

COPING WITH THE LOSS OF A RELATIONSHIP

Trauma and upset

The end of a relationship can be very traumatic and upsetting. No matter how much you tell yourself (or others tell you) to just “forget about it,” you may find that intense emotions and recurring thoughts make it difficult to move on.

Grief

Remember that before you can truly move on, you must first grieve the loss. Ignoring your feelings or pretending that you don’t care will only delay your healing. Grief involves working through a myriad of emotions over time. Eventually these feelings will lead to acceptance of the loss and a desire to move on.

Common signs of grief

- Feelings of intense sadness or pain
- Anger at self or others for causing the loss
- Numbness/inability to feel anything
- Changes in sleep and appetite patterns
- Increased desire to abuse alcohol and other drugs
- Diminished self-esteem
- Social withdrawal
- Slowed thinking/difficulty focusing on studies
- Physical symptoms (feeling sick or nauseous)

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Moving on

The good news is that grief will heal and resolve itself over time. You only need to find healthy ways to express your grief, and then give yourself the time necessary for healing. Here are some ideas:

- Talk with others whom you trust. Tell them what you are going through and ask for their emotional support.
- Start a journal. Spend 15-20 minutes each day writing down some of your thoughts and feelings from the day. Avoid judging what you are feeling or thinking; just put it down on paper.
- Schedule a few sessions with a counselor. Talking things through with a professional may help you put your experience in perspective.
- Allow yourself extra time for usual tasks (remember that completing homework may take longer as your ability to concentrate is diminished right now).
- Get an additional hour of sleep each night.
- Schedule daily physical activity (if possible try something strenuous at least once per week).
- Avoid direct contact with your ex-partner (unless this is comfortable for both of you). Usually such contact will only trigger hurt and anger. If you plan to be friends later, first give yourself time to heal.
- Let yourself cry. Sometimes this is especially challenging for males who have been falsely taught that crying is a sign of weakness. Crying is a normal human expression — don't stifle the tears.
- Be patient! Emotional healing takes months, sometimes years. Give yourself time. You will feel better gradually. You will find new wisdom, and renewed interest in life and relationships.

Need additional help?

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