# **An Open Letter to my Husband**

## I know the trauma deeply affects our relationship, and I’m sorry.

To my sweet, gentle husband:

I know that I don’t always show it and I definitely don’t vocalize this enough, but I am so grateful to have you in my life. ****I want you to know how much I love you.****

I know that I’m not the person you fell in love with anymore and though you say you aren’t waiting for her to come back, it’s okay if you are on some days. The 21-year-old girl that you fell in love with was a lot more lovable. She was relaxed, silly, and bubbly. She was spontaneous, exuberant, and full of life. Things have changed: I’ve gotten more anxious over the years. I worry about things, I obsess over small details, and I am more rigid and closed off. You see flickers of the “old me” come back sometimes, but I need you to know that for the most part, that girl is gone.

You love me and stand by me despite the significant changes I have gone through these past six years, and I will **always** respect you for that.

I wish that the three years leading up to our wedding weren’t so horrendous. You supported me through three residential treatment stays, five hospitalizations, and two suicide attempts. You drove me to the E.R. when I was having panic attacks and thought I was going to die. You packed my bags and brought me comfort items when I was hospitalized in the psych ward all those times. You forgave me when I experienced countless relapses and slips, even when I promised I would get back on track. You stuck with me through terrifying medication changes; You held my hand and comforted me when my body felt like it was not my own. You watched me kill myself slowly and dealt with the repercussions of my anger when you brought it up. You had the tough conversations when I know you didn’t want to. You swallowed your pride and asked for help when you needed it, and it saved my life more than once.

I don’t know how you were able to think clearly during those times and how you survived it…. But you did.

**We** did.

I know that my words don’t always align with my actions. I know that sometimes, the language between us is confusing and complicated. You hear me say “I love you,” but you see me shrink in your presence. You feel me constantly pull away from you, both emotionally and physically. I know that it must be hard and that it’s probably easy to question my love for you on most days.

I’m acknowledging that at certain times, walking on eggshells is a common practice for you. You don’t want to set me off and yet you never know what triggers it. You want to say and do the right thing in an effort to make all the pain disappear, and yet you don’t know where to start. You wonder what you did to cause this intense irritability I feel towards you or what you did to annoy me. I am so sorry that I snap on you so often.

****It’s not you, I promise.****

You probably feel helpless at times. You see the panic attacks, the random glassy stares, the emotional unavailability, and the sleepless nights. I know you want to hold me and tell me that everything will be okay, because I feel it. I feel you restraining yourself- I’m sure the rejection can be exhausting and depressing after a while. I know that when you try to hold me or be near me it doesn’t always go well. I realize that predicting my behavior is probably puzzling. I’m sorry I’ve needed so much alone time these days.

You are aware of my pain, my intimacy issues, and my trauma. We don’t talk about it, and yet some days it feels like the center of our worlds. I’ve been waiting for the elephant to disappear for so long and it just doesn’t really go anywhere. I’ve realized that we’re both numb to it- We have learned to ignore its’ company. Sometimes I wish that you would just rip the band-aid off and bring it up so that I don’t have to anymore.

I need you to know that it’s okay to be angry- I understand that you didn’t sign up for this. It’s not fair that you have to bear the brunt of my anger and hold my pain when I choose to check out of life. It’s not fair that you have to constantly pay for other men’s mistakes. It’s not fair that you sometimes get lumped into the category of unsafe and dangerous, because we both know you are anything but those things.

You are the kindest, most genuine man I know. Some days I can’t comprehend what I did to deserve your love and I hate myself for vehemently rejecting it when I’m scared and full of fear. I push and push and push, but you never leave. I love you for that and I hate you for that all at the same time. I know that I’m complicated, but you accept that.

You still chose to make me your wife through all of this suffering. You loved our weird dog when I randomly brought her home one day after I got out of the hospital. You’ve stepped up to the plate when I have asked you to, and you made a home for us. You still want to have a family with me, because you believe in me. In us.Your faith in our relationship and your ability to be optimistic despite what I’ve put you through is nothing short of astounding.

I know that loving me takes work sometimes, but you never complain. You never hold grudges or keep score of all of the shitty things I have done to you or to myself.

I want so desperately to be better for you. I want to stop the cycle of self-destruction because if I have learned anything, it’s that I am not just hurting myself anymore. I’m hurting you, our dog, and our future together.

I want to remind you of the reason we read this aloud last June:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

You live up to this every day of our marriage. I want to thank you for being my life partner and for always being there for me, despite my scars and my fears about letting myself be loved. I know that some people would say that I am a survivor of trauma, but so are you. Together we can build a beautiful life together and move beyond the painful memories. We have only grown stronger from this- I know this because you always remind me when times are tough.

I will always love you. Never stop dreaming, hoping, and loving- For the both of us.

From the bottom of my heart,
Your deeply flawed, (but forever grateful) wife