

Coping with SEPARATION

The end of a romantic relationship can come as a welcome relief, for most it comes as a shock triggering an overwhelming flood of thoughts and emotions.

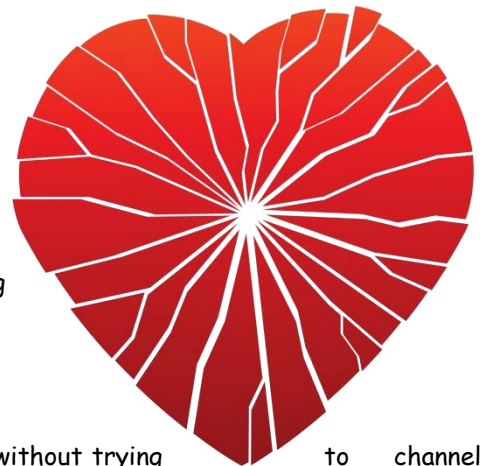
This newsletter offers suggestions on how to cope with the pain and confusion that can follow a separation. To understand the roller coaster of emotions that can follow a separation and to help in recovering from the pain, we refer to G. Streit's stages of the broken heart.

Going Down

After the actual separation an individual may deny the pain. Some fog their emotions by increasing their workload, while others fall into a zombie-like state. Still others hang on to wishful thinking to avoid facing the full impact of the separation. For example - *If only my ex would look at the facts and listen to reason then our relationship will be restored.* When this logic fails the individual may fall into a tailspin of feeling obsessed, haunted, lonely, empty, and exhausted. In panic and desperation the individual plans to check up on the ex's behaviour. Thoughts of love and desire may change to fantasies of revenge. Likewise feelings of sexual urgency and sexual emptiness trade off unpredictably. The broken-hearted individual is prone to accidents, alcohol or drug abuse, depression, and overall neglect of their body.

Going Under

The pain and deterioration has now reached a crisis. This may take the form of an emotional breakdown, trouble with the law, problems at work, or a health emergency. The decision of whether or not to seek help may have been taken out of the sufferer's hands. Now the broken-hearted has to have help. Ideally there is a sense of surrender, or a feeling of hitting bottom that may be a moment of truth.



Going In

In this next stage, the individual starts to accept the feelings and the pain without trying to channel them. This is a time of genuine reflection and of taking emotions as they come. Contemplating the ended relationship takes on more of a feeling of an inquiry into what it all meant rather than an inquest where evidence is constantly rehashed in pursuit of blame, punishment, or reparation.

Going Out

It is now time to return to some old activities and engage in some new ones. Going Out is future-oriented with plans, goals, and dreams. There are still thoughts about the past, but instead of the separation being a problem that had to be explained, it is now (and may remain) more of an unsolved mystery that in its own way has helped the individual to come to terms with their life. The separation may have been humiliating but now the individual feels more human. It is not a matter of being perfect, or even better, but of becoming more whole - body, mind, and soul.

Self Care for a Broken Heart

The broken-hearted are vulnerable and their own negative thoughts can increase their misery. For example, many hold the superstitious thought that - *if I really go downhill (eg lose weight, act depressed, appear suicidal) my ex will notice, realize the wrong they have done, and return to restore me and our relationship.* Note the first suggestion for looking after yourself -

- **Acknowledge that you can make a positive effect in your own life.**

No one will rescue you. There is pain and discouragement, but there is also possibility!

- **Remember it will fade.**

The grief, pain, obsession, longing, and confusion will diminish. Recovery rarely follows a straight line. So even though there may be ups and downs it is important to reaffirm that the overall frequency and intensity will fade.

- **Seek out friends and family.**

Talk with friends and family. Support can make all the difference. Although men tend to have a more difficult time connecting with supportive people, it is essential for them, too.

- **Avoid alcohol and other drugs.**

Abusing drugs may seem attractive but the temporary relief it offers can quickly turn into an additional stress or problem. Also do not misuse drugs prescribed by your physician.

- **Seek outlets.**

Do something - walk, swim, or do anything that makes you feel physically tired. The broken-hearted are prone to prolonged periods of sitting around, brooding, and being physically inactive.

- **Separate your worries.**

Divide your worries into two piles - those you can do something about and those that are outside your control. Eg, it is important to acknowledge that the thoughts and emotions of your separated partner are outside your control.

- **Stop waiting for the phone calls, emails, texts.**

But I really have to know what my ex thinks. You may not need any additional information. If you have asked, and the answer you received was unsatisfactory, then leave it alone.

- **Have a daily routine and stick to it.**

This includes getting plenty of rest, eating well and exercising. It does not include daytime sleeping as a way to escape.

- **Keep decision-making to a minimum.**

Remember, you do not have to change your whole life right away. Do not let others hurry you into decisions you are not prepared to make, especially romantic ones! Watch out for the rebound relationship. Little value and great hardship tend to come to those who rush into another relationship.



The turmoil of separation is not a trivial matter, nor can the suffering be treated lightly.
Feeling whole again brings the same challenges to everyone,
however each individual has their own journey.

YOUR LOGO

For confidential assistance
Brown Crawshaw 1.800.668.2055
www.browncrawshaw.com