

BLOG

10 WAYS TO WORK THROUGH THE GRIEF OF A BREAKUP

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We know we feel grief when we lose a loved one. But death isn't the only trigger of this gut-wrenching response.

When a relationship ends, we grieve our partner's absence. We grieve the life we had with them. And we grieve the future we thought we'd have.

Learning to navigate the world without them will take time. So here are 10 psychologist-approved tips to survive the grief – and emerge a healthier, more confident person on the other side.

1. Slow down

In the immediate aftermath of a breakup, our minds and bodies will be flooded with emotion.

Our thoughts will race. Our stomach will turn. We'll feel as though we'll burst into tears at any moment.

Instead of trying to outrun the unpleasant thoughts and sensations, we should slow down – and expect less of ourselves for a while.

Gradually, we can work back up to the pace of everyday life. But it's okay that we're not there yet.

2. Resist the urge to look for answers

If we were the break-up-ee – as opposed to the break-up-er – we'd crave an explanation as to why they ended things.

This is entirely natural. Our brains crave context; but if we're not careful, our questions can quickly lead to self-blame.

Were they honest when they said it wasn't about me? Did I do something wrong? Do they hate me?

Time and space will eventually give us perspective on the relationship and, of course, the many reasons for its ending. But for now, try to resist searching for answers.

The truth is, we may never know for sure.

3. Mute them on social media

We will be just as tempted to check our ex-partner's social media from time to time. But, much like picking at a scab, our emotional wound will never heal if we expose it to things that remind us of them.

We know this already. But it's hard to exercise willpower when our emotions are heightened. That's why muting them – if not blocking them entirely – is an act of self-protection.

It doesn't have to be forever. But if seeing them in person would be too hard, we're probably not ready to see them digitally, either.

4. Feel the feelings – don't fight them

Our minds are likely spinning with imaginative ideas of what our ex is doing without us.

But instead of picturing them with a new lover or otherwise reveling in their singledom (it's safe to say they're suffering, too) we should turn our attention to ourselves. Specifically, to the sensations in our bodies.

Psychologist Deborah L. Davis suggests that every time an emotion flares up, we should pay full attention as it moves through us.

We can disregard upsetting thoughts and focus only on what we are *feeling*: anger as tightness in our chest, fear as a drop in our stomach. It's the healthiest, fastest way to move through the pain.

5. Reconnect with those you love

Many people find that their ties with family and close friends loosen when they enter a committed relationship. Even in the healthiest partnerships, this is entirely normal.

Now is the time to reach out if we haven't for a while. A breakup is devastating – but it's also an opportunity to deepen our other relationships.

Some of us might hesitate to see others, not wanting to burden them with our grief. But vulnerability is a pathway to connection – and friends are often touched that we feel we can confide in them.

Whether we're single or partnered, community is key.

6. Cultivate a balanced perspective

It's easy to see things in black-and-white terms after a breakup – or rose-coloured terms, more accurately.

We might look back fondly on all the best moments from the relationship. The good times will be front and centre, making it seem as though we had something perfect – and blew it.

Nostalgia is a powerful thing. But studies suggest tempering the good memories with the bad will do us a lot of good.

In truth, neither our ex nor the relationship was perfect. Our partner likely had qualities we found irritating or downright intolerable.

On reflection, we might just find a little relief in being on our own.

7. Try something new

It might not feel like it, but there are a few upsides to a breakup.

One is that we're free to make decisions without considering another person – possibly for the first time in a long time. We could ditch our hair, adopt a cat or move to a new state altogether. (Whether we should is another matter.)

We might have concealed or ignored desires for fear of our ex-partner rejecting them. Now we can indulge those neglected parts of ourselves with abandon.

We could take singing lessons, sign up to a life drawing class or take up rock climbing.

It's the perfect time to experiment with something new.

8. Take opportunities to socialise

Along with new hobbies and new interests, the time following a breakup is a chance to meet new people.

We can start by just accepting invitations to parties or gatherings we might have ordinarily turned down. When we're free to mingle, chat (even flirt) and stay out as late as we want to, we start to reconnect with who we are outside of our relationship.

It's not wise to drown our sorrows in the party lifestyle. But we do need to have some fun – and expanding our social circle can be a reassuring reminder that we're not alone.

9. Look for the lessons

Post-relationship growth is a real and studied phenomenon. A breakup presents an opportunity for enormous emotional development – if we use it as such.

As time passes, we should look for the lessons we can take from the relationship.

Maybe we didn't communicate our needs when we wanted to. Maybe we worked too hard, and too often. Maybe we were unhappy in the relationship but didn't have the courage to end it ourselves.

These are lessons we can take into our next relationship, whenever that may be.

10. Don't give your grief a deadline

As time passes, we'll naturally adjust to life without our ex – so long as we continue moving forward.

But even as our acute devastation subsides, our feelings of love and affection towards them might remain. We may still feel those pangs of sadness, or the occasional rush of longing, for some time.

It's important to accept these feelings for what they are: a sign of what the relationship meant to us.

They'll be there for as long as they need to. Our job is only to let them – and to redirect our energy inwards, again and again.

Struggling with a breakup? Sometimes, an unbiased opinion – with a professional perspective – is an enormous help.

Give us a call on 1300 995 636 to book in a time to chat. Or enquire [here](#).

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