Dear Alice,

First, let me say that this is the first time, after two years of faithfully reading your on-line service while at Columbia, that I have felt compelled to ask you for help.

Here is my dilemma: I?ve always been close to my platonic friends. With one I began to secretly want more from our strange, mutually-exclusive but non-romantic relationship. Well it happened! If it were not for the previous closeness we had developed, I would never have given myself to him so quickly. So, we are now approaching the inevitable arrival of his graduation date, and I am anxious about what will happen. I grew up with conservative, religious feelings and beliefs about sexual relationships, but I am also practical and intelligent. I realize for him to promise marriage would be premature, but I have this engrained desire to stay together no matter where he finds a job or what he decides to do after this May. I fear, however, that although our relationship is far from temporary, that he is frightened of committing to a long term and possibly long distance relationship at 22. I know he loves me, and our relationship in most respects is ideal. But how do I reconcile all of these facts?

Scared in love

Answer

Dear Scared in love,

Congratulations for finding a partner with whom you have a strong connection. And just for the record, the two of you did not get together in an unnatural way. You built a bond, a foundation of comfort and trust, before you became sexual. "Unnatural" is a highly-charged word: judgmental, strong, and inaccurate. You just got together in a way that you didn't expect. Nothing wrong with that at all.

Long distance relationships, if both people invest in them with phone, e-mail, letters, and occasional visits, can work; however, in life and in love, there are no guarantees. We do the best we can with whatever life brings us, especially when we have chosen to take risks. It will take some work, but there are plenty of examples of successful relationships that endured a period of distance.

You seem to have a lot of thoughts and feelings to sort out. Have you talked with your partner about your feelings and concerns about the relationship as his graduation approaches? How about making some notes about how you would like things to go before talking with him? Has
he brought the subject up with you? If you decide to have a conversation, or the first of several, be sure to plan a time when you can both be fully present and not rushed. Important life decisions deserve time to be discussed.

Now, in preparation you may want to give yourself the opportunity to talk about these and other feelings in a safe, unbiased way first. A counselor or therapist can fill that need. You are lucky that at Columbia, help is closer than you think. It may take some courage to go talk about your feelings and concerns with a counselor; however, the benefits, including developing some insight and a sense of personal power within your relationship, are worth it. You owe it to yourself, as well as to any relationship you might have.

You are not alone in concerns about relationships after graduation. Times of transition are often filled with anxiety and potentially conflicting feelings. Congrats again for having a solid relationship and for getting started on this thought process.

Alice!

Category:
Relationships
Relationship Stuff
Relating & Communicating

Related questions
- Long distance relationships: Giving it a go!
- The up side of a long distance relationship
- Relationship becomes a long distance one
- "True love"? could it be true?
- Friends to partners possible?

Resources
- Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside)
- Mental Health Service (CUMC)

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