

# Rebuilding after separation and divorce

## TIP SHEET

*Relationships Australia WA's education team has 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 – a separation, divorce or the ending of a significant long term relationship? If so, you are probably finding it a challenge, one way or another. You may be experiencing hurt, anger, fear, confusion or loneliness. Maybe you are feeling guilt or other intense emotions. This is natural and to be expected.

To work through many of these emotions and feel better about yourself and your situation, there is an adjustment process. Our eight-week Rebuilding after Separation and Divorce course takes you through this process. As well as benefitting from learning in a group with others and sharing common experiences, the course also covers some of the key stages to rebuilding your life.

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

### **1. 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 experiencing some 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 – not only 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 are predominant and identifying what aspect of the breakdown hurts most, can help us make sense of things.

### **3. Dealing with 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, but 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. Our self-worth is knocked**

A relationship breakdown involves losses, and with it we often experience a loss of self-worth. Many people invest so much of themselves in their love relationships, so when they end, their feelings of self-worth are damaged. It's important to 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. See the previous relationship as your former comfort blanket, but remember it is not helpful for your rebuilding journey. Clinging onto it will only delay and draw out the process, so try to 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.

#### **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 in retrospect 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 grief, or just to get back to some sense of normality. Focus on rebuilding your life first, processing your emotions and learning lessons from your past experience. 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 real passions? Now you may have the time, and more importantly, the freedom to do what you want to do!

#### **9. Acknowledge the silver lining**

2020 was a year for re-discovering 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 or Divorce**, or any of our other courses, please email [education@relationshipsaustralia.org.au](mailto:education@relationshipsaustralia.org.au) or call 6164 0200.