

The following is a sample from my book *Myself and Others*. If you enjoy this small taste, please consider purchasing the book here:

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07M5DQV32?pf_rd_p=c2945051-950f-485c-b4df-15aac5223b10&pf_rd_r=K7B5XD5Z8HDJ3R4AMFGC

Thank you.

To a Troubled Friend,

We haven't always been on the best of terms. I recognize that. But at the same time, I didn't realize what was going through your head when you weren't around the group anymore. In spite of what others told me, I was too blind to recognize the severity of your situation. For that, I can't begin to tell you how sorry I am. Still, we're at this point now. There's no reason to loom on the past. I know you tend to find solace there, at least in certain iterations of it, but there's no going back. Take it from the person who's tried.

I can't exactly explain the point of this letter. The obvious reason would be to say what I can't express to you in conversation, but I still don't know if I ever want you to read this, so that isn't necessarily the case either. Honestly, I've just had a lot on my mind. There is a lot I didn't get to say the night we stayed up, you telling me what happened to you since the break we've had in speaking to one another. Maybe this letter will give you some insight into both how I can relate to your situation and what you haven't learned about yourself yet to move on. Really, though, that is all up to you.

From everything said in that conversation, there's one point that I really hope will resonate with you: even though you feel a searing pain every waking moment without her, you will find a way to cope and move on. You might not know what that mechanism is right now, but give it time and you will. Ironic as it may sound, coming from me, giving her that much power is equivalent to handing her the keys to your life. All that suffering stems from that lack of control. Even though you think I don't understand, due to circumstance and exceptions, I can assure you that I do. I know how it feels to stay up until the break of dawn with someone, sharing intimate secrets and emotions that you would not tell anyone else otherwise. How it feels to know that a small, unknown part of yourself is secure in somebody you trust. How seeing her with somebody else envelops you in a sweeping, yet confusing sea of prodigious rage and immense sadness. How every single second of the day is spent trying to block out who she's seeing or what she's doing. How tremendously convoluted the facade of true love can be. Hell, I'd be lying if I said that doesn't happen to me still once in awhile as well. Yet, that's also how I know you'll find a way to make it through all this hardship. For me, it was achievement that drove me away from that anguish. Though it may be the reason I'm such a cynic at this point, it saved me from myself. But everyone is different. You probably won't make a similar choice, and I hope you don't. I expect that, whatever you choose, it will both reduce your suffering while retaining the optimism and outgoing personality you've always had. It can be a simple solution; finding a new hobby, meeting a new person, etc. And you *will* find that, there is no "what if." Just give it time.

Regarding what happened between you and the group, you should know that nobody ever hated or resented you after what happened. Sure, most weren't happy with you, but that is a far cry from hatred. And even though we're your friends, you shouldn't worry about how we see you. If we really disliked you that much, why would we even talk to you anymore? Even though me saying this isn't going to suddenly transform the way you view yourself in the context of how the world accepts you, I just want you to know that there is nothing about your character that needs to change. Imperfections are the building blocks of a human, perfection is reserved for forged personas. People who have caused you to think this way are just projecting their lack of proper introspection onto you, which is entirely unfair. She didn't want to date you, even though she had those feelings for you, because she didn't feel comfortable enough with herself to become vulnerable in that way. Nothing you did was going to remedy that. To be clear, I'm not trying to side with her; what she did to you was undeniably and irredeemably manipulative. But it was not because of an oversight on your end. We all wish we had done something to fix a broken relationship, but sometimes it just isn't meant to work out. Eventually, somebody else worthy of your appreciation will come into your life, with considerably more maturity and integrity to sustain a legitimate connection.

I guess I've been avoiding the largest issue at hand here, in spite of its severity. I don't know how you could ever think the world is a better place without you. I'm not really an optimist, but I know for damn sure that you have a place here. Think of your parents. Your sister. Friends like me and the rest of the group. There is no way your disappearance would be anything close to minor for us. And I know you say you're mostly over it now, but I worry. Actions tend to speak louder than words. People don't spend consecutive nights drinking themselves to sleep alone for no reason. You always try to reassure me: "I didn't have that much." "Don't worry, it won't do anything with my medication." As much as I'm here for you, you have to stop. This can't go on like this. I get so pissed off because that's the only way I know how to convey how much harm these tendencies are doing to you. Dare I say, it's becoming an addiction. With everything you've been through, I don't want that to add to the weight of your life. Everytime you pull a stunt like that, every single time, I spend the rest of the night worried. How am I supposed to handle hearing that you ended up in the hospital? I'm hundreds of miles away, there is nothing I can do to prevent something like that from happening. Seeing you in a hospital bed, a casket, would...I don't even know. Please. If not for me, or your family, even the girl from your past, do it for yourself. Because, I assure you, you deserve better.

I'm sorry if this whole thing was a jumbled mess. I just needed you to hear me out.

-Taygh

What is my favorite memory?

Oh boy, that's a tough one. There is such a myriad of choices! I'm not sure that there is a definitive answer to this, but for the sake of the question, I'll choose one memory that at least is a contender for the best.

First, a bit of explanation. When I go out to fast food restaurants where they call customer names for picking up orders at the counter, I tell them my name is Raj. Why?

Because, quite honestly, it is much easier to tell them an Indian name I know they'll be able to spell or pronounce, rather than to waste the time and effort explaining Taygh to them. Some people have surmised that this habit is representative of how I am somehow ashamed of my name or culture. That is absolutely not the case; it really just is easier and more efficient, for both me and the cashier, to tell them the wrong name. Plain and simple.

So, with that in mind, onto the story. Over the summer between my freshman and sophomore years of college, I hung out with friends as much as possible in my home state of California. I wanted to get as much time in with them as possible before I had to return to Seattle. One time, we decided to hang out at my house to play games and swim a bit. At some point during the night, my friend, Nico, suggested that we get some Chick-fil-A. Having spent the last nine months in a city with no such delicacy, I quickly concurred. After a few minutes, everyone in the group was packed into my car and ready to go.

Admittedly, the car ride was a bit...much. My thirteen year old car only had a single speaker left that barely worked, so I brought my wireless speaker along for music. Big mistake. Or the opposite, depending on your point of view (I'm towards the latter). Quickly, my friends hijacked the speaker and started playing music that I can only define as "audible memes." It started off with some legitimate music, but it quickly turned into music like the theme to *iCarly* and tracks from the soundtrack for *The Greatest Showman*. Now, I don't remember exactly what happened, but I do know that the car was filled with the ear piercing sound of all of us singing along with the music. It was both a horribly regrettable and noteworthy bonding experience. Eventually, somebody played "Bet on It" from *High School Musical 2*. That. Is. My. Jam. We pulled into the parking lot with huge smiles on our faces, just yelling the lyrics of the song at the top of our lungs. It was...dare I say, magical?

Finally, we made it to the restaurant. We decided to eat inside because the drive through line was ridiculously backed up. When we got in, everyone else ordered before me. So, none of them heard me tell the cashier that my name was Raj for the order. Also keep in mind that none of them have ever seen me use this tactic before. After I ordered my food, I went to sit down at a table with them and wait. One by one, each person received their order. Since I was the last to order, I was the last one to get their food. The waitress came over, cheery as ever, and asks me "Order for Raj?" Of course, I said yes, ignoring the strange looks my friends were directing towards me. But, stupidly, Nico just looked up at the waitress, dead in the whites of her eyes, and asked, "Did you just say RAJ?!" The tone in his voice had the most you-idiot type of vibe to it that I have ever heard. In rebuttal, the poor waitress just turned her head downward in dismay as she quickly whisked herself away. She whispered a soft apology before she left, feeling utterly embarrassed. And as horrible as it may sound, that is one of the absolute funniest moments of my life. To this day, we have not let Nico live that remarkable moment down.