

Rebuilding after separation and divorce

TIP SHEET

Relationships Australia WA's education team have developed a range of tips to help support you during difficult times. As a free resource, we encourage you to share this with your community.

Are you going through the breakdown of a love relationship? If so, you are probably finding it a challenge, one way or another. You may be experiencing hurt, anger, fear, confusion or loneliness. Perhaps you are feeling guilt or other intense emotions. This is natural and to be expected.

To work through these emotions and feel better about yourself and situation, there is an adjustment process.

Here are some suggestions to help you navigate that rebuilding journey.

1. Remember, rebuilding is a process and a journey

Accept that if you are in the early stages of dealing with a relationship breakdown, you may be a little in denial around what has happened. This can be a natural mechanism for protecting ourselves from being overwhelmed by a multitude of painful emotions. However, if we get stuck in this stage it can restrict our capacity to attempt recovery and adjust to this change. If you are stuck, recognise it and seek help.

2. Explore where your grief is coming from

A relationship breakdown is a significant loss. You may be grieving for your former life which probably had some positive aspects. Not only are you grieving the loss of your former relationship, but also the hopes and dreams associated with it. Sometimes we don't know exactly why we feel so bad about our situation, so working out which painful feelings predominate and identifying what aspect of the breakdown hurts most, can help us make sense of things.

3. Deal with feelings of loneliness

When a love relationship ends, feelings of loneliness, and the thought that this might be never-ending, may be overwhelming. We often reach for alcohol or other ways of numbing the pain. This is counter-productive. One approach is to try and fill the void with exercise, healthy activities and making new friends. Another approach is to write a journal, put into writing your thoughts and feelings.

4. Recognise your self-worth may be impacted

A relationship breakdown involves losses, and with it, we often experience a loss of self-worth. Many have invested so much of themselves in the love relationships that when it ends, their feelings of self-worth are impacted. Recognise that this is usually temporary. Embrace this as a hard time in your life, particularly if you are on your own, rather than pretending you are fine. Be kind to yourself. Now is a good time to start or continue with counselling, therapy or group work - as you rebuild your self-worth, you will be rebuilding your life.

5. Don't be tempted to go back to your former love partner

You are simply prolonging the recovery process. The temptation may be easy, and you might see the relationship as your former comfort blanket, but it is not helpful for your rebuilding journey. Clinging onto it will only delay and draw out the agony.

Distract yourself when you have those urges. If you feel the need to talk it through, then this might be the time to seek counselling. Consider the consequences of clinging on, rather than just reacting to your feelings.

6. Learn from the past

When you feel strong enough to reflect on the past, you will be able to learn from the experience. This in turn will help you avoid repeating choices or patterns of behaviour that were not helpful.

7. Don't be tempted to re-partner too quickly

Many people seek a new partner as soon as possible, believing that this will be the quickest way to end their pain, or just to get back to some sense of normality. Rebuild your life first, process your emotions, learn lessons from your experience, and only then seek new relationships because you want one, rather than need one. Move into a position of power, rather than reacting from a place of desperation!

8. Re-align your purpose and find productive things to do

Work on a hobby you've always wanted to start or do some online studying. Perhaps there are things your former partner discouraged you from doing, even though they linked to your passions. Now you may have the time, and more importantly, the freedom to do what you want to do!

9. Acknowledge the silver lining

The COVID-19 pandemic has helped us re-discover how meaningful human relationships are to our well-being and sanity. As a recently separated or divorced person, now is the time to commit to making any future relationships you might embark upon be ones that are healthy, safe, fruitful and mutually beneficial.

As we journey through these challenging times, please reach out for support and connection amongst your community or if you'd like further support from Relationships Australia WA you can call us on 1300 364 277.

Our Education team are continuing to facilitate Relationship Australia WA's seminars, workshops and courses face-to-face and online.

If you'd like to register your interest in attending a course on [Rebuilding after separation and divorce](#) or any of our other courses, please email education@relationshipsaustralia.org.au or call 6164 0200.