

Dealing with relationship break-ups



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Relationships break-up for lots of reasons. Often it's no-one's 'fault' and nobody is to blame – instead, things just aren't working out.



A break-up can bring a sense of relief, especially if the relationship was making you unhappy. However, it can also bring on a range of difficult feelings such as denial or disbelief ("it's not really over"), guilt, sadness, anger, or fear, and may lead to feeling rejected, lonely or confused.

Dealing with a break-up

It's normal to feel sad after a relationship split and it can take time to get over the loss of a relationship. You might feel as though your world has turned upside down and that things will never be good again. The strength of your feelings might be overwhelming. You might cry, feel restless, or have less motivation or energy to do things. Your appetite and sleep might also be disturbed.



Some things to remember



Whatever you're feeling now won't last forever. It may take time before you feel you have 'moved on', but you will. Take it one day at a time and realise that there will be good and bad days.



If it was your decision to end the relationship it doesn't necessarily make the break-up any easier to deal with. It's still normal (and okay) to feel upset and to miss the other person.



The end of a relationship doesn't mean that there is anything wrong with you. Try not to take it personally – relationship break-ups are common.



You don't have to be in a relationship to feel happy. It's better to not be in a relationship than to be in a bad one.



It's okay to feel angry or hurt, but be sure you are safe in how you express your feelings. Don't act out your anger or do spiteful things. Don't follow your ex around, call them all the time or harass them online. This sort of behaviour is not acceptable and will make you feel worse in the long run.



Try not to feel embarrassed or to worry about how the situation will look to others.



Remember that break-ups can have a positive side. You can learn more about yourself and what you want from future relationships. You can develop coping skills, become more independent, have more time to spend with friends and do the things that you enjoy.

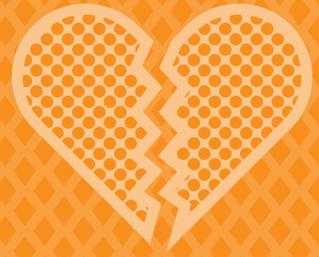
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It is important to remember that with time and support most people pull through relationship break-ups, sometimes coming out stronger at the other end.



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Some things that might help you feel better after a break-up

- **Let yourself be upset.** Dealing with your emotions will help you heal and feel better.
- **Look after yourself.** Try to eat healthy, keep sleeping and exercise routines.
- **Be realistic when thinking about your ex** and the relationship. It's common to remember only the good things about the person and the relationship. But be honest with yourself – it's rare for a relationship or a person to be perfect. Remembering the things that weren't so great will make it easier to move on.
- **Try to limit how much you think about your ex** by finding things that will distract you. Think positively and try some new things.
- **Give yourself some space.** You don't need to shut your ex out of your life but it might be helpful to try to avoid him/her for a while after the break-up.
- **Keep busy.** You might find yourself with too much free time on your hands, especially at weekends. Plan ahead and do things that you usually enjoy.
- **Take time out for you.** Do things that you find relaxing, like going to a movie, playing or listening to music, meditating, reading or playing sport.
- **Treat yourself.** Buy yourself a treat or do something that you really like.
- **Talk to friends and family** and others who can support you. It's okay to want some time to yourself but being with supportive people can also be a big help. You can also get a different perspective by talking things through with others.
- **Don't use drugs or alcohol** to deal with the pain. Alcohol and drugs might help you feel better at first but the after-effects will leave you feeling much worse.
- **Give it time.** Allow yourself some time to cope with the change.

Breaking up with someone

If you're breaking up with someone, try to be considerate in ending the relationship. Think about how you would want to be treated in the same situation.

Try to end things in a way that respects the other person, but be honest. Clearly state that the relationship is over and why. Understand that the other person is likely to be hurt and perhaps angry about your decision.

End the relationship face-to-face wherever possible, rather than by text, Facebook or by email.

When your ex moves on



It can be especially hard when you find out that your ex has a new relationship. If this happens:

Try to avoid thinking about them being with someone else as it can be really painful.

Don't contact your ex or lash out at them for being in a new relationship. It won't make you feel any better.

If you are struggling with anger or jealousy you need to make sure you stay safe when dealing with these feelings. Talk to somebody about it and get some help if you need it.

Thinking about a new relationship?

Take all the time you need in beginning another relationship. Think about what you want in your next relationship but try to feel confident about being single for a while.

When should you get some help?

Break-ups hurt but people usually get over them in time and without any serious problems. Sometimes a break-up can play a part in a person developing other problems such as depression. If you are struggling to move on after a break-up, or if you feel unsafe in any way, it is important to talk things through with someone you trust. This may be a friend or family member. If you'd prefer to talk to someone outside your family and friends, your general practitioner (GP), a counsellor, or someone at your local **headspace** centre can provide you with confidential support.

HELP!



headspace
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre or for online and telephone support, visit headspace.org.au