

# 12 Tips to Heal a Broken Heart

*Take these steps to come through a breakup happier and wiser.*

By [Lisa Esposito](#) and [Deborah Kotz](#) July 1, 2020, at 9:39 a.m.

This article is based on reporting that features [expert sources](#).

**GETTING OVER A BROKEN** heart is never easy. In fact, recent [research](#) suggests that romantic rejection can cause physical [pain](#) and symptoms like inflammation in a way that no other negative emotion – not even anger or fear – can.



(GETTY IMAGES)

It's helpful to face these difficult feelings rather than run away from them, relationship experts contend. Take these steps, more or less in this order, to live well and emerge stronger and happier from those unwanted waves of grief:

1. Embrace the initial heartache.
2. Deal with negative thoughts.
3. Recognize grief vs. [depression](#).
4. Find creative outlets and hobbies.
5. Listen to music.

6. Acknowledge anger.
7. Feel free not to keep in touch with your ex.
8. Refocus on other relationships.
9. Practice serious self-care.
10. Seek help from a therapist as needed.
11. Look back without bitterness.
12. Open your heart to love.

"Grief after the breakup of a serious relationship can be one of the most painful experiences we endure in life," says Anita Gadhia-Smith, a psychotherapist who practices in the District of Columbia and suburban Maryland. "It can be excruciating and debilitating. Not only do we have to work through the pain of the loss of a recent love, but current losses can trigger old grief issues and stored pain and trauma from past losses, as well as childhood abandonment, trauma and loss," explains Gadhia-Smith, author of "How to Heal Emotional Trauma: 7 Keys to Finding Freedom and Self-Worth."

It's actually good to go through the deep despair and bouts of endless tears that result from being dumped, contends author and relationship expert Susan Piver. We should embrace these feelings rather than run from them, she argues in her book, "The Wisdom of a Broken Heart," in which she details her own two-year experience recovering from heartbreak.

### **1. Embrace fraught heartbreak emotions.**

You may be tempted to try and forge past heartbreak, numbing the pain with rebound sex or a gallon of ice cream. Or you may swear off all future relationships. But hardening your heart won't serve you well in the long run. "It takes a lot of courage to be sad, but a fantastic life is not one that is placidly happy," Piver says. With grieving comes increased awareness.

### **2. Deal appropriately with negative thoughts.**

"You may find that negative thoughts creep in after a breakup, causing you to ruminate about what you or the other person did wrong to cause it," Gadhia-Smith says. "If you experience negative thoughts that continue to bombard your mind when you don't want them to, find ways to disrupt the cycle and change your thought patterns."

Meditation is a great way to quiet the mind and help deal with the tendency to beat yourself up, Piver says. Another approach when negative thoughts persist is to get up and do something else. "Take a walk or call someone who's having difficulty and try to think of them instead of yourself," she says.

Simply acknowledging what you're feeling – hopelessness, despair, fear – from a distance without drawing any conclusions will allow your mind to process the grief more quickly and return to a more balanced state, Piver says.

### **3. Recognize grief vs. depression.**

There is often a fine line between the two, and normal heartbreak can sometimes transform into full-blown depression. However, in depression, nothing seems to matter, Piver writes, whereas with sadness, everything does.

Grief involves these stages:

- Denial.
- Anger.
- Bargaining.
- Depression.
- Acceptance.

"In grief, you will move through the different stages and ultimately come to peace," Gadhia-Smith explains. "Depression has less movement between different stages and can simply feel like a heavy weight in your soul that doesn't move. If you are experiencing depression, it is recommended to seek mental health treatment in order to get the help that you need, which usually involves therapy, medication or both."

#### **4. Find creative outlets and hobbies.**

Make a change of pace. Watching a movie, listening to a podcast or [exercising](#) can help you cope with negativity. "Move a muscle, change a thought," Gadhia-Smith says. Try these strategies:

Write the story of your relationship. Do it from the third-person point of view in three different writing sessions, Piver suggests. First, tell about how these two people met and fell in love. Then write about the love story and how it started going south. Finally, tell the story of the breakup. "(It) may sound silly, but it helps you bring a very valuable perspective," she says.

Immerse yourself in [activity](#). Keeping busy can interrupt your lovelorn mindset:

- Exercise that you enjoy elevates your mood.
- Household chores may actually make you feel better.
- Adult coloring can reduce depression symptoms.
- Painting and pottery-making awaken positive creativity.

#### **5. Listen to music.**

Science suggests that [music](#) has a therapeutic effect. (No, not that breakup album with the sad, lovesick songs.) Blare some of your favorite, feel-good tunes to trigger the release of endorphins, lift your spirits and combat stress. Gadhia-Smith details how listening to music helps:

- Music with a high number of beats per minute can energize you and restore your mind.
- Music that you have loved in the past can take you back to better times.
- Classical music can increase the production of serotonin in your brain, known as the "Mozart effect."

## **6. Acknowledge anger.**

Anger is sometimes unavoidable. "If you did not choose the breakup, you're more likely to have anger than the other person," Gadhia-Smith says. "When we feel powerless over others, helpless and out of control, anger can dig deeply into our souls. Take positive steps to process your anger with a therapist and get it out so that it doesn't internalize or poison you or your next relationship."

## **7. Keep in touch – or not.**

You don't need to forgive or forget your ex's past transgressions or stay in touch. In fact, Piver says it's a good idea to remove exes on Facebook or Instagram to keep from obsessing about their every move.

Following an ex on social media and monitoring their posts can lead to unhealthy rumination, Gadhia-Smith agrees. "Keeping in touch with your ex is a very personal decision," she says. "Some people need a clear break in order to heal and resume friendly contact down the road. Others need a clean break forever. And, some are able to stay in touch to help each other separate."

## **8. Refocus on other relationships.**

Reimmerse yourself in other relationships. "Turn to others in your life for love and support," Gadhia-Smith advises. "That's what friends and family are for." If someone isn't particularly sympathetic, look elsewhere, she says: "Go where it is warm."

## **9. Practice serious self-care.**

Regulating your sleep, exercising, eating nutritious food and minding your mental health – including seeking therapy – are all components of "radical self-care" to get you through a breakup, Gadhia-Smith says.

## **10. Seek help from a therapist as needed.**

Consider counseling if you can't get unstuck from any stage of relationship grieving. "Therapy is particularly helpful for sorting out and processing complex and painful feelings," Gadhia-Smith says. "Find someone that you feel comfortable with and allow yourself the opportunity to receive maximum healing from the pain of the breakup."

With therapy, she says, you can move through the healing process more quickly without carrying emotional baggage into the future.

## **11. Look back without bitterness.**

Feeling some kindness toward your ex is the most potent step you can take in your own healing, Piver says. Although it seems counterintuitive, extending your heart to someone whom you have no intention of loving ever again can actually bring inner feelings of stability and peace, she says. You don't need to forgive or forget your ex's past transgressions – the focus is on letting go of anger. She recommends sitting in a quiet, comfortable place and spending a few

minutes wishing yourself well – may you be happy, healthy, peaceful, accepting of myself – before wishing your ex the same.

## **12. Give love.**

Perhaps at no other time than post-breakup do we want love so much, Piver says. But instead of desperately searching, give love, to anyone, in any situation. "That is how you balance the sorrow and rage from the heartbreak you're dealing with – by giving love to whatever situation or person you are interacting with," she says. "That is the secret."

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### **Lisa Esposito, Staff Writer**

Lisa Esposito has been a patient advice reporter for U.S. News since 2014, writing about ... [READ MORE](#)

### **Sources**

#### **Anita Gadhia-Smith, PsyD, LCSW-C, LICSW**

Gadhia-Smith is a psychotherapist who practices in the District of Columbia and suburban Maryland and author of "How to Heal Emotional Trauma: 7 Keys to Finding Freedom and Self-Worth."

#### **Susan Piver**

Piver is a relationship expert and author of "The Wisdom of a Broken Heart."

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