



Getting Over a Dating Relationship Breakup

Breaking up is hard to do. Endings bring the loss of the relationship as well as all the dreams and opportunities that came with it. The stronger the feelings and the longer the relationship lasted, the harder it is to let go and live without the person in your life. And breakups are even more painful when initiated by the other person and thrust upon you because the rejection makes you question yourself, threatening your self-image while you are dealing with the loss.

Here are some practical tips on how to survive a breakup.

Feel the emotions. You need to feel the pain to process the loss in a healthy way. Don't tell yourself you have to be strong or that it shouldn't hurt. If you feel like talking about it, find someone to talk to. If you feel like crying, cry. If you feel angry, let it out. In order to process losses, you have to go through the grief process of denial, anger, bargaining, and sadness before you get to acceptance. Feeling your emotions is necessary and healthy.

Listen to music. Music is therapeutic. It puts words to your stories, emotions, hopes, and dreams. There is a time to listen to love songs and tales of jilted lovers, but there is also a time to listen to music that lifts you up and makes you happier.

Write in a journal. Write it out—all of it: the sadness, the anger, the regrets, the fears, the rejection, the pain, the hurt, and the losses. Write a letter to God, yourself, and your ex. Let your pen fly across the paper. Don't put thought into it and don't worry about grammar; just let it come naturally so that your emotions are released. Even if it doesn't immediately seem to have a healing effect, it organizes your thoughts and helps you process the breakup. If you feel you must mail or email your letter to your ex, then write it and wait at least five days so that you will be sure that it is what you really want to say.

Read books and articles. It helps to read what others say about what you are going through. Check out articles on the Internet and books that will help you process the breakup and the problems in your relationship. If you can learn something about yourself, you will make good use of your time invested. People tend to pick the same type of partner, often with similar problems and dynamics. If these contributed to the relationship not working, it will improve your chances of picking someone different next time.

Compose your "story." It is important that you figure out what happened in your relationship. You don't have to go over every little thing, but you have to come to terms with your "story." What are the beginning, middle, and end of your relationship? Who are the good guys and bad guys? Who gets the blame for the problems? Who are the people in it? Don't create a reality but

settle on the truth from your perspective. This may take asking other people what they saw and will definitely take you coming to terms with what happened including what your part was in the relationship not working.

Find happy memories. When you are hurting, it is hard to remember that you have been and will be happy again. Remember things that you have enjoyed and can enjoy again—especially those from before your relationship. Remember people who love you and care about you. Remember the good things from this relationship but don't dwell on them exclusively. This will remind you that there was life before your ex and will be life after your ex.

Exercise daily. Try to exercise for at least 20 minutes a day. Exercise releases anger and decreases depression. It releases endorphins which are pleasure hormones that put you in a better mood. Anger is accompanied by adrenalin and there is nothing better than to burn off the adrenalin with activity. Plus, it can't hurt your prospects for a new relationship by improving your physique and confidence too.

Stay busy. Keep yourself busy with friends and activities even if you don't feel like it. Make yourself be with other people. Don't turn down invitations to go places because you feel sad. Even if you don't want to go; even if you are thinking about your ex; even if you don't enjoy it as much as you would if you hadn't had the breakup; you will still get enough out of it to make it worth it. The alternative is to sit home, pine about your ex, and feel even worse.

Use comfort measures. All of us have certain comfort foods, activities, music, TV shows, and places that feel nurturing. You can even indulge with a spa weekend or trip you have wanted to take. Others are fairly simple like a food that is associated with good feelings (ice cream, pasta, pizza, or your favorite restaurant), your favorite TV show or videos, an album you enjoy, or a special place.

Find something new you enjoy. Think of something that you couldn't do while dating this person. Whether it was because you didn't have the time or because the person didn't share your interest, engaging in something new and exciting that you enjoy will help you to find a benefit from not being in the relationship.

Get a positive perspective. Everything in life can be used for good including pain and past experiences. It is important to process your relationship. What happened? What was good/bad? Focus on the things you learned about yourself: the insights and awareness, as well as the things you now know you want and don't want in a future partner. You can take something positive from every relationship you have had, even if it is a lesson you don't want to repeat.

Don't automatically ask to stay "friends." People often want to stay friends after a breakup but it isn't always the best thing to do. When you have feelings for someone, staying friends will be painful and only remind you of how much you care for the person. It may also mean you will have first-hand knowledge of the people he/she is dating which will cause you unnecessary pain. Staying friends may also give you an excuse to stay overly-connected by giving you an excuse to text, call, Facebook, and Twitter. If the breakup is painful and you have feelings and would like to get back together, staying in the person's life may make you overly hopeful for a reuniting. At

least take time off. Don't text, call, email, Facebook, Twitter, or meet for at least one month. Then if the idea of being friends is still painful, don't do it. If it isn't, try it. Just be honest with yourself as to your motive.

Disconnect social media links. If you stay connected via Facebook and Twitter, it will make it harder to let go. If the person broke up with you, seeing them post happy events and thoughts will make your pain worse. Seeing who he/she is dating will rub salt in your wounds. You might also want to know that what you post about yourself is private and not scrutinized by your ex.

Reconnect to old friends. We sometimes let go of old friends when dating someone new because our new partner's interests don't mesh, or we just don't have the time. Reconnecting to old friends brings some comfortable familiarity into your life and keeps you busy.

Act as if. Even if you are hurting inside and obsessed with thoughts about your ex, pretend you are okay, put on a smile and go out. Go to work and make yourself focus on your job. Laugh at people's jokes and make yourself have a good time. There is a time to grieve and a time to act like you are fine. Acting like you are fine will eventually remind you that you can be fine.

Get emotional support for yourself. You might decide you need to go into therapy to process the relationship and the breakup. You might want to designate a "go to" friend as the one you can call any time to dump your anger, pain, and obsessive thoughts. If the breakup was related to an addiction, you might want to go to a Twelve Step group to get some insight into the dynamics that affected your relationship. If you need emotional support, it is important that you take the necessary steps to get it.

Hope but move on. If you still have hope that you will get back together, recognize it but move on as if it isn't going to happen. You have to release the person and let go in order to not stay stuck in a holding pattern that will make it more difficult for you to heal.

Know that hearts heal. No matter how much you do not believe this at this time, it will happen. You won't always feel this bad. Find other people you know that have gotten over breakups and remind yourself how well they are doing now. Picture yourself okay in the future. Give yourself the time to heal and time will do its job. It isn't that you will forget the relationship; you will have processed it, accepted its end, and moved on with your life.