



Healing time

Friends, shoes help mend a broken heart

This is what happened on my birthday last year: I got dumped before 9 a.m.

I blew off work, went shopping and got a mani/pedi before treating myself to a lot of Prosecco and dinner with my friends. I wore a beautiful silk dress, which I had bought that afternoon so that I would stop crying, and new, towering stilettos.

At the end of dinner, the waiter brought out dessert with a single candle in it that I almost forgot to blow out because I was so tipsy from the Sancerre we drank after the Prosecco.

This is what happened on my birthday two weeks ago:

I went to Pilates before 9 a.m. I halfway blew off work (because I had worked late the day before so that I could) but did not go shopping because I did not have any money and got a mani/pedi.

Then I drank Cava with my mom and sister before going out to St. John's with my family and friends. I wore a beautiful silk dress that I bought a few months ago at O, on

sale, and towering stilettos.

At the end of dinner, the waiter brought out a bowl of chocolate ice cream with a single candle in it that I almost forgot to blow out because I was so tipsy from the Petite Syrah we drank after umpteen other bottles of wine (there were 13 people, after all).



Cari Gervin
Single in
Chattanooga

Not much had changed, but everything had. I was still a reporter, still single and still spent too much money when I shouldn't (although fortunately I had my mom along this year to cover dinner). But turning 29 felt immeasurably better than turning 28 — and not just because I hadn't spent the day sobbing.

Maybe I was just tipsy, but as I looked around the table at people who still considered themselves my friends even after having to listen to me go on and on and on

about my ex for months, I felt like I had reached the fifth and final stage of grief, acceptance.

How long should it take to get over someone? Is it ridiculous that now, a year later, I still have flashes of rage at the man who broke my heart?

I'm definitely no longer in denial. Last year, I still had some idea that he would change his mind and drive five hours to show up at dinner and propose. He didn't show up, of course, and he didn't change his mind.

I stopped bargaining long ago. I also stopped e-mailing him at the end of last summer, which probably had something to do with it.

It's true that I was sad for a long time. I now drive around listening to "Since U Been Gone" over and over, screaming at the tops of my lungs and feeling completely over him.

(Of course, other days ... well, let's put it this way: Mariah Carey's "We Belong Together" will come on the radio, and I'll begin

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to cry, and not only because I despise Mariah Carey.)

But I still get angry when I think about him. Rage is supposedly the second stage of grief, so if I've reached something like acceptance, then shouldn't I have stopped fuming every time I think about how things ended? Shouldn't I have stopped caring at this point?

I haven't seen him since last March, when I thought we would still be able to work things out — when I thought that by the time I turned 29, I would be just a few months away from getting married later that summer.

Then a funny thing happened a few days before my birthday. I may still get sad, and I may still be occasionally angry, but I real-

ized that for perhaps the first time in my life, I feel content to be single.

I have taken control of my life over the past year, without the help of a boyfriend. I found a new job (in an old home). I have made new friends and renewed older friendships. I am writing more, exercising more and going out less.

I thought nothing in my life would ever be right without my ex, but I was wrong. My life is better.

Two days before my birthday, I went to Lulu's and got my hair chopped off. With my newfound confidence, I decided I didn't need my long hair to hide behind anymore. (OK, so I always wore my hair up with bobby pins or in a ponytail, but I was hiding behind it, trust me.)

For the first time ever, I had chunky blond streaks added to my red. I've always been curious about going blonde.

Like last year, we were the only diners left in the restaurant as we toasted to a fabulous 2006 for everyone. Like last year, I had probably had too much wine, I was probably being too loud and too giggly, and I had probably eaten way too much.

But turning 29 may have been the best birthday ever. While I can't say I'm excited about turning 30 next March, probably still single and still living in my hometown, I'm no longer dreading it.

And who knows? Maybe next year I'll go blonde.

E-mail questions and comments about the single life in Chattanooga to Cari Gervin at cgervin@tfpccommunitynews.com.