

When You're Suddenly Single Again

I met Steve Stern when I was 16 years old. We fell in love when I was 18 and were married one year later. Knowing him, loving him, making a life with him—it's most of what I know in this world.

When I lost him a few months ago, I felt a little like I and all my history had been erased—it was as if I couldn't see my own face in the mirror anymore. The first month was filled with spinning, spinning, trying to find solid footing. It was so easy to focus on what's been lost, and very hard work to fully appreciate what remains.

About six weeks in, I sat down and had a good heart-to-heart with myself. I made the decision to stop looking back and figure out who I am now. I wanted to get to know this Bo. *Single Bo* (which still sounds super weird to me).

Steve will always be such an enormous part of my life because that's what truly great people do to you. They weave their way into your thoughts and opinions and hopes and dreams, and when they're gone, holes happen. Gaping holes. Scary holes.

I've watched some sorrow-sojourners fill those holes up with someone or something else so they'll stop hurting. No judgment on this method, I've seen it work for some, but it's just not for me.

I don't want quick fills. And I don't want to form this new season of my life around another person. Quite transparently, that means I don't want to look a certain way or cook a certain way or fold my laundry a certain way because of someone else. Not yet. Maybe not ever. But I've been around long enough to know that in the "not yet" and the "maybe not ever," unknown possibilities are often incubating inside the

sovereignty of God. I'm more than content coexisting with that mystery, and in being on a need-to-know basis with Him.

In related news, a few friends have asked about my wedding ring, which I recently moved to my right hand (baby steps) and will eventually put on a chain. I didn't move it because I'm ready to move on to another person, but because it felt like an important step in the next phase of the journey (though, again, lots of people do it differently and that's perfectly great). I'm saying yes to this season of life, however scary and crazy and uncomfortable it may feel. I am in no condition to date, so refrain from sending me suggestions.

Just know that I am alive and well and trying to lean into the adventure. I can't change that loss and sorrow are a part of my story, but I can choose to write the narrative around it to include discovery, development and joy in the me that I am now and the me that I will (hopefully!) become.

If you've made it this far, thank you. I know this is intensely personal and perhaps even really awkward to read. If I'm honest, it was pretty awkward to write. But this is my story, and I've come to believe my story is good. And also? I'm grateful for you.

Bo Stern is a blogger and author of the newly-released *Beautiful Battlefields* (NavPress). She knows the most beautiful things can come out of the hardest times. Her *Goliath* came in the form of her husband's terminal illness, a battle they fought with the help of their four children, a veritable army of friends and our extraordinary God. Bo is a teaching pastor at Westside Church in Bend, Oregon.