

## ***Coping with College Series***

### **Breaking Up—Hard, but not Impossible, to Do**

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Break-ups are painful, stressful situations for college students for many reasons. There's the grief of having a relationship end, the loneliness that follows, and the big hole in your life to fill. Additionally, break-ups frequently create enormous self-doubt and sagging self-esteem.

Although many factors lead to romantic break-ups, the first question many students ask after a break up is "what's wrong with me?" Often, the answer is "nothing". But it sure doesn't feel like it. Especially if your partner couldn't give you a clear reason for the break-up -- and it's really difficult for most people to clearly state why they needed to end a relationship -- it's really easy to blame yourself.

But if you are struggling with poor self esteem after a break up, remember that there are many reasons why relationships don't work out. Perhaps you are at a different stage in your life than your partner. Perhaps you're ready for something more serious and your partner isn't. Painful as that reality is, it doesn't say anything negative about you.

Or perhaps your relationship ended because you had unrealistic expectations. Sometimes break-ups occur when people chase a fantasy of "the ideal relationship". The beginnings of relationships are often extremely exciting and passionate, but this "honeymoon" phase doesn't last forever. When you are deeply infatuated, you are probably "idealizing" your partner -- not seeing who they are, with all the little rough edges. Again, the relationship didn't end because there was something wrong with you, but because it couldn't survive past that initial stage.

Sometimes break-ups happen because people need more time to be sure. Two people can feel very "right" together and love each other very much, but may also feel unnerved about "never" dating anyone else. Many break-ups are about needing time to "be sure". Being sure may mean not dating each other for 6 months to a year, or taking some time to date others. Sometimes couples realize after an extended break from each other that they do want to get back together.

Recovering your self-esteem can be very difficult after a breakup, but there are things that can help. Spend time with friends and others who are supportive. Remind yourself of all the people who do love you and find you valuable. Consider the things you like and value about your own personality and

treat yourself with respect. Remind yourself that it is very common for couples to break up. Very few people marry the first or second person they date. Breaking up is normal part of the journey to find your life partner, not an indictment of your worth. You will need time to grieve this particular relationship, but watch the self-criticism. If it's really hard for you to regain positive feelings about yourself, you can also turn to the Student Counseling Services. Services are free and confidential. Call 438-3655 for an initial appointment.