

The American Counseling Association's "Counseling Corner" Weekly Columns

Surviving A Broken Heart

from the American Counseling Association

Yes, Valentine's Day has come and gone, but perhaps it wasn't a happy holiday for you. Love may be wonderful, but not every relationship is going to last forever and when the present love of your life announces that he or she is out the door, it's anything but wonderful.

So how does one cope with the loss and pain that a broken relationship usually brings, whenever it may happen? One starting point is the age-old adage to let time be the healer. Give yourself distance from the breakup and you'll also gain perspective. You'll see that eventually your broken heart will heal, but it's necessary to do that healing at your own pace, not someone else's.

But what can you do to handle that initial period of pain? Here are some practical tips to help:

- 1. Recognize this as a loss**, similar to the death of someone close to you. It's fine to mourn, but don't beat yourself up or feel guilty for being sad or angry.
- 2. Acknowledge that the day will come when you will get better.** Time really does heal.
- 3. Take care of yourself physically.** Get lots of rest but don't languish in bed. Exercise. Eat well and sensibly. This is not the time to pig out nor the time for stringent dieting.
- 4. Put structure in your life.** Stick to your regular schedule as much as possible during the week. Make plans for evenings, weekends and holidays.
- 5. Realize you really aren't alone.** Seek the support of others. It's okay to accept comforting but don't wallow in repeated story telling
- 6. Be aware of the rebound.** This is not the time to rekindle old, failed relationships, nor the time to start a new one.
- 7. Forgive your ex-lover. Forgive yourself.** Celebrate the good in the relationship ended, but don't hold on to mementos from it. They can keep you stuck in the past. Honor what you had, then let it go. Accept that when something's over, it's over.
- 8. Reaffirm yourself.** Accept it's okay not to be in a relationship and that you are still a good person.

Taking these simple steps can help minimize that pain and put your life back on a positive, solid footing. And one day soon you will be able to commend yourself for your courage and your survival. You made it! And hopefully, come next Valentine's Day, you'll again be a participating member of the relationship celebration.

Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org.

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