

DATING

## BREAKING UP: THE PRESENT PARTICIPLE

written by *Danielle Ma* | January 19, 2016



After a breakup, strength looks like the ability to move on, to cut communication, to archive your memories away and date other people. Weakness looks like the lam call to talk about what happened between the two of you, the Christmas present you sent him anyways, the inability to leave texts unanswered. Strength looks like deleting his number. Weakness looks like bringing him up in day-to-day conversations. Strength looks like getting out of the house to meet the guy you found on Tinder. Weakness looks like choosing to stay in bed.

These are the lies we've somehow convinced ourselves are true. I think it's bullshit. Don't get me wrong. Moving on and delicately gorilla gluing the pieces of yourself back together after a breakup is necessary, often transformative, and ultimately empowering, even if we can't see it at the time. That being said, there's nothing inherently strong about being able to cut people out of your life. More often than not, it's reductive. How can such complex a thing as a relationship be expected to end like the last beat in a song, to be tossed out like the sweater for Goodwill, to be filed away like a bank statement?

It's generally accepted that the beginning of a relationship is a process. It gets the continuous tense, the present participle:

"I'm dating someone, but it's still early!"

"We were friends for a while and recently started seeing each other."

"He's courting the maiden he met at the ball a fortnight ago."

But when it comes to the end of a relationship, it's always a singular event. Past tense. "We broke up." As if there was a beginning, a middle, and an end. Curtain call, 10 minute intermission, and applause at the close.

I'm in the process of breaking up with someone, and it's painful, tumultuous, uncertain, and generally very sucky. People ask me, "When did you break up?" and I want to stare blankly at them until they're uncomfortable enough to turn around and walk away from the crazy, heartbroken lady headed for the cat store. Because technically, we started to unravel in a stuffy restaurant on the night of November 15th. We toyed with the idea of "over" on the phone, exactly one week before Thanksgiving. We spent our last night officially together in my little twin bed, wrapped up in sheets and heavy emotions on November 22nd. And we're still navigating our way out of the relationship forest.

We say "I miss you" to each other, drunk, sober, and every state in between. We talk about what happened, why it happened, and what the future might hold. He tells me about his improv. I tell him about his writing. He's not seeing anyone else, nor does he want to. I've been on one date. We still sleep together. He's so afraid to hurt me. I'm so afraid to let him see me cry again. We're so undefined, so important to each other, so unable to predict the foreseeable future between us. We're messy. We're ending. We're not simple, and we haven't finished breaking up yet.

On New Year's Eve, we made separate plans with separate friends. I got ready with my roommate and her boyfriend, laughing, singing Taylor Swift, and donning tight black clothing and dark red lipstick. We cabbed to a friend's apartment for the last few hours of the year. After a couple glasses of champagne, a flip cup victory, and a brief flirtation with the food table, I found myself clutching my phone, longing to see him. The very person who was responsible for many of the highs of this trip around the sun. We found each other like magnets. There was no one else we wanted to spend the earliest morning of the new year with.

It's easy for my friends, who love me unconditionally and fiercely protect me whenever possible, to point to that night as a mistake. An indiscretion. A misdemeanor. A sign of weakness. The "one step back, but it's okay, because you'll get back on track and take two steps forward." But the reality is that I will never regret starting the year with the boy who drove around town at 4am looking for allergy medicine for me. The boy who wrote me the most beautiful poem and paid me the highest compliment when he said I was inspiring. The boy who consistently planned surprises for me in the form of concerts and rock-n-roll burlesque shows. The boy who carried a ladder 10 blocks for me and woke up at 6am to pick up furniture for my new apartment.

I can't freeze him out. I can't delete our history from my phone or gmail. I can't be emotionally available at the moment. I can't help but bring him up and tell our stories. I can't quite resist his touch or charm right now. And thank goodness for that. It's painful, I cry a lot, and I often find myself in bed when my friends are out exploring. But none of these things make me weak. They make me human. A human who is strong enough to love fully and deeply. One who doesn't pretend to have figured out the complexity of people or their relationships with each other. One who doesn't distort brilliant colors into black and white. One who doesn't run from vulnerability and who trusts herself to be true to who she is instead of following arbitrary rules.

I'm going to be okay. I'm going to get through this. We're going to finish breaking up, and I'm going to find great solace knowing that our breakup will have known more love than some relationships ever do.

BREAKUP DATE DATING END LOVE RELATIONSHIP

1 comment | 2 | f t g+ e



DANIELLE MA

Danielle is a passionate twenty-something living in New York City with too many interests and not enough time in the day. She works at a boutique ad agency next to her favorite building, the Flatiron, and spends a lot of time in parks with coffee. She frequents food festivals, listens to science podcasts, explores comedy clubs, and writes, a lot. She diarizes the moments and conversations in her life, writing mostly about dating, love, and sex in the city on her blog, *Here's The Thing*.

previous post

I HAVE MY DIPLOMA...NOW WHAT?

next post

THE BACHELOR: A LANGUAGE ALL ITS OWN

### YOU MAY ALSO LIKE



THE 5 GUYS YOU'LL MEET WHEN DATING  
October 4, 2014



THE LOVE YOU DESERVE  
December 11, 2014



LABOR DAY GETAWAY IDEAS  
August 19, 2016

● ○ ○ ○

Type and hit enter...

#### KEEP IN TOUCH



#### THE TSL NEWSLETTER

TSL's latest and greatest in your inbox to start off each week!

Name...   
Email...

#### INSTAGRAM



#### FROM THE ARCHIVES

**Top Tips On Seeing Your Ex For The First Time**  
December 23, 2014

**Are You the Only One Putting in Effort?**  
June 5, 2015

**Questions Guys Want To Ask Girls**  
July 13, 2014

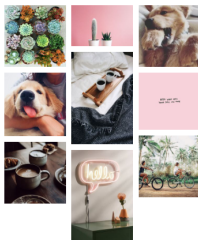
**Why Having Different Opinions In A Relationship Is Healthy**  
July 25, 2015

**Should've Put A Ring On It!**  
July 1, 2015

#### TWEETS

Missing consumer key - please check your settings in admin > Settings > Twitter Feed Auth

#### PINTEREST



#### THE DETAILS

Privacy Policy

Terms of Use