

Searching the soul

Tony Gee and Julie Houghton

AS THE kids go back to school and life returns to its usual pattern, people often think about where their lives are going.

Which relationships are important to me? How do I start a new relationship if I am now separated? How do I know when I'm ready and if I even want another romantic relationship?

These are questions people often ask themselves once the shock of separation has subsided.

Just as every person is different, the need for a relationship will also differ.

If the separation was traumatic, the thought of starting a new relationship may be too much to bear.

Or if life is a bit empty, you may be wishing for someone to fill the void.

The right answer for most people is somewhere between these two extremes.

Though some people are perfectly happy with a hermit-like existence, most people yearn for the intimacy of a successful one-on-one relationship.

But diving headlong into a new relationship in order to fill a void and forget the pain of a previous break-up rarely works.

It's important to spend some time reflecting on why the previous relationship foundered and how you might avoid that in future.

It's a good idea to examine what attracted you to that now-defunct relationship — were you unrealistic about what you thought you would get from it?

Were you simply mismatched personalities?

If you don't do some soul-searching you risk taking this emotional baggage into the next relationship, which is then also likely to founder.

But if you take the time to work through these issues with a counsellor, a separation group such as those at Relationships Australia or even with a good book on the subject that gets you thinking, there is a good chance you won't make the same mistakes again.

Diving straight into another relationship soon after the previous one ends is not the best thing to do, but neither is hiding under a rock forever to lick your wounds.

Sometimes you have to take a risk and embark on a new relationship when the time is right.

So take things slowly, do some soul-searching about what went wrong and your part in it, and learn from your mistakes.

Then you have a better chance of a successful future romantic relationship.

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Survival tips

- It's important to find out why previous relationships failed before you embark on a new one.
- Once you have done this soul-searching, don't be afraid to take a risk with a new relationship.
- Take things slowly and you have a good chance of a successful future relationship.