

Relationship advice from a “Black Rock Widow” – What to do when the one you love goes to Burning Man and you stay home... Originally posted July 2001 on alt.polyamory

...and this seems as good a place as any in this discussion to post what little I have to offer. It might be of more use to L. than to you directly; I wrote this last year and sent it to the person who wrote the Relationship Advice page at www.burningman.com, thinking it would be useful to have the other side represented, but it appears to have fallen into what my primary calls the Black Hole of Quality. So as they say elsewhere, "take what you want and leave the rest."

Advice from the Black (Rock) Widow:

- 1) Try to understand the lure of the playa. I realize that not everybody Gets It. It's like what Dizzy Gillespie said about jazz: "If you have to ask, you ain't never gonna know." But being able to see why it appeals to the one you love, even if it doesn't speak to you in the same way, helps a lot. Stay informed, even if you're not involved. If you can get to an event during the year, so much the better. Much of what we do can't be explained; it has to be experienced.
- 2) Know your boundaries before your lover leaves. It doesn't matter if it's "don't ask, don't tell," "if you can't be good, be careful," or "do it till you drop," as long as you both know each other's feelings on the matter. My last lover and I didn't discuss this at all - the only thing said before he left was a passing reference he made to condoms in his travel bag. I had a miserable week while he was away, and we broke up shortly after his return. It doesn't have to be this way...and it doesn't have to be some long, drawn out negotiation session. This year I was asked, "What can I do while I'm gone?" "You can do whatever you're comfortable with, as long as you come home to me." And he did. ;-)
- 3) Do things to keep the connection alive while your lover is gone - a night to remember before they leave, small sentimental items to keep with them while he's on the playa - whatever.
- 4) Keep Yourself Busy. Nothing in the rules says you can't have your own fun because your lover is off enjoying himself or herself without you. Rent all those videos you keep letting them talk you out of picking up at the store. Go drinking with friends. Go drinking with enemies. Whatever it is, find something to do, and do it.
- 5) Understand that, no matter how diligently you both follow #2 above, your lover is probably going to fuck up. There are lots of temptations available on the playa, and even the most atypical, conscientious lovers will find themselves in a situation where he wants to think with them hormones. I have advice for both of you here:
To the burner: Own your mistakes. Don't make a big production out of it - sackcloth and ashes are so 14th century - but come clean.

To my fellow widow: Try not to dwell on it. We're still human, aren't we? And remember, i cared enough to be honest with you.

6) Take some time to reconnect when your lover comes home. Turn off the computer, unplug the phone, get someone else to look after the kids for a night. Let them tell you what i saw, what i did...tell them what went on in the world while i was away...or just sit and stare at each other. The important thing is to be Together.

A lot of this is just common sense in any relationship. And a lot of it sounds trite. But remember: If it's stupid, and it works, it's not stupid.

Kirsten
gearing up for her own trip to the playa, two years hence....

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"Expect the best. Expect the worst. Expect a f*cking miracle.
It's always Anything Can Happen Day." -Pamela Des Barres