

Unauthorized Dumping

Jessica's boyfriend, Amit, had been a bad partner. Despite his charm, he'd been inconsiderate, selfish, and moody. Still, Jessica loved him anyway, and remained a caring and committed girlfriend for two years. A month ago, though, Jessica heard a rumor that Amit cheated on her with one of her friends. Devastated, she confronted him and he admitted that it was true. In the aftermath of the revelation, Amit begged Jessica not to break up with him, apologized, and vowed to become a better person and boyfriend. Even though Jessica's friends and family encouraged her to end the relationship, Jessica was determined to make it work.

For the next few weeks, it seemed as though things were going well: Amit was attentive and kind, and Jessica, though still deeply wounded, felt as though things were on the right track. But then, out of nowhere, Amit sat Jessica down and told her that he was ending the relationship. He loved her, he said, but couldn't be the boyfriend she needed him to be. Jessica was furious: "You have no right to break up with me and humiliate me like this after all I've done for you! I've stuck by you time and again, and now you have the nerve to dump me?" she said, "After all I've invested in the relationship, and after all the faith I've put in you, how could you do this?"

For his part, though, Amit feels he did nothing wrong. While he still had feelings for Jessica, trying so hard to be a good partner felt stressful and unsustainable. From Amit's point of view, if he truly wasn't capable of being a good partner, it wouldn't have done Jessica any favors for him to continue to be with her only to keep letting her down.

Nevertheless, to Jessica, it still felt like there was something especially unsavory about his begging her not to end the relationship, only to end it himself just weeks later. In many ways, it felt like one final act of betrayal.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Can one wrong a partner by breaking up with them? If so, under what circumstances?
2. Was Amit justified in breaking up with Jessica for the reasons that he gave? Why or why not?
3. Is there anything morally praiseworthy about someone who attempts to mitigate the harms caused by their future bad behavior, when they are not willing to do what they can to not behave badly in the first place?

