crazy journey.

Letsbehappy

Posts: 279
(05/13/08 14:24:58)

Grief

Hello Feyonce,
I felt a sense of awkwardness about leaving my single life behind I felt very strong, secure and independent as I carried on with my life. My successes were my own and my failures were something that only I had to worry about.

What helped me through it all was knowing that my successes were still mine but I could accomplish even more with the support of a "team".

What scared me the most about committing to marriage was the feeling of vulnerability. I saw that as a weakness, that I should be able to handle everything on my own while maintaining a partnership on the side. For most of us, the engagement process caused tremendous doubt, grief and sadness. Certainly not emotions you want to face as you approach such a happy occasion. The honesty and true openness that needs to be shared with your fiancé at this time is a testament to your strength as a couple. This is one of those situations that you must work through individually and with those that support you most. Just

as with marriage. You will still make decisions on your own, crave your "space" and hold on to your habits and routines.

Remember, marriage is not a letting go of identity per se. The single woman you are now will grow into an independent and conscientious woman when you are married.

Accept the work that comes from marriage as a positive. Something that strengthens the two of you separately and as a couple. It is nice to stay comfortable. Knowing that you can do as you please. You will become comfortable as a married woman before you transition into yet another stage of life. When the work comes in your relationship, you will rely on the strength and wisdom you developed as a single woman. The same traits that drew you to your partner in the first place.

I definitely felt sadness over this aspect of my marriage as well. This is one area, however, that has resolved itself. It's good that you are talking about it now.

betterday

Posts: 144
(05/14/08 05:43:30)

hard for me too

Hi all,

LBH this post definitely struck a chord with me as I feel like leaving my family of origin was the hardest part of this transition for me and the source of 95% of my anxiety about getting married. Well I have now been very happily married for over 6 months...something I never thought was possible in the dark times.

For me leaving my family (even though I hadn't lived near them in many years) was like turning off the little voice in my head (my mother and sisters) and listening to myself instead. It was about growing up and coming into my own (at 28!). I feel more free and see more possibility in my life since I have made this separation and transition...who knew being married could set you free! It was a very challenging separation, one that I went through with the help of a therapist, wonderful husband, and this amazing board. I guess the point of my post is that this is a

really important piece of the transition puzzle...it's hard and emotional and people may have their feelings hurt, but without this I would not be the grounded and happy wife and woman I am today.

catlover

Posts: 326
(05/14/08 07:20:40)

I can relate

Hello,

This was probably the hardest part for me about getting engaged is the leaving my family part. I had a very hard time with it when I first moved in with my FI this past August, but things have gotten MUCH better. I still make sure that I see my parents at least once a week and I still miss home, but I am getting used to it. I make an effort for dinner, for my parents and my FI's parents.

My family and I are VERY close so it's been very difficult, but you have to move on. I know walking down the aisle and dancing with my dad are going to be very hard for me, but it's just part of growing up, I guess!

You will be fine, as I am sure I will too. It will get better, I promise!

~Cat

GettingMarried

Posts: 19
(05/20/08 05:53:26)

personal experience

Hi all - I was thinking/crying more about letting go of the family today - especially in regards to my father. One feeling I finally can articulate, is that I'm sad that by getting married, I'm letting go of my dad, but at the same time, it's almost like I've never really had him, which makes it all the more sad. But I'm realizing that my dad and his drug addiction is affecting me way more right now than I thought it would. It's like I'm grieving all of his problems and all of the problems he caused my family NOW. I have grieved this in past, but probably not enough as I often as I should have. My mom always said I never cried as a

child, and I think I' m totally making up for it now. I guess this issue might fall under Sheryl' s "grief from old losses" more so than family ties - I' m not sure. I' m worried I' m going to be emotional about this AT the wedding, even though it' s not what the wedding day is about at all. I' m hoping that by continuing to grieve about it, and starting journaling today!, I' ll be to a point where I can feel okay about it by the wedding day? It' s weird too because on the surface my dad and I have a good relationship. We have a lot of interests in common and I' m more like him than either of my sisters are. Anyone else have any experiences like this?

Thank you all for your encouraging posts and for sharing your personal stories!

[ilovehim](#)

Posts: 197
(05/20/08 06:28:14)

Re: personal experience

Yes, I had and am still having grief about my family. At first I could not understand it b/c I really thought that my family was pretty close to perfect, we appeared happy on the outside, parents married for 35 years, dad successful in his career, took regular family vacations together, parents supported us in whatever endeavor we wanted to pursue, be it academic, sports,etc. It is through the engagement and through the interaction with my FI's family that I began to notice that my family is not perfect. We DO NOT communicate, everything is always "great" and if someone is upset you are encouraged to "think positive". My father gave me the book "The Power of Positive Thinking" for my 16th Birthday. While there is much to be said about thinking positively, it is not a sin to be sad once in a while, life is a series of ups and downs and my family environment led me to believe that it was not OK to feel the downs. My grieving has really been around realizing that my parents are not perfect, they make mistakes and do not have all the answers (I know this may be something I should have learned years ago but it took me to be 32 to realize it). My grieving has also been around realizing that I am an adult a WOMAN not a girl and my relationship with my mother and father is changing, they are not the first people I call anymore when

marya15

Posts: 19
(05/20/08 11:28:17)

something great, or horrible, happens to me and I have found myself challenging them more often.

I believe I am grieving the end of my childhood and embracing my adulthood, with some fear sprinkled in there from time to time.

Re: personal experience

I too am dealing with grief related to my parents and my engagement. My adult relationship with my parents has always been characterized by guilt, mostly because I've lived far from my parents since college and, as an only child, feel responsible for their sense of loneliness and sadness about the distance. Now that I'm getting married my sense of guilt is more complicated, though, because since I've been engaged my parents, who seemed to like my fiancé up to now, have suddenly found tons of reasons to dislike him, despite the fact that he's a smart, kind, responsible guy who's well-liked by my friends and other relatives. My mom called him "asinine" and told me she had a "bad instinct" about the wedding - for no concrete reason. I've spoken to a priest about this, who thought that my mom's anxiety is not about my fiancé but about my getting married in general, but I still wonder about the validity of her "bad instinct," which has created a lot of anxiety and doubts. It's hard to move from always relying on my mom for advice and approval to taking this major step without much support from her, but I try to remind myself that I know that marrying is right for me. So I'm grieving for the sense of closeness and support I used to have with her along with my identity as her child, I guess - and apparently she's going through a similar grieving process herself, though her expression of that grief seems unnecessarily mean-spirited...

learning

Posts: 88
(05/20/08 13:19:40)

Re: personal experience

Hey GettingMarried (and others!),

I'm right there with you. I'm feeling good now, but at my lowest points in this process it's really been so much about my father. It's like the bubble that had been my perfect childhood up until now finally (at 31!) burst, and I saw it for what it really was (really scary for everyone that lived through it). I had learned how to shut off my emotions and not "feel" when things got too scary, and all of this is what re-emerged when I got engaged.

I've also grieved for the sad, scary, and seemingly incomplete parts of my father's life, as well as for his death four years ago. This weekend, at engaged encounter, we had to write a letter to someone, and I wrote one to my dad. In it, I told him how much I had learned from him, and also how much I have learned on my own, in the time since. I realized then that I've been feeling guilty, like I was betraying him for moving beyond him, for learning some lessons that perhaps he never learned. Like you, I was very close and very similar to my dad, and somehow I felt like my life should simply mirror his. I felt guilty for moving further with my life, even for continuing to live after him. I wished, and still wish I could have made his life a little bit easier, have helped ease his difficult times. I know it doesn't make much sense - because as a child we are the ones that need that kind of support - but it is sometimes the way it is. Have you experienced this? My therapist gave me the word "parentified child." Perhaps in the case of addiction, you may have experienced something similar. Seeing your parent so vulnerable and unstable is such a hard thing for a child.

Well, I hope this helps a bit. Keep writing. Maybe try writing him a letter. Has therapy helped with any of this?

wishing you so much peace. We have 5 weeks to go! (by the way, my wedding is in new york state, hudson valley).

GettingMarried

Posts: 19
(05/25/08 04:36:59)

thank you

Hello again - Thank you Ilovehim, Marya and Learning for sharing your stories! It looks like even with the differences in our families, there is grief, sadness and even loss of innocence at this stage in our lives.

Learning- I have explored this in therapy and have heard the term parentified child which can definitely apply to me in some ways.

Well, I decided to go back and read Conscious bride again since I

read it last summer when I was having a lot of doubts about my fiancé and was only focused on that. It was tremendously helpful again this time around. I got even more out of it while reading it without all of the anxiety I was feeling last summer and can understand my feelings better.

Also I've set aside time for journaling! I know it's always suggested here, but I finally did it one night this week for like hours when I was feeling down and FI was traveling. It really helps you let go of what's going on in your head and sort through your feelings - **I think by forcing yourself to articulate them when you write them down, you can really understand what it is you're feeling!!!** I cant believe I put that off for so long. I felt much more peace after... I even wrote my dad a letter as you suggested and I decided I will have a talk with him before the wedding. I think that will make me feel more peaceful on the day, less sad and more at peace with our relationship and moving forward. I'm thrilled actually to have found some peace in this area as it has been bothering me for so long.

Thanks for everyone's insight and for sharing. I hope you all find some peace with your own situations. Keep journaling!

ps - Learning - less than 5 weeks to go now! We're getting married on the North Shore in MA.

grieving the end of single life

Author	Comment
<p><u>confusedofcourse</u></p> <p>Posts: 52 (05/21/08 13:50:22)</p>	<p>grieving the end of single life</p> <p>TAGS [EDIT]: None</p> <p>wanted to start a thread on this, as this -- along with grieving family losses -- has been (is) really, really tough for me. I'd like to hear how others are dealing/dealt with it.</p> <p>First, I'll start with what's been so tough. To begin, I've realized through this transition process that I derive some of my confidence from external sources (as do we all, I would imagine). one of those sources, for quite sometime, has been men being interested in me, which I would say is a fortunate thing. I've never been short on dates, and I've never been short on interested "suitors." Now, getting married, I'm giving up a really fun and exciting part of my life. I didn't find dating to be "awful" and "miserable" and "heart-wrenching" (although some breakups were). Mostly, I found it fun, exciting, interesting, stimulating, etc. etc. etc. So I don't have the "shew! the end of dating!" feeling that I've heard some people have had. It's almost like I've played this fun sport for all my life, and now I can't play baseball anymore. It sucks. every time I see a cute guy, every time I meet an interesting guy, I think "gosh, if I didn't have this rock on my finger, I could see what there is to see there." frankly, it SUCKS.</p> <p>there is a slight fear that "what if there's someone better," but mostly it's just sadness to leave that all behind. and sadness that I'm leaving it behind at 27. and worrying whether I SHOULD leave it behind at 27.</p> <p>I'd love to hear others' thoughts on this transition!!!!</p>
<p><u>learning</u></p> <p>Posts: 88 (05/21/08 14:46:42)</p>	<p>Re: grieving the end of single life</p> <p>Wow, so glad you started this thread! I feel this one almost every day. So much so that I almost take it for granted as part of the deal. But I can say, at 31, I don't think it matters what age you</p>

are - it's just hard, period, to give up that external source of confidence (I'm pretty sure it can operate like an addiction for many of us). Maybe I feel a little more sure that I've lived a really full single life, but like you, I certainly miss the flirting and dating that were absolutely central to my life over the past decade. I also loved dating, every second of it, and it's really hard to say good bye to it! When I was really depressed and anxious a few months ago I couldn't even see what the point was of getting dressed up or caring about what I looked like - because so much of all that was tied up with men (strangers, prospective boyfriends, ex-boyfriends, men in general!). I felt like dating was a wonderful way for me to explore the world and humanity (smile) and I even remember occasionally being critical of others who hadn't had that experience (misguided, I know).

Well, I know now that after a while, beneath this glamorous exterior, something else was going on. Having read "he's scared, she's scared" and thought a lot about it, I know that my single life - as fabulous as it felt - and endless search for the perfect partner - as self-righteous as it felt - was covering up some other stuff, and was keeping me from being able to just sit still with my own issues. So much of my identity was tied to exploration, adventure, moving on, men... and for me, I think I defined these things pretty narrowly and in a way that kept anything like a real commitment at bay. It's actually pretty funny how I framed things then, given that we all know that this engagement journey is DEFINITELY an adventure - and more so than what my dating life was (because after a while my dating life was falling into some pretty predictable patterns!).

Well, that's about it, but I just wanted to say that I've felt the same loss you're going through, and it has gotten better for me. I've just been able to notice it over time and, gradually, I've begun to really appreciate other things about the identity I'm growing into through this transition.

Thanks so much for writing about this - I think as women we aren't often encouraged to talk about how attached we can get to our single dating lives. And if we do feel attached and have trouble letting go of it, too often society suggests that perhaps we haven't found the "perfect" mate. I now know that this is so

misguided. It's just not so! Just think of how different it is for men, for whom it's often openly acknowledged that they have to be cajoled out of singlehood and that the transition is GOING to be hard. Seems like we need to allow ourselves the same space and the same awkward time and the same letting go... the same transition.

Thanks again.

confusedofcourse

Posts: 52
(05/21/08 15:01:00)

Re: grieving the end of single life

learning -- thanks for your response. I guess I'm torn about a couple things. not just the loss of the single life, but also grieving that I didn't have as much of it as perhaps I would have wanted to. I dated a lot in my early twenties. then, senior year of college, I met a great guy, and we dated for four years. then I met my now-fiancé. during the time with the first long-term b/f, I wasn't unfaithful, but I still flirted and lived a little more single-y than I "should" have. so what is also hard isn't just letting go of single life, but also grieving the fact that I only had about 3 years of it (post-high school).

it makes me wonder if I'm ready. even though I wanted a lasting relationship, even though I dated with an eye towards that, am I really ready to be done? not sure if I ran enough laps around the track, so to speak. and while it could very well be the case that extra laps would lead me to the same guy, I worry that I will one day resent my fiancé for "taking away" those laps from me.

argh. this is such a hard one for me.

WtgforClarity

Posts: 0
(09/22/14 11:11:41)

Re: grieving the end of single life

I'm right there with both of you on this one...and I am 35! I think that for some people (like myself), it doesn't really matter how many laps you do around the track because you can always do more (and in my grass is always greener mentality - potentially better laps). I do sometimes miss the excitement/anticipation of going out and wondering who I could possibly meet, but I know I

don't want to live my whole life looking for something that I have right now. I sometimes think that I would have a harder time with this if I was younger, but on the other hand, I have had a lot of time to develop who I am as a single person and have held really tight to that identity. I suppose there are pros and cons to either side so the key is just to embrace that!

[babyofsix](#)

Posts: 938
(05/21/08 15:32:09)

Re: grieving the end of single life

You know, this is a big area for me as well and I've been working on accepting this loss since finding the site and the book. I'm 27 (26 when married, 23 when engaged). I didn't date much. I went out with a couple guys in high school, but I was so skeptical that I always jumped to the conclusion that "he's making out with me to have sex" and I was a virgin until meeting my now husband, so, needless to say, I was called a "tease." I don't feel as if I had that exciting, "Sex and the City" or "Friends" dating life and sometimes, I wonder what it would be like to be one of the "single girls" on the dating scene.

Right around the time my anxiety kicked in, two of my girlfriends broke up with their long term boyfriends. One had trust issues... the other kept saying things that played right into my fears. It was hard and it's been hard at times "watching" them be single. I miss the excitement of meeting someone new... that first kiss... that "can't keep my hands off him" feeling... the wondering what he's doing every minute... thinking he's "perfect."

But, you know what? If I hadn't married DH, I might not be able to imagine what it will be like to have a child with him someday. I may not know what it's like to know someone misses me because he loves me so much. I may not know what it's like to know I can trust my heart 100% with someone, while being vulnerable at the same time. I may not know it's OK for me to feel neurotic and insecure because he accepts me WITH all my faults instead of in spite of them.

Yes, that life seems glamorous. I know you have said you enjoyed dating. But I'd like to pose a question... and Learning might have been touching on this. Were you ever lonely while dating, imagining what it would be like to finally find someone to

marry and build a life with? I really believe there's truth to the saying "The grass is always greener." I believe that many single women want the "white picket fence" life, and many married women want the "carefree, exciting" life of dating.

So, long post... but this is something I've struggled with, but those are the things I try to remind myself of. Pros and cons to everything... very true.

confusedofcourse

Posts: 52
(05/21/08 17:18:35)
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grass is always greener

BO6 -- in response to your question about being lonely -- it wasn't so much "lonely" as it was that I never dated with absolutely no thought towards finding a lasting relationship. that's not to say I didn't have fun with some people that I knew I had no future with (b/c I did), it's more to say that the idea of a lasting relationship was always a "goal" (not the correct word, but close).

I think the grass is always greener issue is a big one for me. I realized A LOT about what I needed and wanted from a relationship during my four-year stint with the guy I started dating in college. I emerged with a much clearer picture of what I needed/wanted, and then bam, there was my now-fiancé. Potentially, though, there are other guys out there that would fit that "criteria" (and maybe be even better). When now-fiancé and I started dating, the "snowy feeling" was so intense, that even though my brain said, to some degree "hey, maybe you should date around!" my heart was on the freight train. now that the "snowy feeling" isn't a full-time condition, I sit back and think, "I wish I'd dated more guys that fit criteria x, y, and z, and then I could have picked among them, instead of just taking the first thing that 'fit' that came along." Almost like apartment hunting -- maybe in the end you'd end up with the first one you looked at, but you tend to look at a bunch before paying the rent!

I guess I just wish I knew how to make those feelings of "regret" go away, b/c it's not the happiest place to be 30 days out from my wedding.

babyofsix

Re: grass is always greener

Posts: 938
(05/21/08 18:20:40)

Don't worry about making those feelings of "regretting not dating more" go away. Accept them... you're having those feelings. It's OK to have those feelings. I'm almost 10 months into my marriage and I still have those feelings. As for thinking you should've not just taken the first guy to fit "criteria x, y, and z..." Someone else might have fit "x, y, z, q, and t" but might have been missing "a, c, s, and r." Know what I mean? So, and this is something I have to remind myself to do sometimes... instead of focusing on what criteria your fiancé doesn't fit, think about the criteria he does fit... and even the criteria you didn't think you thought was important, but he made you realize how great that criteria is.

Another thing I tell myself... someone can "fit" you now, but remember, people change. I will change. My husband will change. We probably will change at different times in our lives. The key is to accept that we're ever-changing and work toward changing together by talking, communicating, and being honest with what's going on. So even if there was someone else out there that fit your criteria more, that person might not in a month, a year, or 10 years.

learning

Posts: 88
(05/21/08 18:21:04)

Re: grass is always greener

hey confusedofcourse,

are you experiencing anxiety generally? just checking because if you are, it might be that this is just the thing that you are obsessing about. we all have our things that we obsess about if we are seriously anxious and frantically searching for something to explain it. when I'm anxious, mine is usually that we should have dated longer, but now, not being anxious, I know in my heart that it's just an excuse, something I focus on when I'm confronted with the stillness and the contentedness that I'm so afraid of. on the other hand, the loss of singlehood thing is simply not a trigger for me - it's something I notice, mourn, and then move on from. just a thought to notice what your triggers are and try to get some distance from them (that is, don't take them too seriously when you are anxious).

I have found that one of the most liberating and worthwhile things to do with regard to this kind of anxiety is to somehow come to terms with your "story."

for me, this meant coming to terms with the fact that my engagement hasn't been picture perfect (and won't ever be!), that it was scary and sad and confusing and lonely; and coming to terms with the fact that my childhood wasn't picture perfect, that it revolved mostly around illness and death and abandonment and was terrifying and lonely; and coming to terms with the fact that I am not as "together" as I thought I was, emotionally, and in fact needed some serious professional help to come to terms with all of this.

For you, if you want to marry this man, it may mean coming to terms with the fact that you didn't have the long single life that you have so long romanticized, among other things. but remember that on some level it's as simple as that. just coming to terms with the fact that your story, your biography, cannot include every story and cannot include all possibilities. you have to make choices. and then you have to come to terms with those choices. I know this is hard. I was someone that always believed (passionately so) that "all things were possible" and it was this philosophy that allowed me to quietly sabotage anything that resembled commitment and to thrive in my dating life. but ultimately, I wasn't getting what I needed from this life. but once you come to terms with ONE choice that you love, I think a lot more possibilities will open up just the same. we all need stories to help make sense of our lives, our choices.

maybe try thinking about what you think you need at this point in your life. can you learn and grow in new ways through this marriage? that's what matters.

I hope this helps!

p.s. I think your wed. date must be right before mine (june 28th), yes?

confusedofcourse

Posts: 52
(05/21/08 18:33:11)

thanks!

thank you BO6 and learning, so much, for your insight and caring. BO6 -- I hear you, though it is sometimes SO EASY to focus on what's not there than what is. and learning, you pretty much "called me out" (and I didn't even know I was in a place to be called out). I feel like I'm five years old, on the high dive, and I worked up the nerve to climb up, and now I'm about to jump, and my dad is in the pool saying "jump, jump!" and I'm SCARED TO DEATH. and this is one of the things I obsess about when I'm anxious.

but you said something so beautiful, that if I could just do it, I know I'd feel a lot better about "giving up the single life." namely, to embrace my story. ironically, I thought our story was SO COOL at first (fell in love out of the blue, when I wasn't looking for anything, when I didn't want to date, etc.). now, I am finding everything wrong with our story, and it ties right into the very real (non-anxiety stemming) transition of letting go of singlehood.

I definitely romanticized single life, and I to some degree resent the super-conservative culture I was surrounded by for many years that discouraged dating around (making me sometimes feel bad about dating around and at the same time keeping me from doing it perhaps as much as I would have liked to). I guess I'm searching for that perfect story. In essence, I want to know that when I jump off that high dive, I'm going to land in a perfect pool in a perfect way!

But anxiety aside, there is a real grief in leaving behind a life of independence and singlehood. there is such an opportunity to "get to know yourself" during those times. But I'm trying to focus on the fact that you can also grow in a relationship, and that actually, you might even have more freedom (BO6, have you

found this to be true?) What I mean is, when you're not focusing on how to attract attention, or basking in the attention you attract even without trying sometimes, then perhaps you can truly get in touch with what you want OUTSIDE of guys. that might actually be REALLY freeing, but I have defined my life so long by my dating life that it's hard to imagine (i.e., 2000 was my "john, james, and steve" period, 2001 was my "insert other names here" period.) I think if that's the case, then I can try to look forward to that instead of focusing on the loss of new guys by which to id points in my life. (does that make any sense?)

Along those lines, I think that so much of these transitions boil down to identity. How do we identify ourselves (for example, learning - when you said that you at some points thought "why even dress up?" I completely knew what you meant!!!) is really put before us when we are about to get married. Things we KNEW identified us we become sad about leaving (to the extent we're leaving). But more interestingly, we are confronted with things that we NEVER would have guessed identified us, but do, and we only realize it now that those identities are being outgrown, so to speak.

Thank you again for all your wisdom, BO6 and Learning. Truly, you guys are such a blessing.

Learning -- June 21...crazy!

babyofsix

Posts: 938
(05/21/08 18:50:05)

Re: thanks!

Learning... I LOVE the "accept your story" idea. What a great way to put it and it put me at ease tonight. My mind's wandering (DH is out of town and I'm kind of letting it wander a little).

Confused... you asked if I've found that I've found being married more "freeing" in terms of finding out more about myself and what makes me tick without focusing on other men (right?). In a way, yes. But, I'll admit, I'm still very much a work in progress. I think finding out who *I* am within this marriage is challenging. While I'm introspective and analytical, I still don't really know what makes me tick and what makes me passionate. I'm working on figuring I out.

One thing I can say... I have a husband who is very supportive of me trying to find my passion(s) in life. Yes, he and I are both jealous people, so finding passions that involve close interactions with the opposite sex could be an issue ()... but when I wanted to take dance classes, he was all for it. When I've talked about possibly going back to school when he's done because I'm not sure if my career is what I'm "supposed" to be doing (see, I do it outside of my marriage too), he was supportive. If I said I wanted to learn how to widdle a toothpick out of a tree trunk, he'd be supportive. He knows he doesn't have much time to give right now with school being such a consuming task for him. So he's supportive of me making friends to go have a drink with after work or to go to a movie with or to go to the mall with. Where as I'd feel left out if the reverse happened because of insecurity and fear ("what if he likes them better than me?"), he's supportive... which is teaching me A LOT.

I don't know if that answered your question. I hope it did... at least a little.

[confusedofcourse](#)

Posts: 52
(05/22/08 06:03:02)

"finding yourself" in a couple

I've sort of touched on this before, but something BO6 said made me want to pose a question tied with this transition. that question is whether, and to what extent, we feel like the transition from single girl to married woman cuts at who we thought we were. we realize that we often defined so much of ourselves by our "single life." whether that's men, whether that's living alone, whether that's having total career mobility, whatever (all three, for me). I think I'm so scared for that to change. To have to "re-figure" out who I am. To adjust who I am to these new parameters (no different men in and out, not living alone, not total career mobility, etc.).

The transition out of single life is hard. Maybe your identity doesn't 'change" as much as you think it will (those who are married, what are your thoughts here?) , but I'm certainly scared that the shift is going to totally change how I relate to the world.....

[Nenya14](#)

Re: "finding yourself" in a couple

Posts: 363
(05/22/08 07:24:11)

It changes!!

I'm sure many people would say well it shouldn't change, but if you've defined yourself by those things (dating, living alone, career mobility, freedom to live selfishly) then yes it does change, and has to really if you think about it, haha!!

I defined myself by those things to a pretty good extent so grieving the end of my single life was pretty hard for me. I've been married going on 2 years come October and was engaged almost 2 years and I think it's really only been in the past year and a half that I've settled into my new skin. I have struggled a bit with retaining my independent self but at the same time I've learned to truly value being part of a team/couple, and being dependent and vulnerable on someone else. It's an enlarging experience.

It's okay to grieve this and to take the time necessary, but I also think it's imperative to focus on the gains as well to help ease you through this. Marriage did free me up TREMENDOUSLY to focus on other things, things that will provide me with more lasting peace and happiness than the excitement of dating around or living alone. I never would have gone to grad school for my master's in counseling (which requires me to completely shift fields from business to psychology!) without marriage...at least I don't think I would have!

As for getting self esteem from men....well then that is a huge area of growth laid out for you. It's okay to have that, as I know many women feel that way and I did too. It's good that you recognize that and now you can start incorporating more real things that give you self esteem, like hobbies, education, being a good citizen of the planet, a good wife, friend, mother, daughter, etc.

It can be tough though....I did love dating and loved the attention of men and it was like a drug to some extent. I really don't even like going out to a bar without my husband because it makes me uncomfortable if a guy starts talking to me (guys never seem to notice wedding rings!! or they don't care!) because I am a really friendly person so I don't like being rude

learning

Posts: 88

(05/22/08 14:16:56)

and even if I say I'm married it seems like some guys persist anyhow! Sheesh. But I'm human, I can't say that it isn't nice to know I've still

"got it" even though I'm taken. Hubby and I talk about it and he gets proud about it, ha! He also gets a lot of female attention and I think it's cute. We tease each other...we know that we are married, not dead.

agreed!

Just wanted to second Nanya's comments. First, that male attention can in fact operate much like a drug (over and over again); for those of us that have experienced this, there may be a subtle difference that slowly emerges between "enjoying dating" and depending on it for our identities. And for those of us who have heavily depended on it, there's not necessarily any natural 'stopping point,' for this old life until it just hits you that you are at a new window and have some new and different choices in front of you (and in this case the old life may die rather suddenly).

And I also agree that it's important to (try to) look forward to aspects (the "gains" as Nanya said) of the new identity, even if you're not ready to fully embrace all of them. It is true that during this transition I've thought a *whole* lot more about my identity as a woman, as a wife-to-be, as a mother, as a daughter, and as a human being. Sure I had lots of intellectual thoughts on all of this (in fact my dissertation touches on many of these subjects!), but at the same time these were things I had been frankly too self-centered to fully engage on an intimate, personal level. Part of this struggle has been reconciling my intellectual consciousness vs. my deeply personal consciousness (or lack thereof!).

So now, after all these years, I finally feel like I'm growing up. I had been through tons of graduate school and made lots of advances in my career, but at the same time there was part of me that was clinging to my childhood - and it was this part that informed all of my relationships with men, all of my searching, all of my reliance on male attention, and, yes, all of my heartache. This is not to say that dating cannot be wonderful and extended

babyofsix

Posts: 938
(05/23/08 04:57:17)

confusedofcourse

Posts: 52
(05/23/08 08:49:35)

and rich and HEALTHY, or that there's not a time for all of this - there certainly is (and don't we love it!). But, for me, I think I'm ready to finally let the unhealthy (afraid of commitment yet dependent on male attention, terrified of standing still) part of myself grow up, you know?

I hope this helps!

Re: agreed!

Nenya, I'm so glad you wrote what you did. Today, I needed to hear it... as you could tell from the new post I started (if you read it). Growing up and accepting new parts of a new chapter in your life is HARD!! I'm having a hard time easing into the role of "wife," both in what I think it should be, what I think DH thinks it should be (notice, I put the "what I think" at the beginning of that), and what I'm fighting it being. If I were on my own, I wouldn't have to think of someone else. It's so hard to not be selfish anymore... SO hard!!

Thank you for writing this.

Re: agreed!

nenya and learning -- I loved both of your posts! So great!

I think that you should still be "proud" of who you married (i.e., you don't want someone dragging down your self-esteem), but I think what we derived some confidence from was being able to reel lots of guys in, rather than getting a good one (does that make sense?). as nenya said, that part of you has to evolve and get its kicks somewhere else. Funnily enough, I talked with my fi about this (I'm not particularly shy around him about anything), and he made the comment that for him, it's not really a confidence builder or ego boost to reel someone in unless they are super fantastic, b/c frankly, a lot of people are easy to reel in and/or not worth reeling in. He actually hates the chase period, whereas I usually thought it was fun, and whereas I clearly got a little ego-kick out of it (read: drug rush, thank you nenya for really nailing that). Interesting to hear his perspective, though, and I thought I'd share it.

Further, there's also something else I thought about: while you

shouldn't marry just to avoid the crap that is involved with dating, you also shouldn't delude yourself into thinking (as I have lately) that dating is inconsequential, that it's the same as going to barney's and trying on tons of dresses until you're absolutely sure you love the one you think you love. Dresses don't "bite," and you don't rip them apart either (at least I hope not). But dating sometimes is like that. Dating can create emotional baggage; you don't leave barney's with emotional baggage (physical baggage maybe). Again, that's not to say just get married to avoid that, but it was important for me to realize that being completely reckless and thinking that I should just date forever b/c it's "fun" and a "rush" ignores the very real consequences for real people that are involved, and that ultimately can make a person pretty scarred.

That said, it's of course true that there is a real "rush" from dating, and it's fun. And this isn't to deny that being appreciated as attractive isn't nice. But I've worked my butt off to get where I am professionally, and while I'm truly at the top of the game for atty's my age, I haven't really woven that into a key part of my identity. It's kind of like, without realizing it, I've had my radar out for men for so long, and that's been such a part of my social existence for so long, that the other stuff I did was very secondary. But at some point -- I guess that point is creeping up on me! -- the identity shifts from one who snags tons of men to one who found a fish worth keeping, who's really into and successful in their career (and working towards keeping that up), one who's really invested in friendships and whose social interactions become less about meeting men and more about connecting with people, etc. That's why I loved these posts -- reminding me that this isn't just about marriage, this is about growing into adulthood, and starting to shed the skin of adolescence.

[ilovehim](#)

Posts: 197

(05/23/08 09:25:50)

Re: agreed!

Quote:

reminding me that this isn't just about marriage, this is about growing into adulthood, and starting to shed the skin of adolescence.

This is so true and that is why this transition has been so overwhelming for me. In this transition I have had not only comes to terms with losing my singlehood and making a lifelong commitment to someone, it is realizing that my relationship with my parents is changing and we may soon be at a point where we will begin "trading places" and my parents will need help from me. It is realizing that life will no longer be all about me and I will have to pull back on some of the luxuries that I grant myself (excessive shopping sprees, spa days, lavish trips with girlfriends, etc) so that we can build a home and start saving for our future. It is about pulling away from party girlfriends whose main focus is going out and meeting men to building deeper friendships with women that I connect with and have shared my fears about this engagement with. Wow, with all that change no wonder I was an anxious mess. Now I am understanding that anxiety and slowly moving into adulthood, with a smile and as much grace as possible.

learning

Posts: 88
(05/23/08 09:51:30)

Re: agreed!

I just wanted to say that I think you ladies are amazing. this is one of my favorite threads ever, and to be in a 'community' and sharing with so many wise women is really, truly uplifting for me. thank you.

tangomija

Posts: 60
(05/23/08 10:53:23)

Re: agreed!

Agreed also from me!

I think my "grieving the single life" thing lately has been deciding whether or not I want to hyphenate my name or take his. To completely lose my name feels sad, and like I wouldn't be the same girl I always was, I would be "the wife"....aka the woman of someone else. Not 100% me. This should be exciting and like a rebirth..and it is..but I wonder if I take his name and don't keep mine at all if I would resent it later and like I didn't keep a part of myself.

Here's another thing. He was married once before...and his ex wife hyphenated her name. He didn't tell me this, but I have figured it out. I feel like it would make me "just like her" or something if I also hyphenated my name...
Argh.

[confusedofcourse](#)

Posts: 52

(05/23/08 11:34:14)

So many things to think about and decide!

Heidi

Re: agreed!

heidi -- for what it's worth, I'm keeping my name. both my fi and I are fairly established professionally (him more so than me), and it has meant a lot to me for years not to lose my name. I don't know if this is the right choice for you; there are tons of considerations, of course. but I'm keeping my name, and then when we have kids, we'll likely hyphenate their names (and maybe ours personally, if there is confusion at PTA meetings).

The way we arrived at this decision, ultimately, was to put the shoe on the other foot. That is to say, he was completely uninterested in changing his name (and I know that sounds "weird," but truly, that's what the tradition is asking you to do). It not only brought home for us how much both of us took pride in who we were, but it also --for both of us -- reminded us of the proprietary sexism that historically defines the name-changing process. *** QUICK CAVEAT: to anyone who did change their name, is changing their name -- please don't take this as a hyper-feminist suggestion that if you take his name, you're adopting some historically rooted position of subservience! I think for most people, it absolutely does not have those connotations -- it just did for my fi and me. ***

Anyway, the point of the story is to say that the name change thing is hard, and I think you've got to "feel out" what sits with you. And that may change over time. If you're not ready to take his name, there's no rule that you have to. If you're not ready to hyphenate/don't want to hyphenate, you don't have to. My plan is to take this in baby steps. If we want to hyphenate when we have kids, I'm open to it, but it doesn't "sit" with me right now, for any number of reasons (which will be individualized -- mine are 1) my professional life, and 2) my uncomfortability with historically misogynist traditions). Yours will be your own. but explore them, and figure out which one "sits" with you. does that make sense?

hope this helps!

Phoenix

Posts: 20

(05/23/08 21:24:21)

name changing

Hi...just wanted to add in here as well on the name changing discussion--

I'm not sure of my final decision..but I'm pretty sure I would keep my own name. I'm well into my thirties and have worked in 3 countries--I want people to know who I am for personal and professional reasons!

Just for some perspective, I lived in Ireland for 5 years... a lot of professional women there did NOT change their name (I'm American and it seems that there was less name-changing than in the u.s.). Most of them did STILL keep the name of the child JUST in the father's surname and nobody seems too bothered about it. (no hyphenating, etc). It actually does not create as big a problem as people think.

Now that I'm living in Latin America...it is common for married people to have the mother's name as the 'ending' name following the father's.

Just wanted to point out that the tradition of taken your spouse's surname is not universal by any means.

birthdays, mortality, and engaged encounter

Author	Comment
<p>learning</p> <p>Posts: 88 (05/19/08 09:21:14)</p>	<p>birthdays, mortality, and engaged encounter</p> <p>TAGS [EDIT]: None</p> <p>so ladies, how many of us are tauruses..? and does that have something to do with all of this? nenyia, too, had a birthday a few weeks ago, and I turned 31 on may 1st, and now CB and BO6... very interesting.</p> <p>Anyway, I definitely struggle with mortality and health - and it has all been very tied up in my engagement, of course. The first thought I had, when the engagement anxiety set in, was an image of my partner and I at the end of our lives - thinking THIS is the person I'll be that weak and vulnerable with (hopefully). It made me cry every time - to really understand that I was committing not to be perfect and strong with him, but to be human and scared with him. And, at least in part, that's precisely what made me so terrified of commitment, of growing up (emotionally), and of saying good bye to my childhood, for real.</p> <p>Not that it had lasted that long to begin with - the defining quality of my childhood was that my father was very sick and almost always expected not to live much longer, and yet he was my best friend. And so I took on much of the anxiety from his own illness and manifested into a really powerful fear of death and abandonment. I had a small stroke when I was 21 (related to birth control pill), and anxieties around health have always been present for me. Ten years later, I now appreciate how much wisdom I've gained about this and related fears as the years have gone by. How much learning we are all doing - this is what matters, more than anything - our commitment to keep growing and learning, all the days of our lives. All of you are so inspiring in this respect - your commitment to conscious living. It just takes thinking back to earlier moments in my life to know that I would never really want to go back, given how incomplete my thinking was and how much more there is to learn. Embrace each moment fully, choose the conscious path again and again, and we will seldom have regrets.</p>

By the way, I had my engaged encounter retreat this past weekend, and it was WONDERFUL. So special. (We are not Catholic, by the way). The whole weekend really reinforced all the learning I've been doing through therapy, with all of you, and reading about what real love is. And, more than anything, I felt like I finally understood how much bigger our relationship is, and can be, than our "feelings." I felt like I was able to access the spiritual foundation of our union, and, then, to really relax into (and enjoy!) our relationship. When I am connected to a force much greater than us, it's like the circle of what matters expands, and the "either/or" anxiety-thinking simply dissipates. I read recently that real change happens not by dramatic turns but by "slight shifts in imagination," and that's what we gained this weekend. I felt like I had finally experienced a rite of passage in this transition. I am so grateful for it. I highly recommend this, or something like it, to all of you.

Letting go..

Author	Comment
<p>catlover</p> <p>Posts: 326 (12/30/07 07:51:57)</p>	<p>Letting go..</p> <p>TAGS [EDIT]: None</p> <p>I think someone else posted about this already, but I am going to have a hard time with my dad "giving me away" and dancing with him - I cry every time I listen to the song we are going to dance to, as does he! I am definitely Daddy's Little Girl and will always be - so I have a feeling I will need a LOT of tissues when I dance with him! I know this is normal but did anyone else have this problem? I love both of my parents very much and we are very close, but my dad and I have a special connection - he would do anything for me and I love him so much. Any advice on how to stay calm during the dance?</p> <p>Cat</p>
<p>sneezy</p> <p>Posts: 409 (12/30/07 08:00:51)</p>	<p>Go ahead.</p> <p>Hey, you only get that dance once. What's wrong with crying? Being present is way more important than your makeup. Maybe bring something for a touch up?</p>
<p>Nenya14</p> <p>Posts: 363 (12/30/07 08:08:11)</p>	<p>Re: Letting go..</p> <p>Hey Catlover,</p>

I felt the same way as you during my engagement EVERY single time I listened to the dance my dad and I would dance to (Father & Daughter by Paul Simon---listen to it sometime), I mean I practically wept the first 10 times.

My dad made a joke (because he knew how much I was getting teared up) that I should listen to the song as much as possible before the big day so that I wouldn't be too overwhelmed for our big dance...because we had a totally choreographed dance so I HAD to be focused for most of it.

I did cry a TON during the walk during the aisle, a ton during the ceremony...but honestly, once the reception started, I was just SO HAPPY that I don't think I cried another single tear the rest of the night. I must have gotten them all out of the way.

So I think the combination of listening to the song probably 100x before the wedding as well as the happiness and joy resulted in me not crying during our dance...I'm glad I didn't. It almost would have been embarrassing, after all the crying I did during the ceremony.

Keep doing the work of separating from your parents, especially with your dad...I wrote him a really heartfelt letter (that I wept while writing) that I gave him the morning of my wedding...and it was a really important way for me to acknowledge how much I loved him and how much he gave me, and how I was so grateful for that and so happy that I found a man that

treated me as well as my daddy always did, and so happy that my dad loved my soon to be husband, etc. It was really a great way to acknowledge the changing nature of our relationship.

My dad really appreciated it and got really teary eyed over it. He told my mom the day was very bittersweet for him...mostly sweet, but sad too to be giving me away, even though he loves my husband.

I'm just happy that we acknowledged it all...it made it feel more complete.

catlover

Posts: 326
(12/30/07 08:16:18)

Thanks!

Hey ladies,

Thank you for the quick responses. I think I will take your advice and write my dad a heartfelt letter and give it to him - I know it will make him cry but I want him (and my mother) to know how much I appreciate them. I know I am going to cry at some point, whether it be during the ceremony or during my dance with my FI or my husband. Thanks again for the advice, and I will keep listening to the song - I have until October, lol!

Cat

engagedinct

Posts: 125
(12/31/07 06:35:07)

Re: Thanks!

oh man, cat, I have been having such a hard time this past week or so with the thought of letting

go. it must be the holidays . . . people say that this time of year can either be wonderful or incredibly hard for you. I think the closeness I usually feel with my family has brought out these feelings of utter sadness and fear of "being on my own." as much as I love and adore my fiancé, it scares me to think that it'll just be me and him now. I've had this incredibly comforting, encouraging, safety net of my parents and family for all of these years and, since I transferred to my state college my junior year, I've been living with them. I love and trust my fiancé dearly, but there's this deep rooted part of me that is terrified of being only him and me in a very short while. how do I know that I'm safe with him? how do I know that we'll be ok? my dad has been my "main man" for all of these years and has looked after me so well. I'm the only girl and he's always made sure I have good directions to places I don't know and he knows when it's the right time to service my car . . .things like that. I feel like I'll be all alone without any guidance come my wedding in June. it's just such a terrifying, uncertain time!

I haven't even crossed the bridge of bringing myself to think about my dad giving me away or what song we'll dance to, but I know it's only a matter of time before I need to think of that. that will be very hard for me too. take heart. I've been told that this is the hardest time. we'll establish lives of our own with our husbands and will figure out where each of our families work into the new family we've created.

<p><u>catlover</u> Posts: 326 (12/31/07 06:54:22)</p>	<p>thanks Engaged,</p> <p>Thank you for your insightful words and your post. I know it is just a part of the process but it makes me so sad to think about leaving my dad and mom. I also lived at home, until this past august and I moved in with my FI. The move was very hard on me (if you look at my posts from aug/sept, you will see). I am still having a hard time, not as bad as before, but it is/was very hard for me to leave the safety net of home. Living with my FI is going very well - I still think about the future but not as worried as before, more excited now. I just know that when the wedding day comes, I am going to be so emotional - bittersweet for me and my dad is the right word for it. But, that's life and I know I will be so happy with my FI and I am sure my relationship with my family will only grow stronger!</p>
<p><u>engagedinct</u> Posts: 125 (12/31/07 12:44:16)</p>	<p>Re: thanks "bittersweet" is probably the best word to describe it. right now I feel like I'm feeling more the bitter end of it, but I see glimpses of the sweet too. I think it's just this time of year. I'll just take it as it comes. so glad to hear it's gotten better for you!</p>

Question about the men in our lives...

Author	Comment
<p data-bbox="94 342 256 380"><u>APCP621</u></p> <p data-bbox="94 432 435 506">Posts: 146 (12/20/07 10:08:38)</p>	<p data-bbox="665 342 1414 380">Question about the men in our lives...</p> <p data-bbox="665 432 1003 470">TAGS [EDIT]: None</p> <p data-bbox="665 506 959 543">Hello Everyone,</p> <p data-bbox="665 596 1588 1352">Today we are going to be booking our honeymoon and I noticed something interesting. Since we got the quote from the travel agent earlier this week I have had to fight the urge to sit down with my dad and have him tell me if he thinks that the price is reasonable and that we should go ahead and book the trip. Mind you, we are paying for our own honeymoon. So today when I sent the email to the travel agent telling her to go ahead and book the trip I felt very panicky because we had made the decision on our own and I didn't get the "all clear" from Dad. (I am an only child who has depended on my parents for many years for guidance in making decisions. I have a hard time trusting my own decisions, especially on important or expensive decisions)</p> <p data-bbox="665 1407 1598 1759">I have talked about this in the past with my therapist and I know this is one of the big challenges I face. Letting go of my dependence on my dad and moving into an adult relationship with my future husband. My fiancé has been very understanding about this being a hard transition for me, but I also don't want him to feel that I don't trust his judgment.</p>

Any of you have experience with these feelings?
Any advice on letting go of the Daddy ties?

nc33

Posts: 4
(12/20/07 10:33:06)

Re: Question about the men in our lives...

I have had difficulty with this issue, but with my mom rather than my dad. I think this is because I was more emotionally dependent on my mother, and because my father was often not around, physically (he traveled a lot for work when I was growing up, and my parents divorced when I was in high school) or emotionally. My mother passed away two and a half years ago, so along with grieving her loss, I have also been coming to terms with being an adult and making my own decisions, and not having the option of depending on her or even asking her for advice. It has not always been easy, especially during the early phase of wedding planning, when I was terrified of making a "mistake" and convinced that she'd know what to do. What I've realized is that maybe she wouldn't know what to do -after all, weddings have changed a lot since she got married in the early 70's - and that I am capable of doing this on my own, along with many other things. But it does feel weird at first to make these decisions and follow through on them, knowing that the Mommy Safety Net is not there to catch me. I've talked about this with my FI, and he understands, having lost both of his parents within the last two years. I guess the best advice is to know that you don't have to sever your ties with your father completely, and as time goes on you will gradually become more

used to holding the reins and driving your own carriage.

engagedinct

Posts: 125
(12/20/07 11:23:01)

Re: Question about the men in our lives...

oh my goodness, I can relate 100% to the attachment you feel to your dad. I'm incredibly close with both my parents, but as the only daughter, I've always been "taken care of" by my father. I've never taken my car for an oil change or any work because my dad takes care of everything with my car. my dad's a pretty smart guy, so I really value his advice on financial matters and, being the person I am with the issues I have, I just automatically assume that my parents are right! you know, your post actually made me realize that I haven't even been trying to distance myself from my dad and give my fiancé more authority in my life. I really should be working on that . . .it's such a scary thought for me! I find myself always asking my dad what he thinks about the decision I'm going to make and then use my dad's opinion to try to convince my fiancé. he kinda trusts my dad's advice usually too . . . I think part of the reason I was especially hesitant to solely turn to my fiancé on financial matters is because I honestly don't think his parents have done their job teaching him practical life lessons with money. my dad's taught me so much about investing, mortgages etc. and, before we started dating, my fiancé didn't even have a checking account or a credit card (to start building up credit)! I was like, have your parents taught you anything!? I know I

mentioned in another post that his parents come from this incredibly conservative school of thought where you NEVER use credit. they pay for everything with cash. they didn't even agree with my fiancé getting a credit card to start building credit so that we could get a mortgage! (I think they'd rather us pay cash for a house . . . yeah right!!!) so, with that said, I was a little hesitant to defer to him as far as financial matters went because I really didn't think he knew what he was talking about. I know that sounds so horrible. I didn't have the same issue with the honeymoon. I actually felt like we could make this decision for ourselves (I'm kind of proud of myself for that). but, I've definitely deferred to my dad when it comes to talking mortgages, down payments, and the like.

catlover

Posts: 326
(12/20/07 11:58:25)

I can totally relate!

Hello,

If you look back at my posts from like aug/sept, you can see the trouble that I had moving out of my parents house and in with my FI - I definitely have separation issues, and I rely on them for a lot, I am the only girl in the family and my dad will do ANYTHING for me.

I know I need to turn to my FI now for things but it is really hard for me. For example, last night, I lost control of my car a little bit - I called my parents right away and came home and told my FI. They gave me more comfort that my FI did. In time, I know that I will learn to count on my FI for more things, but it is definitely hard.

I hope this helps - just know that you aren't alone. I am extremely close to both of my parents, so this whole moving out process and getting engaged and married has been very hard for me, in that aspect.

babyofsix

Posts: 938
(12/20/07 12:12:33)

Yep, I can relate

I have a hard time not thinking, "What would my dad think?" My DH has called me on it some. But, on the flip side, I feel like he's the same way with his mom. I love my MIL and he gets along well with my father, but we both always say "what would your _____ say?" if we have a dilemma that we're not sure of. It's really scary to think that I have to make decisions with DH and not consult my parents, especially my dad who will tell me what he thinks no matter what.

On the flip side, I don't think it's wrong to consult with parents. As long as your final decision is what you and your DH/FI agree too... even if it's the same decision as your parent suggests.

engagedinct

Posts: 125
(12/20/07 13:10:42)

Re: Yep, I can relate

I was thinking on this some more after I wrote the last post and I think you're right, babyofsix. there's nothing wrong with asking input . . .in fact, it's probably the wise thing to do when we're not quite sure what to do. the important thing is that we recognize that we, as a couple, are competent and strong enough to make our own decision with the facts we have and stick by it, knowing it's best for us.

betterday

Posts: 144
(12/20/07 13:19:32)

...

I wanted to chime in here, because before my wedding a few months ago, I really think that separating from my family was the source of 95% of my anxiety.

I had always gone to my mom for stuff too, talked to her and my sister every day. Believed that what they said was law. As I started to realize this and step away a bit, the closer I got to my husband the more they freaked out. I have not lived at home since I was 19, I just turned 29, but my families influence in my life was almost suffocating. Separating from them and turning more to my husband has made me so much more the person I want to be. I have started to "grow up", feel more secure than ever in my relationship with my wonderful partner, and just have come to realize that my families word is not law. I am different, my life is different and my husband is who I want to make decisions with. I honestly feel, and have felt for years that my husband knew me way better than my family.

I don't know if any of this will make sense, and it was an incredibly grueling and painful process to shine a light on my family in this way, but I truly believe this is what got me through to the other side.

nc33

Posts: 4
(12/21/07 10:10:15)

interesting

It's interesting to see how people are transferring their family loyalties from their birth families to their husbands. I am actually having a bit of trouble with this. Not that I still feel that tied to

my birth family, but I have this belief, which I know is untrue, that I am now on my own, even though I'm getting married. I feel this strong sense that I now need to do everything. I guess I am having trouble trusting my FI, not because I think he doesn't want to do things, but because he can't. I am waaay more organized than he is, always researching stuff (like mortgages) and thinking about the future. His job is very stressful for him, and he is thinking of definitely making a career change which would entail going back to school, so I guess that I feel responsible for being "The Rock" in our family and making sure we're on track for certain things, like buying a house and starting a family. Maybe it's because I'm older than many of the posters here (I'm 34) and had been living on my own for awhile, I am not struggling with separating from my family so much as giving up my single status and the control it allows me. Is anyone else struggling with this?

APCP621

Posts: 146
(12/21/07 23:13:32)

Re: interesting

I think I am probably dealing with both issues. 1) I am close with my birth family and the separation has been hard. 2) I am 31 and have been on my own for quite a few years (still relying on my dad to help with big decisions) but basically managing my own life. I know that my anxiety has been coming from many directions both separation from family and leaving behind the life I have known. It was good to hear all of your insights on this topic. Thanks for the listening ear.

I am realizing that I don't have to cut my parents out completely. I agree that it is good to seek advice from your parents on topics with which they have more experience, i.e. buying a house. But at the same time it is ok for me to start making decisions with my fiancé. I know it will take me some time to adjust, but that is ok too. I am happy to say that we did book the honeymoon and made the decision all by ourselves. It was scary at first, but now it feels good that I was able to resist the urge to run it by my dad.

maybride

Posts: 326
(12/25/07 12:37:30)

Me, too!

I can definitely relate to you on this level...I, too, am an only child and while I lived on my own for quite a while before getting married, I depended greatly on my parents (specifically my dad) for direction. I would run through every big decision with my dad before acting on it.

I suffered a lot of angst when engaged because my father wasn't completely supportive of my decision to marry my husband and was outright rude to him. To this day, my relationship with my father is strained. There's way more to that story, though...

I finally had to come to the realization that it was time to become dependent on myself rather than others...it was really a growth milestone for me. Sometimes I wonder if "father knows best", but I guess it's up to us to answer that question for ourselves...

Painful Choices and the Advantages of Closing a Few Doors

Author	Comment
<p><u>ThinkBee</u></p> <p>Posts: 661 (02/26/08 09:58:41)</p>	<p>Painful Choices and the Advantages of Closing a Few Doors</p> <p>TAGS [EDIT]: None</p> <p>www.nytimes.com/2008/02/2...1204174800</p> <p>This definitely relates to what a lot of people here are going through. It even mentions marriage, look at that!</p>
<p><u>babyofsix</u></p> <p>Posts: 938 (02/26/08 12:26:25)</p>	<p>Re: Painful Choices and the Advantages of Closing a Few Door</p> <p>Great article!! I e-mailed it to DH.</p>
<p><u>PirateJenny</u></p> <p>Posts: 259 (02/26/08 22:07:12)</p>	<p>neat</p> <p>My mom forwarded me that article today!</p> <p>I completely agree with the author that there are advantages to closing a few doors. Having fewer choices removes the suffering that comes with analysis paralysis.</p> <p>If you are one of those people who thinks and thinks and thinks and thinks about a choice, until your brain is sore, you are well aware what a relief it is when that thought-wheel FINALLY stops turning.</p> <p>I think that's why so many of us on this board are a wreck until the wedding, but do so much better after the wedding is over. Once the wedding is over, the choice is gone. Which means the over analysis is also gone (for the most part). It was like that for me, anyway. I am so much happier now that I don't have a choice. Instead of spending my energy worrying and second-guessing myself, I can spend it making sure Bill knows how much I love him... and figuring out how to resolve our conflicts in the best way possible. It's not always easy, but it is so much</p>

easier than the analysis paralysis, it's like a whole different universe.

P.J.

Best Friend got engaged...

Author	Comment
<p data-bbox="94 340 253 380"><u>Nenya14</u></p> <p data-bbox="94 430 435 506">Posts: 363 (12/31/07 08:13:02)</p>	<p data-bbox="667 340 1198 380">Best Friend got engaged...</p> <p data-bbox="667 430 1003 470">TAGS [EDIT]: None</p> <p data-bbox="667 506 938 546">Hey everyone,</p> <p data-bbox="667 594 1599 993">So my best friend of 20 years, MOH, and pretty much a sister to me, just got engaged! I just wanted to post this to share that it is really interesting to me, being on the other side of engagement, and being able to be THERE for her. Not just for planning and practicalities (I am her MOH!) but more importantly as a compassionate sounding board that she can be AUTHENTIC with about her true engagement feelings.</p> <p data-bbox="667 1045 1599 1444">She and I are so alike it's pretty humorous--she's already shared with me her feelings of unrealness, and how she almost feels in shock, and how she and her FI were cuddling the other day and she burst into tears. She's been quasi engaged for a month now, but officially engaged for 2 days (he got the ring and asked her again more formally) now and she's already in engagement land, haha!</p> <p data-bbox="667 1497 1599 1799">Believe me I don't envy that feeling, I remember that ALL too well, and I am so glad I'm on the other side of that. I do feel like she's really lucky to have me (haha!) in terms of having someone so close that went through it all already and can comfort her....I didn't have that at ALL (Aside from everyone here on the board which of course</p>

was very helpful) and felt pretty alone in my non-internet life. I already told her that she is going to feel every emotion and to not fight it, that it's a huge transition and that it's going to be a roller coaster at times. I also told her I liked being married a LOT more than being engaged.

I am going to send her The Conscious Bride Wedding Planner immediately. I know she has a lot of inner work to do...and while I feel for her because I know this engagement isn't going to be really easy for her, I also am excited for her because I know it will be a time of tremendous growth and she will come out so much stronger and self-aware.

Has anyone else had anyone close to them (a woman) get engaged and noticed they were experiencing things that you have experienced? Have you reached out to them and shared your truths with them? I think it can really bring you closer.

I told her certain things during my engagement, but I felt really separate from her at a lot of times because she wasn't even in a relationship, let alone married...so I guarded what I said as I didn't want her to form judgments about me or my hubby (I don't give her enough credit there, she is not judgmental at all, it's my own fears I'm projecting there) or our decision to marry. Now that she is engaged, I feel like I can finally be more forthcoming with her and it's already bridging a certain gap in our friendship that formed when I decided to marry. It's really cool.

Anyhow just wanted to share!

catlover

Posts: 326
(12/31/07 08:30:46)

That's great

Nenya,

That is wonderful that you can be there for your friend - I haven't had anyone that close to me get married or at least not talk to me about her inner feelings. My MOH has been there for me every step of the way so far and I hope that, when she gets engaged, I can be there for her. That is great that you can be there for your friend, having gone through it, good for you! Enjoy this time with her and let her know that she WILL get through it and she WILL be ok!

Cat

ChristmasBride2006

Posts: 1355
(12/31/07 08:44:07)

Re:

YES! One of my friends got engaged after being with her boyfriend for 3 years (she is 29, he's 33). We went out for drinks one weekend when our SO's were gone and she started talking about how she's feeling anxious and weird about getting married even though that's all she wanted was to marry her fiancé. She told me about being afraid of committing to someone for the rest of her life, sleeping with only one person for the rest of her life, wondering if she's cut out to be wife/mother, growing up, etc. I don't think she has quite the severe panic that I had, but I did share with her that I went through those similar feelings... and

that ultimately I concluded that I was making a good decision and that thankfully, it turned out to be the right one!

That conversation did bring us closer...we are friends because our SO's work together and we are pretty similar even though she's 4 years older than me. So it definitely made us closer, which I appreciated because I like her and I think she's a good friend.

Like you I'm also kind of guarded about how much I went through... there were some really dark, scary times and thoughts/feelings that I don't wish to revisit nor do I want to really share with anyone else (except my therapist haha). But I did let her know that I knew exactly what she was feeling, and that she'd be fine.

Transitions (long!)

Author	Comment
<p data-bbox="94 317 220 352">learning</p> <p data-bbox="94 394 380 457">Posts: 88 (04/23/08 05:52:04)</p>	<p data-bbox="571 317 873 352">Transitions (long!)</p> <p data-bbox="571 394 850 426">TAGS [EDIT]: None</p> <p data-bbox="571 457 1599 1031">Last week I read the most beautiful book, Transitions, by William Bridges (published in 1980, and there's now a 25th anniversary edition). The book explains the natural, but no less difficult, throes of a major life transition. He talks about the stages of transition (often overlapping), including endings, the "neutral zone," and finally new beginnings. He's a beautiful writer, taking a long view, blending literature, anthropology, and stories from his own practice and clients. Most of what he describes resonates with me, and I really get how anxiety (for those that are prone to it) emerges to 'protect' us from this very scary and often sad process. I wanted to share a few excerpts (from sections on "Endings" and "The Neutral Zone") and urge all of you to read this book! I've included a lot here (sorry!), but I thought some of you could find pieces of this helpful...</p> <p data-bbox="571 1073 1599 1646">"Why is letting go so difficult? This is a puzzling question, especially if we have been looking forward to a change. It is frightening to discover that some part of us is still holding on to what we used to be, for it makes us wonder whether the change was a bad idea. Can it be that the old thing was somehow (and in spite of everything we thought we knew) right for us and the new thing wrong? These questions arise particularly when a person's life situation is not an especially happy one. The full-time mother who finally decides to break the narrow bounds of housecleaning and carpooling by taking a part-time job -- these people hardly expect to find the old roles difficult to shed. and the person who has been estranged from parents or siblings for years won't expect to be profoundly shaken by their deaths. How can we feel a 'loss' when we marry after years of loneliness...?"</p> <p data-bbox="571 1688 756 1724">On Endings</p> <p data-bbox="571 1766 1599 1801">"In breaking your old connections to the world and taking apart</p>

the internal structures required by those connections, you also lose your old ways of defining yourself. Others feel it as the loss of a role that prescribed their behavior and made them readily identifiable; still others feel the lack of a familiar and identifying label. One way or another, most people in transition have the experience of no longer being quite sure who they are... I sometimes found pleasure during that period imagining that I was in the middle of a secret passage ritual. In a world of social identities, I was an interloper. I lived in the cracks and moved in the shadows. My own passage markings were hidden and secret, but I was being initiated into the next phase of my life - into middle age, for lack of a better term. I had shed the shell of my old identity like a lobster, and I was staying close to the rocks because I was still soft and vulnerable. I'd have a new and better-fitting identity in time, but for now I'd have to go a little slowly... Clearly, the old identity stands in the way of transition - and of transformation and self-renewal."

"Separated from the old identity and the old situation or some important aspect of it, a person floats free in a kind of limbo between two worlds. But there is still the reality in that person's head - a picture of the 'way things are,' which ties the person to the old world with subtle strands of assumption and expectation... The sun will rise tomorrow, my mother loves me, the tribe will endure, the gods are just: These things are so, and if they are not, then my world is no longer real. The discovery that in some sense one's world is indeed no longer real is what is meant by disenchantment..."

"This may remind you of the disenchantments of your own childhood: that there is no Santa Claus; that parents sometimes lie and are afraid and make stupid mistakes and like silly things; that best friends let you down. But these disenchantments did not end with childhood - nor are they over yet. The lifetime contains a long chain of disenchantments, many small and a few large: lovers who prove unfaithful, leaders who are corrupt, idiots who turn out to be petty and dull, organizations that betray your trust. Worst of all, there are the times when you turned out to be what you said (and even believed) that you were not. Disenchantment, you can quickly discover, is a recurrent experience throughout the lifetime of

anyone who has the courage and trust to believe in the first place. Many significant transitions not only involve disenchantment, they begin with it."

"This process is hard to take in more than just a natural, personal sense; it goes against the grain of our culture, which tends to view growth as an additive process. We did not have to unlearn the first grade to go on to the second, or forget Sunday school when we joined the church... In fact, the entire termination process violates our too-seldom examined idea that development means gain and has nothing to do with loss."

"The Western mind has worked this way for a long time. Odysseus, you will remember, found it terribly difficult to let go of his assumptions about reality. The world was a battlefield that required armor and struggle. He had been a winner by those rules, and it made no sense to him suddenly to find them not working... He found that the first task of transition was unlearning, not learning anew."

"The lesson of disenchantment begins with the discovery that if you want change - really to change, and not just to switch positions - you must realize that some significant part of your old reality was in your head, not out there. The flawless parent, the noble leader, the perfect wife, and the utterly trustworthy friends are an inner cast of characters looking for actors to play the parts. One person is on the lookout for someone older and wiser, and another is seeking an admiring follower. And when they find each other they fit like the interlocking pieces of a puzzle. Or almost. Actually, the misfit is greater than either person knows, or even wants to know. The thing that keeps this misperception in place is an 'enchantment,' a spell cast by the past on the present. Most of the time, these enchantments work fairly well, but at life's turning points they break down. Almost inevitably we feel cheated at such times, as though someone were trying to trick us. But usually the earlier enchanted view was as 'real' as we could manage at the time. It corresponded to a self-image and a situation, and it could not change without affecting ourselves and others."

"The point is that disenchantment, whether it is a minor

disappointment or a major shock, is the signal that things are moving into transition. At such times, we need to consider whether the old view or belief may not have been an enchantment cast on us in the past to keep us from seeing deeper into ourselves and others than we were then ready to. For the whole idea of disenchantment is that reality has many layers, none 'wrong' but each appropriate to a particular phase of intellectual and spiritual development. The disenchantment experience is the signal that the time has come to look below the surface of what has been thought to be so. It is the sign that you are ready to see and understand more now."

"Lacking that perspective on such experiences, however, we often miss the point and simply become 'disillusioned.' The disenchanted person recognizes the old view as sufficient in its time, but insufficient now: 'I needed to believe that husbands (or friends or mentors) were always trustworthy; it protected me against some of the contingencies of life.' On the other hand, the disillusioned person simply rejects the embodiment of the earlier view; she finds a new husband or he gets a new boss, but both leave unchanged the old enchanted view of relationships. The disenchanted person moves on, but the disillusioned person stops and goes through the play again with new actors. Such a person is on a perpetual quest for a real friend, a true mate, and a trustworthy leader. The quest only goes around in circles, and real movement and real development are arrested."

"As with other aspects of the ending process, most of us already know disorientation. We recognize the lost, confused, don't know where I am feeling that deepens as we become disengaged, disidentified, and disenchanted. It would be a mistake in such situations to view disorientation as positively as one can in retrospect. Traditional people in passage did not enjoy or embrace this experience. They suffered through it because that was the way, which is to say because they had faith in the process of death and rebirth..."

"At each step, the attempt to perpetuate something is the act that initiates its downfall. Our endings, we must discover, are often brought about by the very acts and words that we

believed would keep things the way they have always been...The goal of one phase of life becomes the burden of the next... Oedipus's story makes us realize that we are likely to resist and misunderstand significant transitional changes - at a time when it is terribly important to seek another perspective. He tried to fit the new information into his old reality, but in the end the disenchantment took place and he understood what had happened."

"One of the most important differences between a change and a transition is that changes are driven to reach a goal, but transitions start with letting go of what no longer fits or is adequate to the life stage you are in. You need to figure out for yourself what exactly that no-longer-appropriate thing is. There's no list in the back of the book. But there is a hint that can save you considerable pain and remorse: Whatever it is, it is internal. Although it might be true that you emerge from a time of transition with the clear sense that it is time for you to end a relationship or leave a job, that simply represents the change that your transition has prepared you to make. The transition itself begins with letting go of something that you have believed or assumed, some way you've always been or seen yourself, some outlook on the world or attitude toward others... It is the internal things that really hold us to the past, and people who try to deal only with the externals are people who walk out of relationships, leave jobs, move across the country... but who don't end up significantly different from what and who they were before. They are likely to be people who have learned to use change to avoid transition. They storm out of a job ('rotten, no-good boss!') rather than discover what it is in them that keeps finding such bosses to work for. They end another (yet another!) relationship rather than let go of the behaviors, attitudes, assumptions, and images of self or others that keep making relationships turn out this way. In making this point, I don't want to leave the impression that endings never involve an external change. My point is simply that the inner ending is what initiates the transition..."

"The point is that it is important to let yourself or others in transition experience an ending. If you keep fighting your experience, I can only conclude that you just can't let go of

something in this process... Endings are, let's remember, experiences of dying. They are ordeals and sometimes they challenge so basically our sense of who we are that we believe they will be the end of us..."

The Neutral Zone

"In other times and places, the person in transition left the village and went into an unfamiliar stretch of forest or desert. There the person would remain for a time, removed from the old connections, bereft of the old identities, and stripped of the old reality...One of the difficulties of being in transition in the modern world is that we have lost our appreciation for this gap in the continuity of existence. For us 'emptiness' represents only the absence of something. So when what's missing is something as important as relatedness and purpose and reality, we try to find ways of replacing these missing elements as quickly as possible. That state of affairs, we imagine, cannot be an important part of the transition process; we hope it can only be a temporary, if unfortunate, situation to be endured."

"In this view, transition is seen as a kind of street-crossing procedure. One would be a fool to stay out there in the middle of the street any longer than was necessary; so once you step off the curb, you move on to the other side as fast as you can. And whatever you do, don't sit down on the centerline to think things over! No wonder we have so much difficulty with our transitions. This view makes no sense out of the pain of ending, for we imagine that our distress is a sign that we should not have crossed the street in the first place. It also makes no sense of the feeling of lostness that we are likely to experience, nor of the feeling that the emptiness seems to stretch on forever. ('Wait a minute,' we want to object. 'There is another side to this street, isn't there?') And as for transition as a source of self-renewal, well, after you've struggled and floundered in a scary place like that, you need some self-renewal."

"You should not feel defensive about this apparently unproductive time-out during your transition points, for the neutral zone is meant to be a moratorium from the conventiona

activity of your everyday existence. The activities of your ordinary life keep you 'you' by presenting you with a set of signals that are difficult to respond to in any but the old way. Only in the apparently aimless activity of your time alone can you do the important inner business of self-transformation. But you don't do it as you do ordinary things, for it is in the walking watching, making coffee, counting the birds on the phone wire, studying the cracks in the plaster ceiling over your bed, dreaming, and waiting for God-knows-what to happen that you are carrying on the basic industry of the neutral zone, which is attentive inactivity and ritualized routine..."

"The first of the neutral zone activities or function is surrender - one must give in to the emptiness and stop struggling to escape it... Accept your need for this time in the neutral zone. Understand why you are in this situation, why your life seems to be stalled at the very time changes are taking place around you. Being able to make sense out of your experience at this time is very important, for otherwise the neutral zone can feel like a dead-end road. Understanding what the neutral zone is and why it is there can keep you from falling into one of the two snares that people - especially people upset with and anxious about the transition they are in - fall into when they are in the neutral zone... the traps of fast forward and reverse.... 'Speeding things up,' hitting the fast forward button is a tempting idea, but that only stirs things up in ways that disrupt the natural formative processes that are going on... At the same time, do keep moving. Because the opposite temptation - to try to undo the changes and put things back the way they were before the transition started - is equally misguided. That undoubtedly was an easier time than this nonplace you occupy now! But your life lacks a replay button. The transition that brought you to this place cannot be undone. Even putting things back 'the way they were' is a misnomer, because back then, you hadn't had the experience of being plunged into transition. And that experience won't go away."

Advice for the neutral zone:

- 1) Accept your need for this time in the neutral zone.
- 2) Find a regular time and place to be alone.
- 3) Begin a long of neutral zone experiences.

- 4) Take this pause in the action of your life to write an autobiography (of some kind)
- 5) Think of what would be un-lived in your life if it ended today.
- 6) Take a few days to go on your own version of a passage journey (alone)

"...it is such a misfortune that so few people can make sense out of the lostness and the confusion that they encounter when they have passed through those processes: disengagement, dismantling, and disidentification. Without a key to that state, the resulting 'disorientation' is viewed as no more than 'confusion,' and confused people imagine that they need to be straightened out or fixed. Without such a key, people in transition are like Alice at the bottom of the rabbit hole... It is lonely down there - except that there are more people down there than you may realize. As Arnold Toynbee pointed out, it is into some rabbit hole or cave or forest wilderness that creative individuals have always withdrawn on the eve of their rebirth (St. Paul, St. Benedict, the Buddha, Muhammed, et al)... It is reassuring to find great figures groping through the darkness of the neutral zone, although we may still doubt that we will come across any burning bushes or that even a lifetime under a bo tree would produce enlightenment. Our own lives may be painted with a smaller brush, and our moments of discovery may be less grand - but the pattern is the same and it is even there in our own pasts, if we will look..."

"But each step forward set off an inner warning system, and he would retreat in confusion to the old ways of being. One day, he was ready to launch a new life, and the next he was bitterly suspicious about the motives of others and his own promptings... he would go through a time of resisting change and undermining the temptation to go for what he really deeply wanted at that point in his life... The man finally decided to go into psychotherapy, for his inner resistance to transition was too great for him to deal with on his own... Some find that their inner reactionary is stirring up trouble in a relationship, almost as though she was trying to start a fight so that she could say, 'There, that proves it. He won't let me change.' Or such people may find themselves plunging unexpectedly into a depression at the prospect of a new beginning - and find on closer

examination that the inner reactionary is muttering, 'All right, if you won't do what I say, I'll bring this show to a standstill.' Or they may find themselves getting confused and forgetting what they want, as if the inner reactionary were saying, 'So you won't pay any attention to my warnings, huh? OK, then, I'll fog up your brain so that you won't remember where you are, and then you'll have to cancel that big trip you're planning.' It is as though each of us had some inner figure whose idea of caring for us involved only taking us into protective custody whenever we threatened in the transition process to become too autonomous. Some people find the figure activated whenever risk is involved; others experience the inner sabotage whenever they try to come in from the cold and settle down. One person's safety involves inactivity and another's involves perpetual motion; but either way, a new beginning upsets a long-standing arrangement."

"She is taking the final step to becoming aware of herself and gaining power for the new status and phase of her life. As with all people after important transitions, she is going to be different..."

"Not in his goals but in his transitions man is great" - Ralph Waldo Emerson

What an Engagement "should" be.

Author	Comment
<p data-bbox="94 317 228 352">Topanga</p> <p data-bbox="94 394 380 457">Posts: 92 (10/21/08 12:32:10)</p>	<p data-bbox="573 317 1154 352">What an Engagement "should" be.</p> <p data-bbox="573 394 850 426">TAGS [EDIT]: None</p> <p data-bbox="573 457 1601 1415">I recently got a message from one of my engaged friends about her upcoming wedding. I had warned her that sometimes being engaged can be difficult and she responded by saying, "It doesn't feel like we're engaged. It still feels like we're boyfriend/girlfriend which is good because it should be that way." I was sort of dumbfounded by that. I realized that I had <i>always</i> thought (long before my own difficult engagement) that being engaged was a whole different level of commitment and accordingly should "feel" different than dating. Now, having been through an engagement, I'm even <i>more</i> dumbfounded by her idea of what an engagement should be! To me, an engagement "should" be difficult in the sense that it's a time for financially, emotionally, and intellectually preparing yourself to commit your life to someone. It seems strange to me to suggest that being engaged should be the same thing as dating. I think preparing to commit your life to someone, if done right, is hard! I guess I wonder, in cases like hers, what they're talking about. Are they only worrying about the wedding day or are they really delving into the important issues? For me and my FI anyway, planning the wedding was easy. It was figuring out how we wanted to raise our kids (what religion, discipline) and how to reconcile two different religious ideologies that was difficult! Anyway, I was just taken aback by that comment and wanted to say something about it. Does anyone else find that strange?</p>
<p data-bbox="94 1528 224 1564">ilovehim</p> <p data-bbox="94 1606 380 1669">Posts: 127 (10/21/08 13:28:39)</p>	<p data-bbox="573 1606 1601 1801">One of my good friends got married a few weekends ago and had a similar response, "being married is not going to be any difference for us, we've been together for five years and lived together for two". I was also a bit confused by that comment but have decided that they view marriage different than I do which is some ways I envy bu</p>

in other ways realize that the commitment they have made to each other is probably not as thoughtful or as deep as what me and my FI will encounter.

APCP621

Posts: 94
(10/21/08 13:42:21)

I think you have to look at it as there is no way engagement "should" be. We are all so different in how we process things and how we react to change. I know there are a ton of people out there who are not nearly as sensitive as I am, but that doesn't make them wrong or bad or less thoughtful. I think it is unfair to say that that what the other couple has made with each other is not as thoughtful or as deep.

Topanga, I think you should try and let go of the comment your friend made and be happy for her that she is not suffering from the same anxieties that you were. I know personally there is a part of me that would be jealous that I did not experience the same ease of spirit during engagement, but at the same time I would be happy that she isn't suffering as I did. Also, try not to take it as a personal affront to what you went through, as I said before we are all different and experience transitions differently

babyofsix

Posts: 631
(10/21/08 15:50:14)

You know, I personally think everyone goes through a change when getting married. For some of us, it happened during (or even before) the engagement. For others, it doesn't happen until into the marriage. Some women and men may not think about future issues (raising children a certain way, becoming financially secure, etc) until they have to. Personally, I think about every possible future event way too much right now. Ha!

If your friend feels calm that things haven't felt like they've changed, try to be happy for her. Same with your friend, ilovehim. Personally, I think everyone goes through some sort of change upon getting married or shortly thereafter. For some though, it's not as HUGE of a change as many of us have experienced, and that's OK. Some people just transition easily

and fall into new roles easier than others. But, I think all couples feel a sense of change after a marriage, even if it isn't until a few years down the road.

Just sit back and let your friend feel her sense of calmness. She knows you feel engagement can be difficult. If she ever feels the need to discuss things, she'll know she can come to you.

sillygoosegirl

Posts: 278
(10/21/08 20:24:27)

I know I've talked about this before, but I feel very strongly that there is a dating paradigm and a marriage paradigm, and the engagement is (supposed to be) the transition period. Those of you who also read message boards on TheNest have probably seen when I've had in my sig for the past 3 years or so: "Dating is about loving someone just the way he is today; marriage is about loving someone just the way he will be tomorrow." To me, that really sums up the difference to me. The dating paradigm is about choosing a life partner, and since it is about choosing, it's also about rejecting all the wrong choices out there... all the frogs. It's the time when you say, "Well, he's a nice guy, but I just don't want my children to grow up with a father who smokes" or maybe you love each other but you break up because you have different goals or your personalities clash. Or maybe he's just a jerk or even abusive. But at any rate, the dating paradigm is about finding someone who you can love just the way he is. It's about being really selfish. It's about finding a life partner who is worth being with for totally selfish reasons.

But you cannot maintain a life long relationship under that paradigm. People grow and change. Life throws you difficult challenges sometimes. Bad times come now and then. Eventually for stability and growth in a relationship, you want to switch to the marriage paradigm in which you choose to love this person just the way he will be tomorrow... even though you don't know what he's going to be like. This is rewarding because you don't have to ask yourself if he is "worth it" when you go through a difficult time... but it is dangerous for the same reason because you are giving another person a lot of power in your life and not overseeing how they use it very closely. This is

why the dating paradigm and the marriage paradigm are both so important. The marriage paradigm is better to live, but only if you make a decent choice while you are in the dating paradigm. I think that every single couple with a lasting relationship, without exception, eventually makes this transition. I think a lot of couples make it before they are ever engaged. I think others get hit upside the head with it sometime during their engagement. I think others get married without it and make it later. I think others never make it at all and eventually divorce for lack of making it.

I think that fear of divorce drives people away from approaching this transition in the conscious manor it deserves, because in the hopes of beating the statistics on divorce, couples reject the notion of marriage as a change or a transition. It getting married has no power, divorce will lose it's power too. I've met a whole lot of people in my generation who believe that you are setting yourself up for failure in your marriage if you get engaged before you are living that marriage paradigm (not that they use those words). I've met a lot of other people in my generation who believe you are setting yourself up for failure in life unless you hold firmly to the dating paradigm (again, not the words they'd use, but the same meaning). I think both groups are setting themselves up for a lot of heart ache. Some of the sweetest dating couples I knew, the ones who decided years before they were married or even engaged to switch to a marriage paradigm, are not happy now because they made the transition unconsciously and without thinking it through. They made the transition years before they were married, and didn't realize what they had done until after the wedding... until they were living those dangerously difficult times with someone they really should have known better than to get so deeply involved with (generally someone who exhibits one--or more--of the red flag characteristics Sheryl has listed for us in the past). Of course, marriage is not the *only* way to make the transition consciously, and even making it unconsciously does not have to mean making the wrong choice. But we have thousands of years of sign posts and traditions to guide the transition and guide a person through it consciously... we have them all these years later because they work, maybe not all the time, but they improve our odds. If you enter your engagement with the

intention of changing paradigms, I think the engagement is a huge aid to consciousness. There are all sorts of resources that are made available to engaged couples because they have stated their intention to make the transition and members of the community who can help may then come forward, many of whom never would have made themselves available to a dating couple because it's not a transition that is beneficial if it is not embarked on consciously. But I think for couples who go through their engagement already living the paradigm they intend to have after they are married, there just isn't that transition... and I'd think that would make it a totally different experience.

It bugs the crap out of me when people say, "If you have to ask..." with all it's various endings. Asking is part of being conscious, and for some of us the process of asking those questions produces a lot of anxiety. The difference between me and my friend who married the guy who beat her (she is since remarried to a wonderful man), is not that I "had too ask" if our fights got too intense. She had way more reason that I did to ask that question. The difference is that I *did* ask that question, and if I'd been with a guy who was abusive, I would not have married him. She didn't ask the question. You have to ask. Asking is so important. Yet when people say to one another, "If you have to ask...", what they are really saying is "Don't ask."

ChristmasBride2006

Posts: 1295
(10/22/08 11:42:25)

I think the thing to remember is, there is just no way you can ever really know what engaged or married life will be liked until you get there. I never expected to be so full of fear and doubt while engaged. After going through that for 15 months, I never expected to be so relaxed and calm during married life, either. Again, I think it boils down to expectations and the reality is, you can have all the expectations and ideas in the world, but actually being in the situation is an entirely different ballgame.

Before we were engaged, I'm not sure I ever really thought about how engagement might be different than dating, or how marriage might be different than dating. I went into engagement/marriage thinking that everything would be just

how it was, and it would be no different. In my mind, since we spent so much time together, we were already "practically married." Ha! I wish I knew then what I know now! Marriage is *nothing* like dating, in my opinion. There are new rules, new expectations, new challenges to deal with. And truly, this is only something you'll know and experience once you get married. Now, I can't speak for everyone....indeed there are people who go into marriage very much with the mindset that if it doesn't work out, I'll just get a divorce. They cut and run at the first feeling of discontentment, attraction to another person, loss of those "loving feelings," difficult times, or whatever the case may be. The difference is, they are not really committed in the first place. It's essentially getting married while still having one foot out the door *just in case* something goes wrong. The problem is, they get into marriage without thinking about their expectations, or willing to compromise or work towards their spouse's expectations, and disaster occurs. In addition, when "the change" does happen, they don't like it or try to find ways to make it less glaring.

Anyway, that's not to say that some things weren't the same when we got married. There was a feeling of familiarity after we got married and to this day I still wonder "why did I make such a big deal out of getting married?" I think the reality will hit people eventually, whether that's during engagement or after the wedding that this is different than just dating. You are truly a team, a partnership. And I'm not saying that "reality" is necessarily negative or positive, just....reality. Reality that your decisions affect both people. It's an organic, subconscious commitment that you can't explain, but it binds you to your spouse in ways that you are not bound to anyone else.

The changes for your friend - they'll come, eventually. Most of the time they happen and you don't even realize it. And yet sometimes they are very glaring and hard to deal with, but you find a way.

ThinkBee

Posts: 336
(10/22/08 13:19:08)

I'm inclined to say that after all I've been through, I still just don't believe in "shoulds" or absolutes. Should engagement be

easy and happy? No. Should it be difficult? No. Is it sometimes easy and happy, and sometimes difficult, agonizing even? Of course! Does either one of these two different experiences "mean" anything in terms of the ultimate happiness of the couple or how deep their commitment is? I don't think so...there are just too many other factors that affect the experience -- personality types, personal history, values, psychological and psychiatric issues, etc. -- and factors that affect the outcome -- external and internal.

It probably makes us anxious brides feel better to think that we are experiencing life on a deeper and better level than our non-anxious counterparts, but I think that would be an unfair and inaccurate assumption. We don't know what it's like in others' heads and relationships anymore than they know what it's like in ours. Sometimes, a lot of the time, I feel like my husband is still my boyfriend (and of course I am still getting used to the h-word!), probably because that is what he was for quite a long period of time, a period of time during which we were extremely committed, living together, planning a future together, etc. Day-to-day, life does not feel so different, and I really like that. I didn't want anything to change in that way because I was very happy before with our relationship. However, obviously I think SGG is somewhat right and so is CB. I would not have freaked out so much about marriage if it really was not any different. When we were first engaged, I was completely fine, because I was thinking about it all as "no big deal," "just a fun party to solidify and make public something that already exists." The anxiety crept up on me and then came on full force a few months in. This was actually a big deal-- to ME.

I took it very seriously, but not just that...I wanted to make sure I was making the perfect choice and to a certain extent I wanted to be able to control the future. That's not realistic, I learned. Others may take marriage just as seriously, but they are not so perfectionistic, controlling or anxious. They think "I'm committing for life, and we'll handle whatever life throws at us, but there is no point in worrying about that now," and they will actually feel that, and do that. I really do not think many people get married thinking that if it doesn't "work out" they will just get a divorce, and that's why they are calm about it. There are

few people I know who take divorce that lightly...though I do think there are quite a few people who are lazy and unrealistic when it comes to long-term, committed relationships, and certainly that affects the divorce rate. But I think the reason marriage scares/changes some people and not others is not just the level or understanding of commitment, but also what kind of person you are. Are you future-oriented, or do you just kind of take things as they come? My guess is that EVERYONE here falls into the first category. To us, marriage is more than a present state of being. It's this grand idea that we will give it our all to stick it out through good times and bad, through all kinds of changes, because the reward appears to be worth it...and it's the ever-present awareness that there will be bad times and a lot of change that scares us, but the knowledge that there will always be a constant in spite of this that also brings us deep satisfaction.

I like that I am someone who values marriage and has thought in such depth about it. I don't like that I freaked out so much, but that's the other side of the coin, I guess. And that's not right or wrong...it's just me.

babyofsix

Posts: 633
(10/22/08 18:21:11)

I agree... it's all a matter of expectations, personality type, and how you and your husband/husband view marriage and it's values. I do believe everyone "changes" in some way through marriage. However, sometimes those changes are so subtle. For those people, I'd guess they fall into ThinkBee's second category of taking things as they come. You get married, you adjust, that's it. For those of us on this board, we think of EVERYTHING we could possibly encounter in a marriage, both good and bad, and want validation from somewhere that what we're doing is right.

As for the divorce issue... yes, some people probably figure, "well, if this doesn't work, I'll get divorced." Is this really a bad way of thinking, in the long run? Maybe. It depends on how you personally view commitment and divorce. Personally, I don't want to get divorced. Do I know it's a reality for some people? Yes, I do. Some people can't stay married for one reason or

another. Some people don't want to stay married. But, for me, I don't want it... so I am fully committed to making sure that doesn't happen in my own marriage. Also, for me, one very calming thought as I've grown more comfortable in marriage... if for some reason things aren't working, divorce isn't horrible. Like some of us said during engagement... if our relationships fell apart, we'd be OK. We just don't WANT that, so we're willing to do the work needed to make sure this isn't a possibility.

I hope that part didn't spike anyone... and that you all know what I'm getting at.

The bottom line, in my opinion... every bride will be different. Every marriage is different. Every couple, and individuals in a couple, are different. Therefore, everyone will handle transitions and decisions differently. No one way is "better" or makes you more capable of handling life's situations. It's just how we each handle things... and it is what it is.

ThinkBee

Posts: 337
(10/23/08 05:50:43)

I feel the way BoS does about divorce. I realize not there are people here who really do not believe in divorce and I respect that. And I think it's safe to assume that no one here wants to get divorced and everyone here takes marriage extremely seriously. So given that, I think it may be helpful for some people here to realize that divorce is not the end of the world. It's not something to spend every waking moment in fear of. You can't predict how life will be 5, 10, 20 years from now and you just need to let that go or you'll miss out on the great things you have now in your life. I think it's a lot more complicated than we can understand, why marriages end. We're all engaged and relatively newly married. My mom used to tell me "so the worst thing that happens, you get divorced, and that's not the end of the world." When I replied that I really really did not want to ever get divorced, she would say, "well then, the worst thing that happens, you have to stay with him forever, would that be so terrible?" Obviously, I was marrying him because I WANTED to stay with him forever, so the circuitousness of those thoughts almost made me laugh!

I think balance is important. It can be helpful to realize when you are being too extreme in either direction and pull yourself back to the middle. Thus, those who are flippant about marriage might want to think a little more carefully about it, and those who take it so seriously to the point of extreme anxiety (yes, hi) probably need dose of "cool" every once in a while!