

The way to mend a broken heart

Coming out of a broken relationship hurts. You may feel that joy and happiness will never touch you again.

Fortunately, as people who have travelled this road before can tell you, life does go on and eventually you will be able to create a satisfying life out of your new circumstances.

But first you need to go about the business of rebuilding your life as soon as possible. This doesn't mean launching headlong into a new romantic relationship, as your wounds are probably too raw for that to be the best option.

But nor is turning yourself into a miserable hermit the way to go. You need to establish what your main interested are.

Although people feel a lot of pain through the separation process, this can be a great opportunity for personal growth, though you may not realise it until you look back in a few years' time.

Your own extended family can play a role in supporting you through the rebuilding process. Many people strengthen their family connections at this time, because these are the people who are important to you and who care for you.

Separation is a time that forces you to recognise your true priorities. It is your connection to people – children, relatives and friends – that is the important stuff of life.

Sometimes people realise they have put too much emphasis on the importance of work. The separation makes them reconsider. So while work remains significant, they realise that life outside work also needs personal investment.

Some people can also use work to help them recover from the pain of separation – it gives them stability and purpose when their life is in flux.

People react differently to separation. Some experience depression, deep sadness and the inability to take part in life. If someone is sad, teary and upset for a long period, they need professional help.

Other people who may be in need of outside help are those unable to let go of the broken relationship.

Many people benefit from taking part in group programs, rather than personal professional counselling.

Organisations such as Relationships Australia have courses in issues involving separation, such as one for men on separation and parenthood, where blokes can come and talk about what's going on for them.

The course helps them form new social connections within the group, which can help them with rebuilding their lives.

Other people of both sexes might attend a program on rebuilding lives, which lasts for four or five sessions and helps people adjust to their new circumstances.

A sympathetic GP will have some idea of what is around that can help you. Using the computer to do an internet search on separation and divorce can also give you information that can help. There are also many good books available on the topic, check with a good specialist or generalist bookshop.

One of the most valuable resources is a good friend. The way to help a separated person is to make yourself available to be active with them.

If you have been friendly with both parties of a separation, and want to remain friends with each, make sure that each person knows that you are available for them.

There is a very Australian story about a newly separated man and his neighbour. The man was still finding the whole separation process difficult.

His neighbour called in and said: "I know you're going through a bit - I'll mow your lawn." Just this simple offer of practical help was a real boost to the separated chap, because he felt that someone cared enough to help him out.

Survival tips

- **Start rebuilding your life immediately by reassessing your interests**
- **Don't rush into another romantic relationship too soon**
- **Lean on friends, and get some professional help if it all seems too hard**