

Why Breaking Up Is So Hard: Factors other than love

We all know losing that emotional connection with someone we love hurts and our emotions can be overwhelming after a breakup. We may feel lost and unsure of what to do next to start the healing process. However, the first step to healing is often understanding what is actually causing the hurt. While love is a major factor, there are actually many other factors that create our painful experience of a breakup. By understanding all the different factors involved, we can slowly start to unpack our sense of being overwhelmed and tackle our healing one step at a time.

Which of the factors below are you currently experiencing?

Attachment- We are neurologically wired to form relational attachments. This starts as an infant when we are completely dependent on our primary caregiver for safety, basic needs, and emotional soothing. As we get older, we are not as physically dependent on others, but our brains are still wired to find a primary attachment for our emotional needs such as validation, love, and security. When this attachment is severed, it can be very painful even if the relationship was not very healthy or did a poor job of meeting our needs.

Forced to recreate our sense of self- Often we may start defining our self by our relationship or develop new habits to better fit with our partner which can lead to us losing who we are as an individual. In an unhealthy relationship, we may have felt that we had to give up or sacrifice parts of our own self just to please our partner. After the relationship ends, we may feel empty or like we are unsure who we really are. With time we can get to know our self again and start living as our most authentic self.

Loss of the partner's potential- We often fall in love with the potential we see in our partner even if the relationship is not currently working as well as we would hope. We have hope that one day our partner will turn in to someone who can successfully meet all our needs. We may have to reflect on how much of what we feel grief over is really the reality of the relationship and how much is over the potential or fantasy of what might have been. It is important to remember that the idealized version of our partner or relationship may never have been destined to come true even if the relationship lasted longer or you did everything correctly.

Grief over the loss of the dream life- We often dream about our happily ever after and see our partner as a crucial part of this dream. We may have to rework what our dream happily ever after may look like in our new situation.

Loss of routine- We often feel more comfortable when we have a routine and know what to expect. Often our partner provides us with a certain amount of structure and stability, and a breakup can mean the end of certain routines and a lot of change.

Losing our main support/best friend- Often our partner was the one person we talked to every day and who we have the most shared activities with. Sometimes we may even let other relationships drift off because we were so focused on our romantic partner. At first, losing our main support can create a sense of having a huge void in our lives, but with time we can strengthen our support system to fill in the gap.

The shame of failure or not being a good enough partner- It is common to wonder what we did wrong and want to learn from our mistakes, but a relationship ending does not necessarily mean we did something wrong or that we are not a person of worth. There are times that both partners were good people, but just not a good fit for each other. Even if we did make a few mistakes, we still have personal worth and can learn to be a better partner.

Fear of being alone- There may be many reasons that we do not like to be alone. Often, our partner was one of our main distractions from the things we rather not focus on. While not having a distraction can be uncomfortable, it is also a great opportunity to face our issues and grow as a person.

Fear that we may never find a stable partner and be alone forever- Sometime right after a breakup, we have a hard time imagining that we will ever find love again, but often with time, we realize that we are able to move on and find a new love interest.

Practical concerns- The end of a relationship may mean increasing financial struggles, moving, or having to take on increased responsibility. While these challenges could be difficult in the best of times, it may seem even more overwhelming while in an emotionally charged state of mind. However, with a positive mindset, you can tackle each issue one at a time to find the best possible solution.