

T'S been a bumpy ride for Britney Spears ever since she divorced Kevin Federline in 2007. But the troubled pop princess has turned a corner in her recovery after two frightening emergency trips to the mental hospital. And as the fog clears, she's discovered that she still loves her ex!

"Since their face-to-face meeting on Easter, Britney has started confessing to Kevin how she feels about him," a family insider tells Star. "She says 'I love you,' and she really seems to mean it."

In fact, a friend of the 26-year-old singer believes that, with Kevin's affection, Britney could soon be back to her old self—the girl he fell in love with!

"She's really doing so much better," says the pal. "Britney said she's finally dealing with the issues that she was ignoring for so long and is getting over her anger. The fact that Kevin is in her life again gives her hope, and she's realizing she wants him back. She knows now that Kevin truly wants her to be better, and she's told him it's one of the reasons she loves him."

"The fact that Kevin is back in Britney's life gives her hope." —an insider tells Star

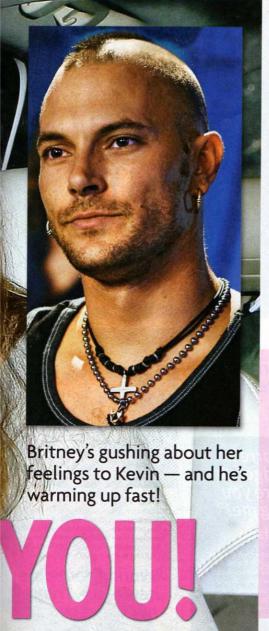
"HE'S ALWAYS LOVED HER"

Happily for Britney and their two sons, Sean Preston, 2, and Jayden James, 19 months, Kevin seems to feel the same way, but he's not jumping into anything with Britney — yet.

"Kevin has decided that the best strategy for now is to try to not read too much into everything," says the family insider. "He's always loved Britney, and we believe he always will. Even though he's taken a lot of grief from her, he still says that he'd take her back under the right circumstances."

And that could happen soon. As Star reported, the Easter meeting between Britney and Kevin, 30, went so well that he is planning to whisk her away for what could turn into a romantic weekend as they explore their feelings together. "Kevin does sometimes tell Brit he loves her, too," says the family insider. "But





only when she says it first. He's being careful to do things right this time around. He's also hoping they can start getting together with the boys for family dinners a couple of times a week."

FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHILDREN

Both Kevin and Britney, sources say, care deeply about their beloved children. For a while, Britney was legally prevented from seeing her sons. But now, says the insider, she sees them at least two or three times a week, usually from noon to 6 p.m. And while regular visits have provided a good excuse to be in constant contact with her ex, sources say, Kevin is determined not to get back with her just for the sake of the children.

"He won't let the boys' needs determine his and Britney's relationship," the insider explains. "If they want each other, that will be reason enough."

And their families are hoping that the pair can work it out, the insider adds. "Britney and Kevin are both craving love right now. We think the idea of a future together could be good for them."

But it won't be easy, says Denver-based relationship therapist Carolyn Bushong, who has not treated the couple. "There's no way to put a relationship that was so destructive back together without counseling," she says. "They should both admit things they did wrong and try to give each other a fresh start. That involves a lot of work, but it can be done."

— AARON RASMUSSEN, CASEY BRENNAN,
KATE MAJOR & SAMANTHA GENNUSO *

Britney's Eight-Page Apology Letter

As part of her recovery program, Britney is making amends to those whom she's hurt, an insider tells Star. She's begun by writing apologies to her loved ones — especially Kevin. In an eight-page note she penned to him, she confessed:

- She regrets her behavior and how she acted as a wife and a mother.
- She loves him deeply, and a second chance would be everything she could ever ask for and more.
- She wants to move on to a healthier life and has even written a long goodbye to drugs.
- She wrote letters to both her boys to read when they are older, explaining the chaos of their early lives in her own words.

"Britney is taking steps to rectify all the wrongs she has done in her life," says the insider. "She's trying to clean up the wreckage of her past, and reconciling with Kevin is a big part of that."

-TIM PLANT *