



Brace yourself, break-up season is upon us

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BRACE, BRACE, BRACE... are the uttermost terrifying words you will ever hear before a commercial airliner makes impact. Unfortunately, we aren't given the same warning before a break-up occurs considering both have life-altering consequences. If you have made it through the holidays unscathed, now would be a good time to BRACE for potential impact. Why? Break-up season is officially upon us and no one is safe until after March Madness.

Blame it on first introductions to family, New Year's resolutions or the moon, but this time of year gives people an awful lot of time to re-evaluate their lives. It may be cold weather trapping us indoors for extended periods of time that make us realize we would rather throw a log at our loved one than hug them. But regardless of what causes the break-up, how our body reacts to it is quite universal. Therefore, gaining an understanding and appreciation for Mother Nature, our greatest protector during a break-up, will give you control to not internalize the process as a never-ending dark abyss. Plus, it can save you from jumping into another relationship that you're not emotionally ready for.

If you have experienced a break-up it's a valid conclusion to judge Mother Nature as a total witch - and many will commiserate with you. Not many would debate that losing a loved one through the death (let's not sugar coat how it really feels) of a relationship can be a traumatizing human experience. In fact, it only seems fair to loathe Mother Nature's way of handling it. Yet, if we want to survive this trauma without severe damage to our health and wellness, we need to give her some credit for ultimately trying to help us cope.

Like a thief in the night, regardless of how the relationship ends, stress ravages the body without warning. Mother Nature goes into defense mode by activating the body's primitive "flight or fight response" but it's unable to distinguish whether you are heartbroken or being chased by a lion. Hence, in either situation, the body will respond the same way by causing shakiness/trembling, poor concentration, insomnia, and intrusive thoughts. When stress is left to run rampant, chronic anxiety and depression develop which leads to a weakened immune system and digestive issues.

Understanding that you are under an insurmountable amount of stress, Mother Nature attempts to cheer us up by releasing dopamine to stimulate the pleasure center of the brain. (Side Note: Dopamine is responsible for addictions, blind love and why you will obsess over the person you're trying to hate.) This helpful gesture from Mother Nature is commonly viewed as a cruel joke since we are being stimulated without a reward.

Therefore, in our despair, we use this incorrectly and instead fill the missing reward with unnecessary solutions like another relationship, alcohol, drugs, food...etc...etc...etc.

Being able to process why you feel the way you do won't necessarily diminish the pain of heartache, but it will allow some logic to override your emotional wreckage. The more you think positively when rationalizing thoughts and fears, the sooner you can embrace your body's defense mode and ultimately heal from the break-up.