

"Breaking-up" Is Hard To Do

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Listen to the radio any day, any time and it won't be long before you hear a song about "love gone wrong." Many of you have probably experienced the end of a relationship. "Break-ups" are frequent in college. Partners may choose to attend separate schools resulting in a long distance relationships. Sometimes one partner will change a great deal due to the experiences gained in college. These are just some of the factors that can create stress in a romance.

College years can be a tough time to end a relationship for several reasons. Unlike high school, college life comes without the structure and social ties that are typical in high school. In college you have to find your own connections and make your own way among strangers. Although this can be a fresh start for you, it can also be a lonely time until you get "connected" on campus. The press of classes and work can make it tough to balance relationships, friendships, social connections and other activities. Consequently, sometimes in college our "break-ups" are devastating because we're losing not only a love, but a best friend and a social routine.

The first signs of a "break-up" can often seem like a bad dream as you notice you're arguing more and more, and enjoying your time together less. It's hard to let go when you've invested so much in a relationship. Too often a "break-up" takes its toll on our self-esteem. It's very common to blame yourself when a relationship ends and to think that if only I were sexier, or more interesting, I would still have him or her in my life. "Break-ups" are also hard because they can disrupt your entire social life. The places you used to go, and the mutual friends you shared, can now become awkward reminders of times passed. Worse yet, you may find that you failed to invest enough time in other friendships so you've lost your love and your best friend at a time when there aren't other friends to help you pick up the pieces.

There are several things that can help you survive a "break-up." First, it's important to remember that as bad as you feel now, the hurt will ease with time. Time works to heal emotional pain if you can give yourself time to feel sad as well as time away from the sadness. During the healing process take time to review the relationship. Look at its good points and the places it was less than ideal. There are probably many lessons you can learn about yourself, about what you value in a relationship and about what needs to happen differently next time. Taking the time to review and reflect can turn the hurt into an opportunity for personal growth.

Effective healing is more likely if you avoid jumping into another serious relationship right away. Waiting a few months to give yourself enough time to sort through your feelings and to grieve the loss can help the healing process. Jumping into the next relationship may seem to make the hurt go away, but it usually results in a rebound relationship that ends soon after it starts. Take your time; learn about your behavior in relationships before venturing into another one.

Sometimes relationships end because partners have unrealistic expectations. Perhaps your partner expected you to "make them happy". Those unrealistic expectations can come in the form of jealousy and control tactics, if one partner feels insecure. It's important to learn to be secure and happy on your own if you want to be happy and secure in a relationship. Why? Holding on to your partner by holding them back, whether it's from other friends, or other activities that might help them grow, is a recipe for disaster. This might be an area for reflection after a "break-up" that could really pay off the next time around.

As you recover from a "break-up," it really helps to have friends and activities to help you reinvest in your life. You may feel like withdrawing, but it's wise to try to spend some time with close

friends. If you don't have many friends, begin slowly building friendships. Try to see this as a time to develop new interests, to meet new people and to do things that you'd put off for later like learning how to roller-blade or taking a gourmet cooking class. Good things sometimes come from endings.

Although "breaking up" really is hard to do, there are ways to get through it and to even grow because of it. If you feel you want to spend more time understanding your reactions or finding positive ways to deal with the "break-up," please consider coming into the Student Counseling Services and talk to a counselor.