

LOVE LETTERS
BY MEREDITH GOLDSTEIN

I'm 49 and I'm not sure I want to date again

Q. I just turned 49. The last time I was serious about a man, I was much younger. We were deeply in love. Then I got pregnant, so we decided that the right thing to do was to get married. We had everything planned. We had a priest, venue, date, and my dress, we were both excited about the baby, and then he began to have doubts. He wasn't sure about us anymore. I was so heartbroken, especially when I found out he was seeing someone else. It took me years to heal. Being a single mother was not in my plans. I was in medical school and the only one of my siblings to go to college. Everything changed and my heart hardened along the way. I like to say that the reason I never seriously dated anyone was because I didn't want to risk bringing the wrong man around my daughter, but I think I was more afraid of being hurt again.

The man I am currently dating is 45. We met about five years ago at a coffee shop. On impulse I suggested to a stranger to try the coffee from my country because it is the best.

We talked, exchanged numbers, and started to see each other frequently. But it is a strange relationship because I never feel like he reciprocates my feelings. He rarely calls, and we see each other every two weeks, if I am lucky. He is always busy. When we are together everything is wonderful but when we are apart, I feel forgotten. We have been on and off since we met. I am the one to call things off when I get tired of his lack of communication and presence, then he reappears to make things work but goes back to being the same.

The longest we've been apart was two years, and during those two years I met another man online from another state. We would message and call each other quite often. We shared the same values. We met for the first time this past winter, while I was on vacation, and had two wonderful dates, but after I came back home, I stopped hearing from him, so I decided to cut off communication. He said he was disappointed.

Then in April my longtime on-and-off coffee shop boyfriend came back to my life, but

I don't know how long this will last. I am not sure if the reason I am seeing him is because I am afraid to be alone. He makes plans at the last minute. He has expressed that he loves me, but something feels off. I'm not sure if after this relationship ends, I want to attempt at dating again. My daughter moves out next month and I feel like I haven't done anything in life but provide for her. She says I should have focused on myself a long time ago. Now, with her leaving, I don't know what to do on my own.

HOPELESS AT LOVE

A. I can spot two very hopeful points in your letter. The first is that you are capable of meeting people. I mean, you picked up someone in a coffee shop. That's difficult to pull off (unless you are in a romantic comedy), and you made it happen. Then you met someone online and had enough of a connection to meet up with him in person. You did all of this while working and raising a child. Imagine what connections you might make with more time for yourself.

The second hopeful theme in your letter is that you want to be someone's partner. You desire more phone calls and quality time. You're looking for shared stories and plans for the future. You seem capable of letting someone in, which is a great place to start.

I imagine it's very stressful to think about adjusting to life without your daughter in the house. Please know that you don't have to make any monumental decisions as you prepare for her to go. There's no need to shout, "I'll never date again!" from the rooftops. It's better to focus on making room in your life for what you want. That means breaking up with this long-term boyfriend.

That's what you want to do, right?

You write about the end of your relationship as a *when*, not an *if*. You might as well get it over with and cut ties. Then think about how you'd like to spend your free time. It doesn't have to be all about romance. You can put more energy into friends.

Give yourself the opportunity to get to know yourself all over again. If you spend time on

yourself, you'll get better at knowing what you might be looking for in someone else.

MEREDITH

READERS RESPOND:

People always tell women to lower their standards as they get older but you (we) really need to raise them. Being with someone who is emotionally unavailable is just as, if not more, lonely than being alone. If you develop your own interests and are content on your own then you'll be in a much better space to find someone who will add to your life in a healthy, positive way.

PHATALISTIC

Finding the right guy takes trial and error. We all get hurt while dating. Keep your expectations low and don't go all in until you find a keeper. WIZEN

^Expectations lower but standards higher.

QUADROPENTA

Now that your daughter is moving out, you have the opportunity to find the kind of relationship you really want,

(without feeling guilty that you aren't focusing on your daughter). There's no reason you should have to settle for less than what you are looking for.

TWO-SHEDS

I can so relate to this letter. I'm your age and I've focused more on raising my teen alone since the beginning and have also been mostly without a partner. I think you need to move on from your on/off boyfriend. You gave it a chance but it's clearly not fulfilling you and you're only going through the motions. For whatever reason, his heart isn't fully into it. Take stock of this next chapter in your life. Embrace being single. Have faith that eventually you will meet the right person.

BKLYNMOM

Figure out who you are besides a mother. I think if you do that you will be better poised to find someone who is crazy about you.

THENURSE

Column and comments are edited and reprinted from boston.com/loveletters. Send letters to meredith.goldstein@globe.com.

MY INSTAGRAM

Logan Wilder

By Chris Triunfo
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

When Logan Wilder (@wildervisuals) isn't in class at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, he's making collages out of the portraits he takes of local artists, musicians, and his friends. The 20-year-old New Hampshire native defines his art as "an explosion of colors and beautiful faces." The Globe chatted with him about his innovative take on portraiture.

Q. Your art could be classified as portrait photography, but it's also a lot more than that. You take your photos and make them into colorful collages. Does your creative process start with an initial idea for a collage or does it start with an initial idea for a portrait of somebody?

A. I never go into a photoshoot with an idea of what the collage is going to look like. Once I do the shoot, I take some time to look around online, or at magazines and other artists. I really like to hoard content. And from there I begin to take note of certain colors and backgrounds that I find interesting and I try to incorporate them into the final product. I definitely try to use various sources though, and I never really plan something out. It can be a little tough.

Q. When did you start making collages?

A. I've been using [Adobe Photoshop] since eighth grade. Once I got really familiar with it, I realized you can really do whatever you want with it. So, I started making tons of different kinds of digital designs, including collages. But I probably started editing my photography in that style about two summers ago, just as I started college.

Q. Further back on your Instagram there is also a lot of graphic design, do you still work on that?

A. Graphic design was a sort of stepping stone for me. When I started [college], I was very into the graphic design program that was offered. So, I'd sketch images of musicians I liked or make posters for campus events. But it gave me the chance to play with colors a lot, something that I've definitely kept up with.

Q. How important is color to your creative process?

A. To an extent, it's all about color. I love seeing crazy colors and very saturated colors come together. Color is what bridges all of my work, because the forms I use are constantly changing. Right now, I'm working a lot with 3-D illustration, but color is still at the forefront.

Q. Is there any project that you've worked on that sticks out as a favorite?

A. I actually recently worked on a shoot and did a ton of designs for Ric Wilson, an up-and-coming rapper from Chicago. He was in town for a few days and I was lucky enough to work with him just as he's started performing at music festivals like [Governors Ball] and Pitchfork. It was crazy to be able to work with someone like that, and he's such a creative person. We killed that shoot.

Interview was edited and condensed. Chris Triunfo can be reached at christian.trunfo@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter @trunfo_chris.

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