

“How Do I Help My Friend Get Unstuck From a Failed Relationship?”

I have a friend who has been stuck for about 8 years. She is a 30 year old single parent with an 8 year old daughter. She broke up with the baby's father about 6 years ago. The problem bothering her is that she is still in love with him. She realizes this is not a man she can marry due to his lifestyle and the fact that he is living with another woman. This is the only man she has been sexually involved with. Moving on with her life has been a constant struggle. Her confession to me is, “I feel stuck.” What do you recommend?

I suggest you encourage her to reframe her thinking about her daughters daddy. In our culture, we tend to elevate our feelings to the position of idols, and we feel like it would somehow be dishonest not to follow them. But feelings are just feelings, and they are not equally valid or wise. If she's still “in love with” a man she hasn't had a relationship with for six years, who had made it abundantly clear he doesn't care for her, then it's because she is still feeding the fantasy and the feelings with her thoughts. No wonder she feels stuck! She is stuck because she keeps feeding the feelings.

The problem is that we can't change our feelings by attacking them directly. Feelings are like the caboose on a train; they follow the engines. The engines are our beliefs/thoughts and our behavior. Redirect the engine, and the caboose will follow in a different direction.

I would suggest you help her write out on a sheet of paper two columns: the lies and stuck thoughts she believes, and the truths that would counter the lies. Such as:

Lies and Stuck Thoughts	Truths
I want my daughters daddy to come back	Hes not coming back. That chapter is over.
I have feelings for him	So what, theyre just feelings. I have to deal with reality.
I am stuck	God will help me get unstuck as I follow Him
I need him	Hes not available; I must get my needs met from God, through my support network of friends and family
I love him because I had sex with him	I must confess my sin of sexual immorality and renounce the emotional ties I have to him because of our one-flesh union

I would also suggest that you instruct her to imagine taking a giant roll of Saran wrap to her bundle of feelings and wrapping them up like leftovers that go in the fridge. Then put them on a mental shelf, and purposely engage in some activity that will help her replace her thoughts and feelings with something else. The biblical pattern for lasting change is to replace and displace the old with the new, but first we have to plan on what the new will be—such as a new hobby, new relationships, new habits that dont remind us of the old thing were trying to renounce. She may need some help with coming up with ideas for new things to add into her life.

Its also possible that shell say no, no, no to all that you suggest, giving excuses why none of those will work. Sometimes people dont really want to change, they just want to complain

about their terrible emotional state and suck sympathy and compassion from those they complain to. If you discern that thats the route shes taking, then I would suggest that you tell her, You dont really want to be unstuck. So Im not going to talk about this situation with you. Then always change the subject if it comes up.

Bless you for being a friend! I hope you find this helpful.

Cordially,

Sue Bohlin

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