

## [Transcript] Mamamia Out Loud / Three Women, Three Friendship Break-Ups

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Mamma Mia Out Loud!

Hello Out Louders, it's a public holiday in some bits of Australia today, including our own.

But we're not going to leave you with nothing to listen to just because we are having a day off.

So we've decided to release one of our most popular subscriber episodes all about friendship breakups.

I was nervous about releasing this one from behind the subscriber wall because it's a little bit personal.

Friendship, as we know, can be complicated.

And in this episode, Mia, Jesse and I all share the details of a friendship breakdown that has affected us in some way.

Some of them are like, oh, I'm glad to be released from that.

Some of them are cause of real sadness.

Some of them we're trying to work out how to fix.

So if you love what you hear on this episode, just remember that Mamma Mia subscribers get two extra drops just like this one every Tuesday and Thursday.

And you can always sign up via the link in the show notes and please enjoy.

We ran a story on the site this week by Charlotte Rhee, who is the author of a brand new book called Heart Bake.

It's all about her separation from her first husband and entering the dating world.

And there's one chapter in particular, and this is the chapter that we ran on the site, about a breakup with a best friend.

And it is so powerfully written and I think so relatable.

It's basically the person that she grew up with.

They traveled together.

They lived together.

There was a closeness that I think a lot of women would be envious of.

And then they sort of started, there was a bit of distance.

They started to drift apart until they realized that elements of their relationship had become quite toxic.

And it underwent a romantic level breakup, which included unfollowing each other off social media, blocking each other on social media.

And really severing ties.

So it's not like they demoted each other to just friends.

There was a real ending.

The story has been resonating with so many women.

And every time we run a story about friendship breakups, it gets an enormous response.

Because there's not enough space, I think, in our conversations for that very particular kind of grief.

And we don't really have a word for it.

And so I thought today I wanted to discuss with you both if you have an ex-friend.

Holly and I were talking about it before and she said a great conversation starter is to ask someone if they have an ex-friend.

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Because there's always a really good story there, a really interesting story about something that went wrong.

And in Charlotte Reeve's experience, what I loved about her chapter was that she saw a lot of things that she would have done differently.

And this wasn't about blaming some narcissist for blah.

It was going, oh no, I had a lot to work on and I regret a lot about how I behaved during that period.

Holly, have you had any falling outs with friends?

I have. I have an ex-friend. In fact, I have two.

So I was listening to Mia's No Filter with Bex Barrow and Lisa and Sarah who have, they've done an audio series about friendship.

And it actually made me reflect on two ex-friendships.

One of them I think is salvageable and I made a promise to myself when I was listening to it and driving in today that I'm going to make that call.

I haven't done it yet, but I'm going to.

The other one is not salvageable. It is too old.

So I had a friend, a really good friend through nearly all my 20s into my early 30s.

We used to live together. We traveled together. I was really close with her family.

I used to spend Christmas with her people. She knew my family.

And we broke up when I was probably about 32, like a long time ago now, right? Long time ago.

When I think about why it was because we had drifted apart as the cliché would go.

And then the tensions between our different life stages and what we were doing and how we were handling ourselves got too difficult.

It got too complicated and she ghosted me ultimately.

But it was one of those ghostings where you don't chase too hard because you know it was the right thing to do.

It was almost like euthanasia.

Yes, so friendship.

I obviously wasn't giving her what she needed at a difficult time in her life.

I found our catch ups and our interactions to be becoming increasingly stressful and difficult.

And then slowly we just stopped returning each other's messages and calls and faded out.

Now at the time, it was genuinely like a breakup.

I mourned that relationship and I worried about it, thought about it, felt really sad, felt this big hole.

But also like a relationship, I knew it was right. Do you know what I mean?

And the way I think about her now is just like I think about some of my exes, which is, I love them.

That was a really important relationship in my life.

It's good that it's an ex relationship.

Do you ever look her up and wonder what's happened to her?

Every now and again I do.

Sometimes I bump into somebody that we both know, which is really awkward.

Does she live in Australia or she's back home?

No, no, she lives in Australia.

You've never bumped into each other in person?

We've never bumped into each other in person.

I bumped into her sister in the supermarket a few years ago, super awkward.

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Yeah, it's just like an ex. I don't think there's any difference.  
Like if I bumped into the sister of one of my ex-boyfriends in the supermarket, it would be exactly the same.  
This kind of awkward like, oh my God, we used to know each other so well.  
How so and so?  
It's like the unspoken thing that you don't mention.  
And it's really weird.  
There isn't language around friend heartbreak.  
And even when it isn't, as you were saying about Charlotte's story, Jesse, even when it isn't like a story of betrayal, like that bitch did me wrong, but just more a sad ending. Just like a relationship, there's heartbreak and sadness and there are things you miss.  
And then there's the awkwardness of how you move on with your life, you know, when you're not in the same circles anymore.  
It was very, very much like a relationship.  
And I think about it a lot.  
And sometimes enough time has passed now that I think, oh my God, it would be amazing to go and have a drink, cup of coffee.  
But then I also think, but would it though?  
Or would it just open up a big can of what happened?  
In some ways, it can feel more like a failure than a romantic relationship because romantic relationships, you're either with them or you're not.  
But with a friendship, the fact that they didn't just become demoted in your circle, but you actually could find no way to coexist as friends.  
I think that you do a lot of post mortems on it and there's a lot of guilt and shame.  
I think there are some friendships that can be demoted, but there are some friendships that can't.  
Our relationship was way too longstanding and intense for it to be like, oh, now we're just people who see each other at parties.  
It just wouldn't work, do you know what I mean?  
Or we every now and then like each other's pictures on Instagram.  
I have a friend who was one of my best friends for years and years and we had a falling out.  
And I think that as the falling out was happening and it was over an ex-partner of mine, I thought it would be temporary and that we'd kind of have this fight and then we'd be friends again because I couldn't imagine my future without her.  
But it became so toxic and mean and I felt as though she was almost being more cruel than the ex-boyfriend in some ways.  
And now it's exactly the same.  
It's like I couldn't follow her on any social media or even have a polite conversation.  
And in fact, I've tried.  
I remember seeing her maybe eight years ago or so.  
And I thought, I'm really interested in what she's doing and how everything has gone.  
And every sentence was just laced with so much tension and judgment that I went, oh, this is why you can't do this anymore.  
Maybe there was an undercurrent of competitiveness.  
I'm sure I wasn't completely innocent in it all.

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Do you stay across her life and what she's up to?

Every now and then I do.

I'm definitely curious if someone brought her up in conversation, and say, what's she doing?

Where's she living?

I would be really, really curious.

But there's no hope that in five, ten years we rekindle that and hang out.

What would you do as she reached out to you?

I mean, I'd be polite, but I look at the quality of my friendships now.

And I think these are a different caliber.

And maybe I didn't know that at the time.

But I don't think looking back, that that person actually liked me that much.

That we were best friends, but that she didn't like me.

Which I think the same looking back at ex-boyfriends.

You go, yeah, we're in a relationship,

but I'm not convinced he really liked me that much as it went on.

So, yeah, as you say, Holly, it's exactly like a romantic breakup.

How about you, Mia, because you make friends very quickly.

A lot more quickly than I do.

Yeah.

And not always successfully.

I was thinking about in terms of friendship breakups,

my only sort of hardcore breakups.

I've broken up with a couple of friends and they were both guys, interestingly.

And I don't miss them at all.

Neither of them were intense as a female friendship,

but they were just friendships that ended quite abruptly.

But that I was happy that they ended.

And in terms of female friendships,

I've come close a couple of times in the last few years

and brought a couple of friendships back from the brink.

And I'm glad that you brought them back from the brink.

Yeah.

Yeah, I'm glad that I brought them back from the brink.

You know, one of my closest friends in the world.

We just weren't getting into our groove with each other over like a long period of time over years.

And it was just getting more and more grisly and difficult.

I can't remember why, but we agreed to meet in Centennial Park, which is a big park in Sydney.

And there's like a walking track of about five kilometres.

It was one weekday afternoon.

And we literally marched around this track three times, shouting at each other.

Oh, did you?

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Like shouting at each other.

Like it was extraordinary.

Was that the catharsis you needed?

Yeah.

And we talk about that all the time that, thank God, we did that because it was really touch and go.

We so easily could have not done that.

And it would have just drifted away

and we would have both lost someone really important to us.

And then I have another friend who, again,

things were just weird with us for a little while.

And this is a long distance friend.

We don't live in the same city.

So we spend very little time together.

I don't know.

Again, it was just, you know, it's just like grisly.

It's just like, and we ended up deciding to take a break.

We were on the break.

Let's just have a few months of no communication

because we recognise this is, you know, could easily go bad.

And we didn't, and I thought about, you know,

I did that thing where I was imagining in the shower

what I would say to her and how do I break this.

And then I was like, maybe I would just never be friends.

Maybe at the end of the three months, I just won't see anything.

And then she was like, hey, what do we do now?

The three months are over or whatever.

What do we do now?

And I was like, I don't know.

And we ended that friendship.

There are only two really strong female friendships

that I can think of that ended for reasons that were difficult around betrayal.

Like that's a big thing for me.

I think it's hard to come back from betrayal.

And, you know, those friendships were probably looking back, not healthy.

They were sort of lopsided.

They were complicated.

But they were pretty much severed by betrayals.

And I feel about those women like an ex,

like unfollowed them on social, not so much to send them a message,

but to just sort of protect my heart from seeing them

because my reaction is quite visceral,

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which suggests I haven't really processed it.

A woman that we work with,  
terms that the stab in terms of when you walk past someone  
that you used to date and you feel this like knife in your chest  
and it can be you dated them 10, 20 years ago.

It doesn't mean you regret breaking up.

But there are women who if I walked down the street  
and I saw them, I would lose my breath.

Like because of a previous pain or betrayal.

Yes.

Where I would run in the other direction  
and have like a really physical response.

And what you say is so true, both of you, about  
how do you navigate backwards from an intense level of intimacy  
to politeness?

We almost have a playbook for doing that in a romantic context.

But in a friendship context, it feels almost weirder  
because when you bump into an ex, you both know, right,  
we broke up, we've moved on with our lives, whatever.

We're not together anymore.

We know how to play this and it might be a bit warm,  
might be a bit awkward or whatever.

But with a friendship, with a woman, it's just,  
or with a male friend, it's just, yeah, it's very different.

Very often with an ex, they'll be, well,  
we're not getting back together.

So what's the point of this?

Whereas the thing with friends, you can get back together.

You always could.

And you're choosing not to.

Which is what makes it so icky because it's like,  
what we had is gone.

Could we get it back?

I don't think so.

And it's just...

I realised too when I was listening to that no filter  
that I am a ghoster for sure because also a lot of my,  
like more intense friendships from my 20s and things  
have just faded out.

Nothing happened.

But you know, life circumstances that we would all be familiar with,  
you don't live in the same place anymore,

you have a baby now, they have a baby now, whatever it is.

Yeah.

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Faded out.

And some of them you're nostalgic for  
and would love to rekindle and others you're like, really not.  
But what I would love out loud is to tell me  
is how to rekindle.

Yes.

Because I do have a really, really good friend,  
someone who was really, really good friend of mine,  
who we have probably me, but also probably both of us,  
allowed too much time to elapse,  
like in us having any kind of meaningful catch up  
or any kind of meaningful contact.

And it's one of those people who nearly every day,  
I think I must call blah.

I must message blah.

And then I don't because it feels weird now.

It feels weird.

We did a work event a while ago, Jesse,  
and there were two women there and they came up to us  
and one of them said, this is my friend, blah, blah.

I hadn't seen her in X number of years  
because we both had kids, blah, blah.

And then I messaged her and now we're on our third friend date  
in a month and we're just so happy.

And I was like, I need to do that, but I want some help.

I want some guidance.

So out loud is how do you reach out to an old friend?

Thank you.