BREAKING UP WITH A BEST FRIEND

First Person Essay: My Other Ex

After 4 happy years together, our relationship suddenly hit the rocks. Me and my boyfriend? No, me and my best friend

Kristina Grish

Chloe is one of the most alluring women I've ever met. She's fashionably thin and daringly stylish — with a sharp tongue, naughty mind, and asymmetrical hair. Simply by existing, she reminds The Rest Of Us that overgrown roots and a half-read copy of *Catcher in the Rye* are very bad things. For no good reason, jealous strangers call her a bitch. For 4 years, I called her my best friend.

Then I dumped her.

Now, ditching a guy definitely stings, even when the ditching decision is all yours. But once he's gone, your postdump ritual kicks in: a box of tissues, a bowl of cookie dough, and an evening watching *The English Patient*. By the time Juliette Binoche figures out Ralph Fiennes, somehow you know you'll make it through.

But breaking up with your best girlfriend is altogether different. Not only are you out the shared wardrobe, the on-call therapist, and the weekly date to mock *The Bachelor*, you're also minus one emotional cornerstone. "There's a bonding and disclosure that happens between women that doesn't happen with men," says Audrey Nelson, Ph.D., author of *You Don't Say: Navigating Non-Verbal Communication Between the Sexes*. Indeed, studies show that women's hormones — specifically oxytocin and endogenous opioids — internally wire us to nurture and support each other. That's why ties between female friends are so intense and revealing — but also why our friendships don't always last.

"Female friends put so many demands on each other," says April Masini, author of askapril.com, an online relationship magazine. "Either you grow as a united front, or it ends."

A Continental Divide
It's hard to imagine two friends closer than Chloe and me. We were often each other's plus-ones for parties, movies, and readings. And no matter how much we went out, social moments never outweighed supportive ones: I was Chloe's biggest cheerleader when she switched careers, and she encouraged me to cry when my parents separated. Like a perfect couple that makes you reach for a barf bag, Chloe and I were enviable complements.

When she moved to London for 6 months, I immediately booked a flight. We scoured London flea markets, ate mounds of chocolate, drank too much, and talked until jet lag kicked in. Our jaunty little holiday marked the height of our relationship — but, in retrospect, it was also the beginning of the end. Back in the States, I threw myself into work, fell in love, and circled back to friends I'd neglected when Chloe was around.

She and I kept in touch, but our long-distance deal forced me to examine my life, minus the shared charisma. Suddenly it felt limited. Marla Paul, author of The Friendship Crisis, says such social claustrophobia isn't that unusual — in fact, it's the one downside to a super-close friendship. "[It's not healthy] when you put all your eggs in one basket, with just one friend," Paul says. "If you don't allow for multiple perspectives, the aperture on your life gets smaller and smaller."

< BACK 1 2 NEXT >

Last updated: December 1, 2007   Issue date: February/March 2005

Rate This Story:

Average User Rating: (0 Votes)

POST A COMMENT

SUBMIT

Veer Incorporated, N/A

LIFE: ARTICLE
Zoya DeNure Rescues Alaskan S

LIFE: ARTICLE
Six Odor Zappers for the Whole H

LIFE: ARTICLE
5 Ways to Use Your Old T-shirts

LIFE: ARTICLE
How to Help a Friend with Cancer

NUTRITION: TOOL
Eat This, Not That

WEIGHT LOSS: SLIDESHOW
You Lose, You Gain

BEAUTY & STYLE: SLIDESHOW
I Saw it First!

HEALTH: TOOL
The Best Ove
Counter Drug