Surviving a Relationship Break-up
Counselling Service Tip Sheet

It’s inevitable you are going to feel bad after a relationship ends. Just about everyone, at some time in their lives, experiences this type of pain and loss and it is normal. Healing from a break-up means going through the dumps in most cases. You may feel worse if:

• You didn’t see the break up coming
• It wasn’t your decision to break up
• You still see your ex partner on campus
• It was your first serious romance
• They’ve moved on with another relationship
• They felt like your only real friends

But here are some tips to help you survive your relationship break-up...

Now it’s just me...

It’s important to keep the break-up in perspective. Think about what you still have - your health, your friends and your family.

It may sound corny but try and take one day at a time. And it is often true that a year from now you will feel very differently.
Remember number one!

If you were unhappy in the relationship, try and recall why. If you were happy and they left you, what have you lost if they did not appreciate you? Let someone find you who appreciates you!

What can I do now?

1. Call a good friend or family member and speak to them for an hour or two - your real friends and family will talk to you.
2. If you are really feeling bad, invite your friend or family member to come over for the night.
3. It may help to talk to someone neutral and objective, such as a counsellor.
4. Talk it out or write down your thoughts – this can be a brave and steady way through it.
5. Give yourself some realistic time to get over it – why set time limits?
6. Take gentle care of yourself – eat, rest and exercise.
7. Do some fun things as soon as you feel able.
8. When you are ready, reflect on some of the things you have learnt, given and gained from the relationship.

What not to do

1. Try not to isolate yourself and withdraw from those that care about you.
2. Don’t over use alcohol or harming substances to escape the pain. They will only make you even more depressed and lead to further problems.

Remember those other interests?

You may have spent months or years with your significant other and devoted your energy into making that person happy. In some cases this may mean you neglected the hobbies you had or the friends you socialised with as a single person. Being on your own means having an opportunity to get back into the hobbies that made you smile before and re-establish good connections with friends.

Remind yourself...

1. You are a good person and when the time is right you will meet someone again.
2. You are better off alone than in a bad relationship.
3. The hurt will go away day by day.
4. Remember the last bad relationship you had prior to this one ending. Remember how miserable you felt when you were breaking up then? You probably got over that and with time you will get over this one.
5. The main thing is to take one day at a time.

Rebound relationships

After breaking-up it may be best to look inward and see if there is anything you need to take care of before jumping into a new relationship. You will probably be vulnerable after a break-up and you may be tempted to go for a rebound-relationship so you will not be on your own. It is best to take things slow however, especially during the first month after a significant break-up. Take care of all the things you didn’t do when you were in the relationship. Concentrate on your health, your uni studies, your finances and better relationships will follow.

And when you do enter a new relationship, never forget to nurture your individuality – neglecting to do so may contribute to co-dependence on your next partner and can eventually lead to resentment in both individuals. If you are a whole and happy person in your own right, you will not need a relationship to “complete” you; rather it will be the icing on your cake!

References

This tip sheet was adapted from: Surviving Relationship Breakup (ANU Counselling Service) and http://www.survivingbreakup.com.

More information is available from:
- Relationships Australia (http://www.relationships.com.au)
- Family Relationships Online (http://www.familyrelationships.gov.au)

Acknowledgements

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Please note that this tip-sheet provides information and guidance only - it is not a substitute for professional counselling and support.