



BLOCK. DELETE. GET THE ICE CREAM

There's no getting around it: Breakups are terrible, even if they're handled with compassion. They can shake you to your very foundations, causing you to question your confidence AND your faith in love itself. If you've been broken up with, you're grappling with the very real pain of rejection on top of mourning a lost love. When you're the one who chose to end things, there's often guilt swirled into your sadness. Even in the most amicable, mutual situations, a split is an ending—and in a culture that emphasizes "forever" as a relationship goal, we're made to feel like an ending is a failure.

In reality, breakups are often the shattering preamble to a new-and-improved life (one that can eventually include a relationship with someone you're more compatible with). But in those first few brutal days and weeks, you've got every right to feel inconsolable. In time, though, you *can* move onward and upward. Here's a few ways to start feeling better fast.

Allow yourself time to grieve.

No matter the circumstances of your split, your feelings are valid and processing them is a journey in itself.

"You're losing a big part of your life when you break up with someone. They are a friend, a lover, a confidante and maybe a housemate," says Charly Lester, dating expert and CMO of Lumen, a dating app for people over 50. "They've probably been a daily feature in your life for some time, and you need to grieve that loss almost like you would a death."

Tess Brigham, a therapist and life coach based in California, agrees. "It's okay to feel sad one day, mad the next, in denial the day after, and back to feeling sad again."

Consider deleting your ex's number—for now, anyway.

Maybe the two of you said that you'd stay friends. A post-breakup friendship may well happen in time, but "time" is the key word here. Very few exes make a seamless transition into friendship immediately (and if you think you've done it, see what happens when one of you starts dating someone new).

"If the breakup was instigated by the other person, delete their number from your phone, so you aren't inclined to contact them," Lester says. It'll help you avoid the dreaded drunk-dial and eliminate the impulse to send ill-advised texts.

Protect your heart with a social media purge.

Whether you're scrolling through old photos of happier times or hitting refresh on your ex's profile to analyze every update, Facebook and Instagram can be pure poison for the brokenhearted.

"Trying to decode if your ex is happy when he or she posted a picture from brunch is just going to make you feel bad about yourself," says Brigham.

No matter what an ego-wounded ex may tell you, it's *not* unkind to unfollow them; feel free to block them in the name of mental health. You can also choose to "snooze" a Facebook friend for 30 days by clicking on the three dots in the right-hand corner of a status update, so they won't appear in your feed for a month (you'll still need the willpower to avoid checking their profile, though).

"The same goes for their friends and family," Lester suggests. "If you think it's just going to make you obsess over your ex's every move, mute or remove them from your social media."

Don't contact your ex unless absolutely necessary.

Are you sensing a theme here? Distance is tough, but crucial. Moving logistics and figuring out shared dog-custody is one thing; calling or dropping by to get that one sweatshirt you "need" is another. DO NOT DROP BY.

"It isn't going to help your healing process, and the quicker you can adjust to life without your ex in it, the better it's going to be for you," Lester explains.

Schedule plans with friends.

"In the early days after a break-up, you're likely not to feel great, so try to distract yourself as much as possible," says Lester. "Make plans with friends so you don't have time to wallow."

Book a dinner date with your best friend—and if it turns into an hours-long hang, all the better. If you're the type to neglect non-romantic relationships when you're in love, come armed with an apology (and the intention to never do that again). You might throw your energy into forging new friendships, too.

Before you dash off those invites, remember to strictly stick to buddies who make you feel like the best version of yourself, instead of those who don't. Your heart is like a wounded baby animal right now, and it needs to be pampered!

Make a breakup playlist.

Music has a powerful effect on mood, which is why the breakup mix is a key part of your post-parting toolkit. When you find yourself adrift in a churning sea of emotion while driving to work or rage-cleaning your apartment, let the breakup playlist be your constant.

As for what to put on your mix...that's intensely personal. According to a 2016 study, listening to sad music is a source of comfort for some, while it makes others feel worse. If you know from

past experience that moody songs will soothe you, go for it. Otherwise, you'll want to step away from that Adele album, pronto.

Consider energizing talk-to-the-hand jams that make you feel...well, "Good As Hell," to quote a Lizzo song. "Truth Hurts" is another excellent option—and so are all of these perfect breakup songs.

Return to the things you love doing, but they didn't.

Remember how Indian food used to be your favorite, but your ex nixed that takeout option every time? Order curry tonight and enjoy the taste of sweet freedom.

"When we meet someone new and start spending a lot of time with them, some of our favorite activities can easily slip away," Brigham says. "Now that the relationship is over, it's time for you to start practicing daily yoga, bike riding, board gaming, whatever it was that made you happy that you might have put on the shelf while you were together."

Lose yourself in a good book.

Is there a better (and more affordable) form of escapism than an absorbing read? Put one in your tote and head to the park or a coffee shop—it'll get you out of the house, and you never know who you'll strike up a conversation with about the page-turner in your hands.

Need recommendations? Start with 13 books that'll help you heal after a breakup, or make your way through every Oprah's Book Club pick ever.

Keep it (and yourself) moving with a new workout.

Exercise helps your body get a shot of mood-lifting endorphins and serotonin (you can listen to that breakup playlist while you work out!). And if you've never had a fitness regimen before now, that's okay: A recent study suggests that starting today can still yield major benefits, including a lower risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and early death. Besides, it's difficult, if not impossible, to weep your way through an entire Zumba class.

Travel and explore new places.

Enter a new headspace by exploring a new location. It doesn't need to be a lavish, *Eat, Pray, Love*-style solo trip, either: Start by switching up your route home, or check out a restaurant the two of you never went to.

"When you're in a relationship, it's easy to get stuck hanging out in the same places, doing the same things," Brigham points out. "Push yourself to explore parts of the city you've never been in or take a weekend trip by yourself to somewhere you've been meaning to visit but haven't had the time."

Do not get a "breakup haircut."

Or, at least wait a second before getting bangs for the first time in your adult life. Same goes for quitting your job, getting that tattoo that seemed brilliant last night, and all other major life changes.

According to Lester, it's best to write these urges down and revisit them a few weeks later. "Your emotions are likely to be running high, and you might not be sleeping or eating in a normal way, which can affect your judgment."

Resist the urge to obsess and fume over what went wrong.

"We learn a lot about ourselves through our relationships—both the good ones and the not-so-good ones," says Brigham. That said, "going in circles and feeling angry and resentful isn't going to help you learn about yourself and what you want in a relationship. It's going to keep you stuck in the problems of the past."

Try to accept that the relationship ended for a reason and focus on picturing what you'd like to give and receive with your next partner, instead. Meditation and therapy are two ways to let go of anger about the ways you were wronged (and definitely skip bringing the topic up on future dates). And speaking of dates...

Don't rush into the dating game too soon.

If you *do* find yourself ranting about your last relationship while on a Tinder date, that's a clear sign that you need more time, Lester says.

"While meeting new people can be a great way to realize there are plenty more fish in the sea, you don't want to be sobbing about your ex over drinks," she adds.

Rethink your definition of "closure."

It isn't that there's no such thing as closure. It's that too many phone calls, DMs, and "one last talk" coffee shop meetups are committed in the name of achieving it, when all you're actually doing is reopening a wound. True closure only comes with time.

Lester breaks it down like this: "In my experience, there are two scenarios. You either get enough time and emotional distance to be able to look back and appreciate why it didn't work, or you end up with an 'eclipse effect.' That's when you meet someone else so amazing that they completely eclipse all your previous thoughts of your ex."

Finally, when you're ready, forgive.

"Forgive yourself for mistakes you made in the relationship, and forgive the other person," Brigham says. "We don't forgive *for* the other person, we forgive for ourselves."

Letting go of the bitterness will help you find that friendship with an ex eventually, if you both want it. More importantly, it will help you move forward.