

## Surviving a Breakup: Your Personal Survival Guide

Breaking up may be hard to do, but getting over it can be even harder. When an intimate or long-term relationship ends, you might feel a combination of sadness, anger and loneliness.

Right after the breakup, give yourself an opportunity to vent. Cry, shout, spend a self-indulgent weekend wallowing in memories, and then start thinking about moving on. “Closet yourself up with mementos and talk to everyone about (the breakup),” suggests Sherry Amatenstein, the Dating Doyenne of *ivillage.com* and author of the book, *Love Lessons from Bad Breakups*, “but then you want to let it go as much as possible.”

A breakup is a significant loss and experts concur that a mourning period is important. But take heart—you won’t be miserable forever. Here are some strategies for surviving the loss:

- **Get a “breakup buddy.”** Find a close friend or relative (preferably someone with lots of patience) willing to hold your hand during the first month. If you feel compelled to telephone your ex, call your breakup buddy instead. You’ll have a prearranged shoulder to cry on and someone willing to listen. If you’re reluctant to share your sadness with others, remember that talking will help you move on. Ignoring painful feelings won’t make them go away. “Admit to yourself and a few trusted people that this hurts and talk about it,” advises Amatenstein. “Talking about a breakup is healthy.”
- **Pamper yourself.** Now’s a great time to take special care of yourself. Get a massage. Buy an armful of books and indulge in long, hot baths. Eat great meals. You’ll be sending a message to yourself (and everyone else) that you deserve to be treated well.
- **Think about someone else.** Immediately after a breakup, you should focus on your needs and your feelings. As the days pass, however, give some thought to other people’s problems. Volunteering at a local shelter, joining a literacy project or working with children are all meaningful activities that you won’t associate with your ex. “It can be helpful to think about someone else for a change,” explains Amatenstein. Studies show that volunteer work often alleviates depression, while sharing your talents with a worthy cause provides an instant self-esteem boost.
- **Avoid the rebound.** You may be tempted to jump back into the dating pool—immediately. Socializing with friends is important, but don’t rush into another romantic relationship. If you haven’t healed from the breakup, you’ll find yourself discussing it endlessly with your date or making constant comparisons between the old love and the new.
- **Get busy.** Now’s a great time to focus on other relationships, interests and priorities. Sign up for tennis lessons or take an art class. Make an effort to get in

touch with that long-lost college roommate or friends who've drifted away. Plan to host a family holiday or special event. Lavish time on the people and activities you love most.

If you feel stuck in your grief, consider talking to a professional counselor. Healing takes time, but every broken heart mends. Reach out to family and friends, take care of yourself and start to enjoy your independence.

Sources: [www.ivillage.com](http://www.ivillage.com) ; *Love Lessons from Bad Breakups* by Sherry Amatenstein. Perigee, 2002; *After the Breakup: Women Sort Through the Rubble and Rebuild Lives of New Possibilities* by Angela Watrous and Carole Honeychurch. New Harbinger Publications, December 1999.

By Lauren Greenwood de Beer  
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