


Tips for Dealing with a Breakup



Student Counseling Center

(410) 328-8404

<https://www.umaryland.edu/counseling/>



The Bare Basics

Love/Limerence

A nearly universal phenomena associated with attachment

Considered an emotion and biological drive

Changes one's brain chemistry and behaviors

Elevated levels of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with rewards

Heartbreak

Scans show parts of brain may be activated by thoughts/pictures of ex

Activation of anterior insula, part of brain associated with physical pain

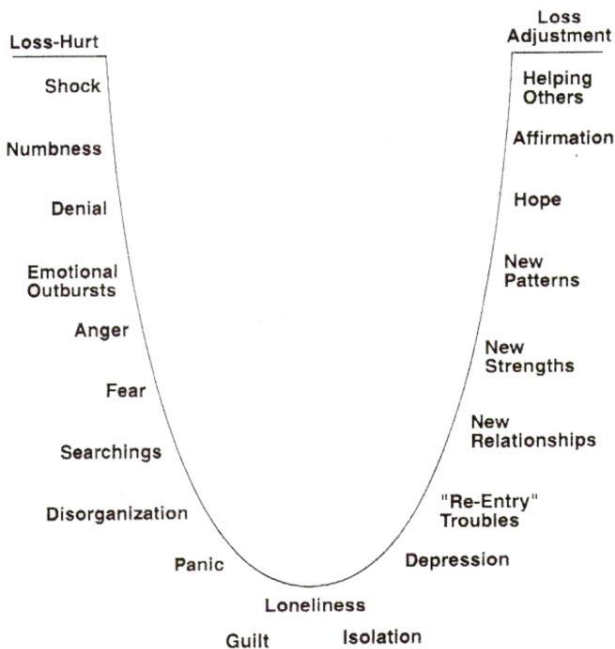
It's not easy to break an attachment bond

52% of people report experiencing clinically measurable depression after a breakup

Negative Feelings are Typical

Finding healthy coping skills to manage these feelings does not mean ignoring or suppressing them. It is important to acknowledge them as part of the grief process!

STAGES OF GRIEF



Grief can look differently for everyone and there is no right way to go through these stages. It's possible to skip stages, backslide, or go through some steps multiple times before grief resolves.



Intensifying Situations

Some conditions to the breakup may intensify negative feelings

Some of these conditions may be:

- Not being the one who decided to breakup
- Not expecting the breakup
- This being your first serious relationship
- Your ex being your only or main social support/friend
- Continuing to run into your ex or seeing them consistently
- Your ex starting to date someone new right away
- If the relationship was not a healthy relationship

Talk About It



It is helpful to talk about the feelings you are experiencing to the supportive people in your life.

Isolating and holding on to these emotions for ourselves does not benefit the process in the long run.



It can also be helpful to write down your feelings and experience.

Journaling allows one to externalize thoughts and feelings that seem too private to share with others.

Prioritize Selfcare



1

Eating healthy options, sleeping enough, and engaging in physical activities are good choices. You may not feel like engaging in these things when feeling upset or saddened but they help.



2

Get back into a routine around waking up, bedtimes, meals, school or work related activities to increase your sense of stability or normalcy.



3

Indulge in things that you enjoy like eating out somewhere, spending time with a friend, taking a hot bath, getting a massage, going on a hike or trip.

Things to Try

What did you learn?

Examine the relationship as a learning opportunity. What are things that you've learned about your wants or needs? What are things that you want in a future partner?

Comparing yourself with others is not helpful. Everyone's timeline is different and it's important to remember that.

Make a list of the benefits of being single such as:

- Having more control over your day to day
- Being able to do things you might not have before
- Spending more time with friends and loved ones
- Possible excitement of dating again

Performing a closure ritual can be helpful for some people. Symbolic gestures can help process the end of a relationship and move our thoughts into a more future oriented direction.

Consider writing a letter to yourself, discarding reminders, deleting text messages, etc.

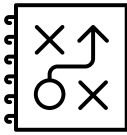
Things To Remember

Breaking up is sometimes a part of the dating process

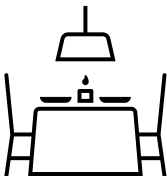
The first 3 months of dating someone is often the trial run to gauge whether this can work long-term



A breakup can get personalized and seen as being someone's fault. It is far more helpful to see the ending because of conflicting needs and incompatibilities that are no one's fault.



Each person is trying to meet their own needs and some couples are able to help fulfill each other's needs and some are not.

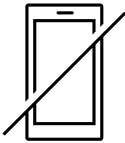


Dating again can be a difficult decision.

It can be helpful to approach it openly and with hope. Sometimes it helps to date casually at first as a way of meeting new people rather than jumping into a deep and long-term relationship.

What About My Ex?

Bringing closure is rarely possible if there is still hope that the relationship will continue



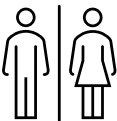
Waiting for calls/texts from this person, begging to get back together or making threats of self-harm or injury will only add to emotional distress



It's not often helpful to depend on your ex after separating, especially to help you overcome the pain of the break-up



It makes it a lot harder to get over someone if you're continuing to see them or trying to maintain a friendship



After a significant period (i.e., months) of no contact, a friendship might be possible, but wait until you're feeling emotionally strong again

Write About It

What are some feelings that you are currently experiencing?

How have you been coping so far?

What are some things you think will improve your coping?

Who are some people you can reach out to?

What are places or things to temporarily avoid?

What is something you feel like doing but know will not help?

Final Notes

- Since you may be feeling hurt it can be easy to assume that everyone is bad or untrustworthy, but this just isn't true. We can't over-generalize from our limited relationship history and assume that it will never work out.
- It is important after a break-up to remind yourself that you were able to survive on your own before you entered the relationship and you will be able to survive on your own now that you're no longer together.
- Blaming yourself or the other person is generally unhelpful. Sometimes things just don't work out.
- We all need to be able to stand on our own and meet our own needs, regardless of the status of any one of our relationships.
- Remember, the healthiest relationships are with two people who are able to meet their own needs. A relationship is not a necessity to be whole.
- Most important remember that it takes **time** to heal. Allow yourself the grace to recover.

Need further assistance? Reach out to the Student Counseling Center at (410) 328-8404 or visit our website at umaryland.edu/counseling