



Want to Buy Me Dinner?

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If you owe me dinner—raise your hand. For the last several years I’ve been making bets with women all over the country. The conversation goes something like this:

Me: “So, we know that once you are in the speed dial, you’ll always be in the speed dial. Cluster B’s don’t know how to do closure and he will contact you again. Not because of who you are but because of who *he* is.”

Survivor: “But, you don’t understand. He’s really pissed. I humiliated him in court. He hates me, calls me all kind of names to the kids. Really.”

Me: “Ok ... so, wanna buy me dinner in (enter your city here) when I come to town if he contacts you?”

Survivor: “Sure, because it will *never* happen.”

And, about two months later, or six weeks later, or eight months later, the text comes from him.

Survivor: “OMG, he texted me and called me ‘baby’ and said he missed being at home.”

Me: “I know.”

What I know is that Cluster B’s don’t/can’t do closure. They don’t/can’t end a “relationship” because they are not emotionally intelligent enough. They lack the skills needed to end a “relationship”.

Closure is what we typically hope for at the end of a healthy relationship. The elements of closure for a healthy relationship require two people to agree the relationship as it is should end, there should be a mutual understanding of the reason (this could come in the form of a nice talk or argument ending in resolution), and there is an expressing of emotion that matches the behavior of ending a relationship. You might see a range of emotions, an expression of hurt and empathy and an end to the behaviors related to being a couple. Doesn’t this seem like the complete opposite of what you see when a pathological love relationship is over?

Closure is a foreign concept to a Cluster B. It represents everything they are unable to do. They cannot behave in a way that matches what they say. So, when they say it’s over—they don’t leave. They cannot understand your emotions or the impact of their behavior on you, so when they say, “I’m sorry,” they repeat the same bad behavior again because they haven’t done anything wrong in their mind. They can use the *words* of emotion but don’t *feel* it like you and I do. All of the elements of relationship closure require an understanding of the abstract nature of emotional words like “love”, “sorry”, “remorse”, “frustration”, “hope”, “trust”, “intimate”, “appreciated”, etc. ... They do not have the ability to read past the word to its deeper interpersonal meaning. They can’t see how the word moves us or how the word is not just one word, but often made up of many concepts that are represented by one word. This lack of understanding of the abstract nature of our emotional language is part of the neurology of Cluster B disorders.

Without the ability to give closure, they don't leave. What remains is your need to get closure. And it is that mismatched ending that tortures you—your expectation of closure and his inability to give it. The circle is set in motion when he never goes away and you keep seeking closure. Round and round it goes until you accept his inabilities. Only then can you end some of the pain of the break-up. When you begin to accept his inabilities, you can then begin to give yourself the gift of closure, because—as we have already established—he cannot give it to you.

He will continue to reach out for many reasons. This is part of the disorder—an underlying neurological part of the disorder. He can't do endings. But on the surface those reasons can be varied. He might get bored down the road. In between relationships he often seeks excitement (game playing) so he pulls out the Rolodex. You are in it because he knows that he has controlled you before and that you have “played”. Remember, he is not a good learner of “failure”, he just knows you played. Another reason is primary needs. He gets his needs met through control, so if he needs sex, shelter, or a cover, he will turn to those who have provided it in the past. Finally, it may be “just for fun”... he wants what he wants when he wants it. He is impulsive and cunning at the same time; he has poor behavioral controls and a need for stimulation. This means that he is coming for anyone who can offer what he needs—without regard for their safety or wellbeing.

Coming to know what he can't do, what he is incapable of and truly believing it, is the way out. It means that each time your mind brings a thought like, “he said he loves me,” or “he keeps coming back, so he must be sorry,” or “if I just love him more, he will do better”—you must challenge with knowing he is a Cluster B. You really have no impact on WHO he is. And the key to challenging these thoughts is not having a conversation with yourself about the “why”. You've read over and over again the answer to the why. The researchers, neuroscientists and *The Institute* has answered that “why” question so you don't have to anymore. It is what it is. When the thought comes via question—answer it. When the thought comes as a statement—respond to it—“Because he's a Cluster B.”

You don't have to make that dinner bet with me or anyone else. You can accept that he will come to hook you again. Knowing that he will re-contact allows you to remain clear-minded. It allows you to “predict” his behavior. His disorder is marked by certain patterns that are predictable and this is one of them.

However, if you live in a really cool town, somewhere that has a great restaurant, let me know— I'm thinking about trekking cross country to collect my bets.