

# Breakup & Divorce Recovery

## Recovering From a Breakup or Divorce

In an ideal world, relationships end with open communication by both partners. Both people are invested in sharing their disappointments, unmet needs, anger, fear, and sorrow. They can acknowledge the loss that is taking place and grieve together. They can talk about the love they shared, and recognize some ways they helped each other to grow.

*A healthy breakup is not always pretty*—it takes hard work and a willingness by both partners to express and tolerate a range of feelings. It is a process that takes time as both people come to terms with what they want and what they are losing. Above all, it is an honest process that may be quite painful in the short run, but preserves the most important bond—trust—in the long run. When a healthy breakup is allowed to run its natural course, both members of the couple may eventually experience a sense of relief in addition to their other feelings—because despite their pain, they know they have made the right decision.

**Needless to say, many relationships do not end on ideal terms.** Couples must often contend with significant unresolved feelings in the wake of a breakup. Frequently, breakups are initiated by one member of the couple and come as a painful surprise to the other member. Communication gets shut down and the partners may begin to create distance and blame each other. They may show each other only their anger or other self-protective feelings. Even worse, they may try to move on without showing each other any feelings at all. This sets the couple up for significant pain, guilt, and unresolved grief. It will also impair the partners' abilities to enter into healthy, fulfilling relationships in the future.

**People respond to the loss of important relationships in different ways, but here are some common reactions:**

- An initial period of shock or numbness.
- The physical sensations of heartbreak, usually accompanied by acute psychological pain.
- Attempts to deny what happened.
- Sadness, feelings of isolation, and hopelessness about the future.
- Anger.
- Difficulty sleeping.
- Obsessive thoughts about your partner.
- Increased sense of vulnerability.

Recovery from a loss is not a steady incline toward happiness—it is more like a trail with many dips and valleys that makes a gradual ascent to the summit. People can (and often do) get stuck at any stage of healing, usually because they try to avoid their pain by shutting down emotionally

or by starting another relationship too quickly. Others get stuck in a state of constant longing, and are unable to release their attachment to the lost relationship.

Therapy can be helpful for support, for moving beyond stuck points, for expressing the feelings that will help you heal, for identifying your patterns in relationships, and for clarifying your values. I can help you come to terms with what has happened, deal with your pain, understand the breakup process, and commit to a plan for your recovery. Healing from the loss of an important relationship is a painful experience, but it is also a time with incredible potential for growth. If you'd like help moving on from your breakup or divorce, email me or give me a call. I can help you develop a plan that leads to personal growth and keeps you moving forward. I've helped many people through this painful time with support, education, and concrete game planning.