

ALMOST USEFUL
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How my best friend died and I replaced it with another machine

The loss of a best friend is painful at best and stinky at worst. Especially when you paid good money for one. You see, I made a new best friend about a year and half ago. He came into my life at a very low point. One day my favourite T-shirt appeared, stretched by my maid to resemble Madonna's 80s' off shoulder slippers. Now I could probably look half decent in one. My shoulders have been getting heavy workouts from carrying my daughter for hours praying she goes to sleep. But it may not go down so well at the office. The ladies there are a jealous bunch.

Back to my lost BFF. For those who are 90 and older, as most of my fans are, that means Best Freaking Friend. My T-shirt was dead. The car outline on the front now vaguely resembled Jim Carrey's face before he went nuts. I looked into my wardrobe and most of my T's were washed and squeezed so hard that they had become mini frocks. Jeans still had marks where I wiped my burger stained hands before the wife could notice with disapproval.

That was it. I needed technology. I needed a robot who looked like Arnold Schwarzenegger in T2 without the murdering. I compromised and

got a washing machine instead. It was tough finding the right one. I love buttons on machines. The more buttons there are, the less I will be able to afford my children's education. Tough call. I needed these because I always follow the manly men style of purchasing things: get more functions than I could possibly need or understand. But then I am also married and that means I cannot always get all the buttons. The wife for instance: no off button there.

In the end, I drew a compromise between getting many buttons and ensuring only one child's education. My son was okay with it since he does not really want to go to school anyway. I got myself a glorious machine full of buttons and red digits and blue lights. It hummed and purred. And when my clothes came out washed, soft and scented, I felt like a new man. I felt glorious.

This is what a best friend does: makes you feel good without using words.

And then last week, the washing machine died.

I was distraught. I cried for hours. I pressed the 'on' button repeatedly hoping it would turn back on. I sang and danced like in the movies hoping it would come back to life. Nothing worked. I was even prepared to sacrifice one of my subeditors by throwing him into a volcano since that is how sacrifices go. Also, subs are cheap to replace. Sadly, no volcanoes around so I pushed him off his chair while he was napping. Nothing worked. The repair guy told me it was one of those rare instances that the controller went kablooey and there was nothing to do. He could replace the controller with a simplified unit but I will not get all my flashing buttons any more. My BFF would not be the same.

I followed all the grief counselling tricks to get over it.

I was told to express my emotions. I performed interpretative dances which made my wife walk out of the room.

I was told to join a support group. I went to my son's school and spoke to all the other moms who strangely mostly still resort to maids. In the end I just hung out with my petrolhead friends because they all understand

the pain of broken machines. They hugged me. It helped. Some offered me the keys to their fast cars for a spin. It helped more.

Finally, after two days of mourning, I decided to let it go. I got it repaired. It was not the same so I decided to get a new best friend.

Moral of the story: The best human best friends are just like a terrific washing machine. They make you feel good without having to say much. They make you look good too. When you're down, they hum and hmm at the right moments. I have a few of those though they do not appreciate interpretative dances.

Which brings me to the last stage of the grief counselling. Cherish the moments. I have a picture of my ex washing machine in my wallet to remember it by. I would add pictures of my wife and two kids, but it is one of those snazzy slim wallets without much space.

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