

# Breaking Up

## and getting on with life

The time right after a break up can be miserable for anyone. Feelings are trampled on, emotions are running wild, and being mean to one another can seem like the best way to lessen the pain. Fortunately, there are better ways to handle this difficult period.

A good thing to do is determine what break up "stage" you are at. Are you or your significant other getting ready to break things off, or has it already happened? Maybe you're still pining about a long-ended past love. Whatever stage you're at, recognizing it can be the start of the healing process.

First, if you are about to break up with someone... then just do it. It's not fair to either of you to wait. One more day won't make it any easier. That doesn't mean to drop the news right before finals, or on his or her birthday. It means that in a respectful and thoughtful way, let everyone get on with their lives.

Second, if the relationship has already ended, acknowledge it. During this period you may be feeling myriad emotions: confusion, betrayal, anger, sadness. Remember that you just lost someone who was a part of your life. It is completely natural to grieve. In fact, allowing yourself a grieving period may be the best thing you can do. However, don't turn grieving into self-pity or self-doubt. Just because one person decided that you are not the perfect match for him or her does not mean you are not the one for someone else. Besides, you shouldn't want to be with someone who doesn't think you are the greatest person in the world. Be happy to have the chance to find that person. That is what you, and every individual, deserves.

Grieving periods vary depending on individuals and the depth of the relationship, but you need to set limits. Losing months and months of your life grieving over a bad relationship is not healthy. If you are feeling seriously depressed, by all means, seek the support of your friends, family, and if necessary, a professional counselor. After your grieving period, it's time to start moving on. That may sound easier said than done, but there are ways to do this successfully! Ask yourself how much time you are willing to lose; how much of your life are you going to sacrifice for something that's over? Remember that time is something you can never get back. Be protective of it. It's yours to control.

Once you have acknowledged that a relationship is truly over, the best solution is to surround yourself with your true friends. Go out. Try to have fun. Even if you don't have fun at first, keep going out. After a while you'll be so annoyed that you aren't having fun that you will likely give in and start enjoying yourself. If you ended the relationship, you have every right to go out and have fun as well. It's always best to try not to put yourself in places where you might end up seeing your former lover too soon. This can be hurtful to both of you and doesn't really allow you the chance to move on

in your own life. Often the person who ends the relationship is ready to be friends sooner than the person who has been left. It's important to be sensitive to the feelings of someone who might still be hurting. Try not to ask too much of that person too soon.

If you're feeling lonely and dejected, make a list of all the things you've been meaning to do or always wanted to do. Start with about ten things. Pick a close friend, or go by yourself, and do at least one of those things every week until you are really over your relationship. You might have lost a lover, but you'll end up learning new things and accomplishing some of your dreams. Before long, you'll be glad the relationship is over. Or at the very least, you will gain some perspective. Staying active both physically and mentally can do wonders for getting over an ex. It gets your mind out of your situation and helps you focus on the future.

Other things you might want to do when a relationship ends:

- Throw away or hide old photos and/or objects that remind you of your past love. If you think there's any chance that the objects might someday conjure up old feelings of fondness, put them way out of sight until you're ready. Don't torture yourself.
- Pamper yourself! Go out with friends; join a gym; go shopping — whatever it takes to get your mind off it.
- Make an effort to meet new people.
- Renew your spiritual beliefs.
- Go on a few casual dates.
- Take a vacation or day trip with a group of friends.
- Talk about your break up and your feelings.
- Enjoy being single for a while. It can be more fun!

- Have a girl or guy's night out.
- Whatever happens, know that there isn't anything that you alone can't handle!

And finally, hold off for a while on finding a new love, as tempting as it might be. Rebound relationships, while they might initially ease the pain of past loves, are almost always doomed from the beginning. When entering into any type of relationship, it's important to really know the person. In most cases, rebound relationships don't allow that "get-to-know-each-other" period. If you do find someone who sparks your interest... at least take it slow. If it's meant to be, you'll be glad you did! This also applies to getting back together with your ex. If something happened that was strong enough to end the relationship the first time, it's pretty safe to say that the same issues could come up again. If romantic feelings are too strong for you to resist, then follow the same advice for rebound relationships...take it slow! Who knows, you may enjoy that dating stage again!

