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Your guy lost the election. Now what?



By Lauren Beckham Falcone

Tuesday, November 4, 2008 - Updated 43m ago

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The postelection hangover. The morning after a long night of results-watching is brutal enough, but when your candidate is the loser, no home remedy will make you feel better.

But that's democracy, folks. Unless you want to go all dictator-for-life on the U. S. of A., you have to deal with the harsh reality of the electoral process: Someone is going home disappointed.

So, how do you buck up, little cowboy? It might seem impossible, what with the yahoo in the next cubicle impersonating an obnoxious **Yankees** fan, gloating about his Big Win. But the worst thing you can do is let it get you down.

"It's important to step back and really think about how much of an impact this election really and truly has on your life," said Dr. Andrew Harper, associate professor at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston and medical director of the University's Harris County Psychiatric Hospital. "Ask yourself if you overvalued the prominence of this particular decision."

In other words, chill. It's only four years until we can do it all over again.

"You know, democracy is a contest and an adversarial one at that," Harper said. "But if you come out on the losing side, here's a chance to get involved in local and state government. And though four years seems like a long time, it's not."

Of course, some people just like to wallow. And New York-based psychologist Wendy Kaufman, the founder and president of Balancing Life's Issues Inc., a national executive training company, said you can reel - just not for long.

"The one thing I love about Americans is that we will support whoever (won)," she said. "We are so grateful to live in this amazing country, and though those on the losing side will be disappointed for a while, you have to remember, these are both good men, and when we wake up (today) we will focus on America and its ideals. That's just who we are as Americans."

Maybe, but some of us are less idealistic. And today - especially if your guy is not planning an inaugural gala - you're grumpy. Especially if your candidate or ballot issue was this close to victory.

"Research shows that being close to winning can hurt more than losing by a longshot because it is easy to imagine how easily things could have been different," said Michal Ann Strahilevitz, associate professor of marketing at Golden Gate University in San Francisco.

"Second place hurts more than third, because you almost got first. Fourth place in the Olympics hurts more than fifth, because you almost got a medal. Even with stocks, if the stock soared right after you sold it, it hurts more than if the stock did not recover until months after you sold it."



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How do you handle it when your favorite candidate loses an election?

- jn I shrug it off. There'll be other elections.
- jn I guess I get a little depressed, angry, bitter... Maybe I should work on that.
- jn I focus on the important things in life. Like catching up on TV, movies, sports...

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So go on: moan, complain, shake your fist to the sky and bang your head on your desk. But then look past the defeat and get involved.

"The worst thing you can do is throw in the towel," Harper said. "Becoming apathetic, not getting involved, not supporting the causes and issues that are important to you. You know, the squeaky wheel gets the grease, and if you become frustrated and then passive, it's not dangerous. But it's worse: it's quitting."

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