

# When rejection is the kindest thing a person can do

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## *The Washington Post:*

Getting dumped is never fun. Neither is finding out that the crush you've been nursing is going nowhere. But when I think about all the times I've been rejected, the worst part wasn't the moment of finding out the relationship was over. It was the part before — that awful stretch of uncertainty when I didn't know whether the person I was into loved me or loved me not.

There was the boy I dated in high school who went off to college and started seeing someone else. He couldn't bring himself to tell me — for *months* — as I agonized over how hard it was to reach him on his dorm room phone. In the end, his best friend broke the news to me.

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When you're the one who wants to hold on, research has found, you'll seize on any evidence you can to hold on to hope. While the rejecter hesitates, the hanger-on is encouraged by the positive signs, however vague — *he returned my call/we had sex/she's just too busy this week but might have some time for a drink next week* — and discounts the negative ones. It may have taken days to get that phone call, or the sex was emotionally empty.

"If there's ambivalence, it's going to prolong the hope," said Roy Baumeister, a psychology professor at Florida State University and co-author of "Breaking Hearts: The Two Sides of Unrequited Love."

Read the whole story: [The Washington Post](#)