Dear Alice,

Recently I had my first one night stand. It happened with a guy at a club and it happened very fast without us getting to know each other too much first. The problem is, the next day I felt extremely sad and depressed. I felt like I've been used and felt cheap. I was also sad that he didn't ask me for my phone number even though I wasn't interested in him. I felt unattractive and worthless. Is it normal to feel this way? Do guys ever feel this way too? How can I get over this post-one-night-stand depression?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Unfortunately, no strings attached doesn't always equate to no feelings attached. Whether you feel sad, confused, or even empowered, it is perfectly normal to have different emotions after a one night stand. You may find that engaging in casual sex is not positive for your emotional health. Studies have shown that at some point or another, most people feel that sex is more meaningful or enjoyable if it is with a partner that they are emotionally invested with.

Self-reflection is key to sorting out your emotions. Asking yourself some important questions can help you move forward. For example, what kind of relationship would you like to have with romantic partners? What role do you think casual sex will play for you in the future? These questions may help you better understand the pros and cons of different sexual situations you may encounter in the future. In the meantime, if you're feeling down and out, keep your chin up! There are various ways to cope with your feelings. You may want to:

- **Boost your morale** by writing down a list of your strengths. What do you absolutely love about yourself? Reading over this list can help remind you of what makes you so fantastic.
- **Pump up your energy level** by engaging in physical activity. This is a great way to stay in shape and feel energized.
- **Revisit your favorite hobby**, such as playing a musical instrument, cooking, or reading a book. Find an activity that makes you happy, and enjoy!
- **Catch up on your rest and relaxation**. Practicing mediation, yoga, and/or tai chi may help you achieve mental peace and wellbeing.
- **Talk it out**. Try speaking with a trusted friend, family member, or professional counselor. Columbia students can make an appointment to speak with a professional counselor at Counseling and Psychological Services online, or by calling x4-2878.
In regards to gender differences, statistics indicate that more men than women enjoy participating in casual sex. However, this may be the result of a greater social stigma surrounding women who engage in casual sex than for men. That is, women who engage in casual sex are more likely to be viewed as promiscuous. As a result, studies also indicate that women were less likely to engage in casual sex with strangers in comparison to men. Despite these gender differences though, it is important to remember that people of all genders can have strong feelings after a one night stand.

If the days are flying by and your feelings still linger, remember that sorting out your emotions may take some time. By treating yourself to some quality thinking time, exploring your emotions, and being patient, you can feel confident and balanced again.

Alice!
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