



THE POST-BREAKUP SELF-CARE WORKBOOK

How to cope with breakups from toxic,
abusive, and codependent relationships.



SelfLoveRainbow

Post-Breakup Self-Care

Today we're going to talk about broken hearts and how much they absolutely freaking suck. Specifically, your broken heart, and maybe sometimes mine. So, you've just had a breakup, you're struggling to get over one, or you see one looming on the horizon and you know that when it hits you it's going to hit you hard.

My expertise is the nuclear explosion of toxic relationships.

It's a great superpower. (Not it's not – WORST superpower ever)

For whatever reason (actually, I can list many) I tend to be drawn toward turbulent relationships and breakups that are even more so.

I'll use my last relationship as an example. My partner medicated bipolar disorder with substances. Throughout our three-year relationship, we probably broke up at least 100 times. That's not an over-exaggeration. "I'm done." texts were quite common from both of us. Our breakups lasted a day or two and then we'd get back together, and the cycle would repeat. Again, and again and again.

I wish I had been able to break the cycle.

When it comes to relationships many of us have to reach this magical point of done-ness before we are able to walk away and let go. "Done" looks different for all of us. There's always that last straw and most of the time we don't even know what it is before it hits us.

My last straw and magical point of done-ness was my partner wanted me to buy them a phone. I had bought them three phones before. Given countless loans that were never paid back. Been cheated on, lied to, berated, and literally traumatized to the point of mental breakdown but phone #4 was just that bit too far.

My mother told me to leave. All my friends told me to leave. Strangers on the internet told me to leave. But it took that one moment on a warm summer day that the link broke.

Did you have a magical I-am-done moment?



That's a very important thing to understand. It's something I want you to understand. Many of us don't leave when we see the first red flag and it adds so many layers of complicated feelings.

Relationships, especially toxic ones, abusive ones, and codependent ones, often have a quality of emotional addiction – and we'll talk more about that later. But for many of us – it is so hard to leave – even when we know we should.

And it's harder to stay gone.

The guilt, the blame, and often as much as we hate to admit it – difficulty moving on are common emotions.

That's its own kind of horror – being unable to move on from a relationship that wasn't even good.

I struggled with that the most. Here I was writing about self-love, and I was allowing myself to be in the textbook definition of a toxic codependent relationship. How?

These relationships affect all types of people but especially people who have experienced childhood trauma. It's rooted in fear of abandonment and a desperate desire to simply be loved.

This workbook doesn't just explore the healing process of these types of breakups, but it also asks you to go deeper and explore your past hurts while also embracing all of the wonderful things that are ahead of you.

Types of Breakups

To provide a basis for this work, I want to first talk about the different types of breakups, even if the breakup wasn't necessarily romantic or trauma-filled.

This is a good starting point on how to move forward from each type of situation. (So is therapy - I highly recommend it!)

The best self-care during any type of breakup is to focus on your needs. What do you need right now to make the situation okay for you?

The Mutual Break Up



Things just are not working out for either of you. You've drifted apart. You've talked about it, you're on the same page, and you've decided together that it's best that your relationship end and you go your separate ways. You might part with very little animosity, or it might be an "I hate you." "I hate you too." type of situation.



Self-Care for Mutual Breakups

Initial distance is always a good idea, for both of you. If you're able to, have an open and honest dialogue about how you can move forward in a way that's healthy for both of you. Talk about communication expectations.

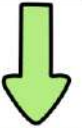
Are you parting ways permanently or are you planning to keep open lines of communication? Does friendship down the line seem possible or likely?

Focus on getting back to you! Do the things that make you happy and make your interests, likes, wants, and needs your top priority.

Ghosting

The dreaded Ghost. Your partner didn't just break up with you - they went radio silent.

They stopped contacting you, blocked, you, and never told you why. There's no ending, no goodbye, just an abrupt and complete absence of communication.



Self-Care for Ghosting

This type of breakup can trigger so many feelings of abandonment and a whole lot of "what did I do wrong and why wasn't I good enough?"

It leaves you wanting a type of closure that you aren't likely to get and that sucks. How do you move on when there's so much you're holding inside and there's no place to put it?

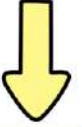
Share the feelings somehow. Don't keep them bottled up and don't brush them off with an "I didn't mean anything to them, so they don't mean anything to me." - type of attitude.

Write those feelings down, just for you. In a journal, in a letter, in the "Notes" app on your phone so it feels like texting. You never need to share the feelings with another person if you don't want to but find a way to get them out so that you can process it all.

Don't buy into the thoughts that say that you're worthless or unimportant. If your former partner chose to end things this way it's about them, it's not about you. Try to find closure within yourself. Accept that you may never receive an explanation or apology and focus on finding your own sense of closure.

The One-Sided Breakup

Unrequited love is hard to deal with. Your heart isn't ready to let go but your partner is. You have all of these feelings of love and want and hope that are specifically for one person and now you're just left with all of these feelings and nowhere to put them.



Self-Care for One-Sided Breakups

Turn all of that love and devotion toward yourself.

Seriously. As much as you love them and as much time and energy you were putting into your relationship (and wanted them to put into you) – reflect all of that back toward yourself and to your life.

Give yourself permission to mourn the loss of the relationship and the future you envisioned.

With grief comes a whole slew of emotions – anger, anxiety, sadness, let yourself feel it and self-soothe through it.

It's natural to feel a deep sense of sadness, so allow yourself to grieve the end of the relationship and the emotions associated with it. Don't put pressure on yourself to move on or get over it. It takes as long as it takes and that's okay.

Limit contact with your ex-partner to allow yourself space and time to heal even though that hurts. Setting clear boundaries can help you avoid falling into a cycle of hope and prolonging the healing process.

The Blindside Breakup

You thought everything was okay and then out of nowhere, the breakup happened. When one partner suppresses their feelings or doesn't know how to express them, blindsides happen.

It's the culmination of repressed feelings that explode. This can leave you reeling, especially if you feel like you never had the chance to "fix" whatever your partner felt was wrong in the relationship.



Self-Care for Blindsiding

Your initial reaction will probably be to try to fix whatever was wrong. Whatever made your partner break up what you felt was a happy relationship (or at the very least one that can be worked on) has to be fixable and you have to be the one to fix it.

It's not on you to carry that burden.

If your partner wants to try to fix things as a cohesive couple, that's one thing, but if you take it upon yourself to fix it by yourself, it's just going to give you more heartache.

You are allowed to share your feelings. You are allowed to be angry. You are allowed to feel betrayed. Allow yourself to feel all of your feelings.

When you find yourself turning to the "I need to fix this," focus on re-framing those thoughts instead.

"I cannot fix things by myself."

Complete Betrayal

Complete betrayal usually comes in the form of cheating or an otherwise breach of trust.

The immediate feeling we have toward ourselves is "Why aren't I good enough?" or "What did I do to make this happen?" and of course - "Why did I let myself trust?"

Self-blame is natural, poorly directed, but natural.



Self-Care for Complete Betrayal

Focus on your self-talk. Monitor all of the thoughts that go through your head and don't be afraid to correct them if they enter the realm of self-blame or meanness.

Reassure yourself over and over again that you are good enough and you were always good enough.

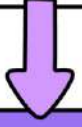
Find healthy ways to cope that focus on healing. Journaling, art therapy, practicing mindfulness, engaging in physical exercise, or spending time in nature and of those things can either help you process or calm your soul a little bit.

Focus on understanding and healing trust issues. When something like this happens, your foundation is undeniably fractured. It will be hard to regain trust in other people but also in yourself.

And because it can shake your foundation really allow yourself to notice how it has changed you.

The Final Straw

Things haven't been good in a long time, and you were always fighting about something. Things finally reached a breaking point and now it's over.



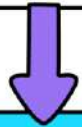
Self-Care for The Final Straw

When coming from toxic relationships and environments, especially if there was a lot of fighting, it's important to focus on your sense of peace and safety. You can become so used to toxicity that it becomes your norm.

Take stock of how that buildup of negativity has affected your life. Focus on calm, peace, and a relaxing atmosphere.

Survival

In abusive relationships, the end of the relationship is often an act of survival. Abuse escalates and it becomes more and more dangerous to stay. It's difficult because you want to believe that the person you love will change and stop hurting you and for your own safety you have to leave.



Self-Care for The Final Straw

Focus on healing your wounds, the physical and the emotional. This is a time for you: to love yourself, to take care of yourself, and to keep yourself safe. Therapy is a great option, but if that's unavailable, get support in other ways like support groups (online or in person). You can't heal from abuse while alone and in darkness. Healing happens with love and support.

The Back-and-Forth Breakup

Yo-yo relationships are exhausting. They're so full of up-and-down emotions. Breaking up and then getting back together in this endless cycle. The fighting, the making up, the period of calm, and then it falls apart all over again.

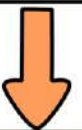


Self-Care for the Back-and-Forth Breakup

Your brain can become used to those dramatic surges of emotion and it can be quite damaging. During the breakup, it's important that you commit to ending it for good. You deserve healthy and stable relationships.

Still Together but Not

Sometimes breaking up is not as easy as committing to no texts and phone calls and not seeing each other. If you've been together for a long time, it's incredibly hard to break up in the "traditional" way. If you're also financially dependent on one another and unable to separate your living situation that makes breaking up even harder.



Self-Care for Still Together but Not

Boundaries are going to be your theme for this period of time. It's important that the two of you come together to talk about your boundaries and then that you create boundaries within yourself. Boundaries on your time. Boundaries on your space. Boundaries on your finances. Start to detach yourself from the life you had together.

What type of breakup did you have?



What factors led to the breakup?

How did the breakup happen?

What was the hardest part of the breakup?



What things are you the saddest about?

What are you angry about?



What do you miss about your ex?

What things do you NOT miss about your ex?

Are there any thoughts you can't get out of your head?

What unresolved questions would you like answers to?

What do you wish you knew before the relationship?

How did this relationship/breakup change you?



What did your life look like before the relationship?

What was right about your relationship? What was wrong?

What needs did you sacrifice to keep your ex happy?



What would you tell someone going through a similar breakup? 

Do you see any patterns in your relationships or breakups?

Are there any red flags you tend to ignore or excuse?

What have friends/family said about your ex/relationship?



What would you do differently in your next relationship?

If you could say anything to your ex, what would it be?



List all of the reasons you broke up.



Breaking Up: What Are Your Struggles?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Missing your ex | <input type="checkbox"/> Letting Go |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your Self-Esteem | <input type="checkbox"/> Doubt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loneliness | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Overload |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jealousy | <input type="checkbox"/> Guilt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anger | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Hatred |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Numbness | <input type="checkbox"/> Depression |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rejection | <input type="checkbox"/> Hope |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confusion | <input type="checkbox"/> Regret |

Describe how you're feeling in as much detail as possible.

What do you need right now?

Healthy Love vs Unhealthy Love

It's so important to be able to identify the unhealthy aspects of your relationship. Here are some traits of healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Healthy Relationships	Unhealthy Relationships
Mutual Respect	Ignores Boundaries
Honors Boundaries	Resents Personal Growth
Encourages Personal Growth	Lies and Manipulation
Honest & Clear Communication	Walking on Eggshells
Willingness to Compromise	Feels Controlling
Grows Together	Lacks Compassion
Works Through Problems	Feelings Ignored & Invalidated
Feels Safe	Cycles of Breaking Up
Affirms Feelings	Focuses on Blame
Focuses on Conflict Resolution	Destroys Self-Esteem
Respects Independence	Lacks Trust
Knows Love Languages	Feeling Powerless
Full of Trust & Honesty	Isolating

What traits do you see in your past relationship?



Abusive Relationships

Let's talk about abuse in the context of relationships. It's important to differentiate abusive relationships from your run-of-the-mill bad relationships.

You would think that the worse a relationship is, the easier it is to leave, but it's usually the opposite.

Many people can break up amicably, feel sadness - anger - guilt and then move on.

Toxic and abusive relationships often have long and drawn-out breakups that are psychologically damaging.

Let's look at what an abusive relationship is so that you can acknowledge the things you experienced and focus on a deeper kind of healing.

It can be hard to come to terms with what is abuse or what is abusive. We can sometimes display abusive behaviors but that doesn't always mean we are abusive or in abusive relationships.

Either way, a relationship that displays abusive tendencies or abuse, is not a healthy one. Even the things that we sometimes romanticize like extreme jealousy and possessiveness are in reality damaging.

When relationships like these end, we need to be able to start healing and the first way to heal is to face it: call it what it was - abusive.

Abuse happens in all types of relationships and with all types of people. It's not gender specific and can happen to anyone.

Here are the different types of abuse.

Physical Abuse

This is the most commonly recognized type of abuse because it's the one we can see.

Hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, physically restraining, hair pulling, and pushing.

Using size or body mass to physically intimidate.

Invading physical space.

Grabbing the face, arm, wrist, or shoulders in an aggressive way.

Self-Care

The first step is realizing that the behavior is wrong and that you didn't deserve it, instigate it, or cause it. It wasn't your fault.

Secondly, if you and your ex have to make any contact, for kids, belongings, financial responsibilities - make sure to do those things in a public place or through an intermediary.

Realize that sticking around (or going back) wouldn't have made anyone change.

If your ex bothers you or pushes boundaries, consider a restraining order or an order of protection.

♥ Have you experienced this in any of your relationships?



Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse can be harder to spot and it's also one that we so easily make excuses for. "They were joking. They weren't serious. Maybe they're right, gaining weight *has* made me unattractive." Here's what it looks like:

Tearing down your self-esteem with what may sound like helpful advice or constructive criticism. Belittling you or your achievements. Making false or unfounded accusations against you. Constantly dismissing or minimizing your feelings or experiences and blaming you for all problems or issues.

Saying mean or hateful things and playing it off as joking, especially when you've expressed that it hurts you or bothers you.

Emotionally punishing you when you do something "wrong" by withholding affection or ignoring you. (Some people need space to process. It is abusive when it's specifically about inflicting pain on you.)

Self-Care

Talk to someone who can reassure you of your own strengths. Surround yourself with loving and supportive people. Focus on your self-talk. Mantras and affirmations can be helpful.

You have to unravel the things that you've been led to believe about yourself.

Are there any ways you've been emotionally abused?



Verbal Abuse

Verbal abuse is a form of emotional abuse where your partner uses words and language to control you, hurt you, or demean you.

Here's what it looks like:

Name-calling, slurs, and using derogatory words at you or to describe you.

Treating you like you are stupid or inferior and questioning your intelligence.

Insults, critiques, put-downs, or negative comments.

Humiliating you, mocking you, or degrading you either in front of others or in private.

Using lies, threats, or guilt trips to control you, punish you, or scare you.

Self-Care

Much like healing from emotional abuse, focus on creating a support system that builds you up.

Reframe the mean things that you hear in that voice. Remind yourself that you are not those things. Use mantras and positive self-talk to start unraveling those words and beliefs. Make a list of all of the *good* things that you are.

What hurtful or demeaning things did you hear in your last relationship?

Verbal/Emotional Abuse Sounds Like

(Trigger warning: these are examples of abusive statements to help you recognize and identify abuse. It's okay to skip reading them if you're not in a good headspace)

"You're such a loser, you can't do anything right."

"You look awful, why don't you ever make any effort to look nice?"

"You're so pathetic, everyone laughs at you behind your back."

"It's your fault that I lost my job, you always make me look bad."

"You're cheating on me, I know it. You're always lying to me."

"You're always messing up. You never do anything right."

"You don't deserve my love, you're lucky I even talk to you."

"You're crazy, that never happened. You're just making things up."

"You're not going anywhere unless I say so. You don't make decisions without my approval."

"I don't like your friends, so you're not seeing them anymore. Your family is a bad influence, so you're not talking to them."

"If you leave me, I'll hurt myself. If you tell anyone about this, I'll make your life a living hell."

"It's your fault I'm angry. You always provoke me."

"Look at everything I do for you, and this is how you repay me?"

"I'm too stressed out to deal with you right now. Take care of it yourself."

"Your promotion isn't a big deal. Anyone could do your job."

"I'm not going to console you every time you're upset. You need to toughen up."

Breaking Down Verbal/Emotional Abuse

Take any of the above examples that sound familiar to you or put in any of your own, and then argue against them. Counteract the abuse with some self-love, compassion, and truth.

Financial Abuse

Financial abuse is all about power and control. A financial abuser will control all of the finances by telling you not to work so they are the only ones pulling in money and you are dependent on them. They make it difficult for you to have or keep a job by sabotaging you. They might give you a strict allowance or refuse to give you any money.

They take control of joint finances by taking your paychecks, not letting you see their spending, and being secretive about finances while insisting that you account for everything you spend. They may also guilt, lie, and manipulate you into giving them money.

The goal is often to ensure that you are completely dependent on them so that you can't leave or on the opposite end that they rely solely on you, so you'd feel guilty for leaving.

Self-Care

Get your financial confidence back! Start saving for things that you want and budgeting for your life in a way that works for you.

Look into getting a financial advisor or credit counselor to make a plan for moving forward and to understand your rights and options.

Regain your financial independence. This might involve finding a job, going back to school, or starting your own business.

What were your finances like in your relationship?

Mental and Psychological Abuse

Mental and psychological abuse often happens in the form of mind games. The abuser will purposefully try to alter their victim's reality. The most common form of this is gaslighting - trying to convince you that something happened a way that it didn't happen. Calling you crazy or mentally ill so that you doubt your own sanity.

Isolation from friends and family is also common. They try to convince you that they are the only ones that care about you so that your only support system is them.

Self-Care

Rediscover your support systems. Surround yourself with friends and family that will build you up. If you were alienated from them during your relationship, it might be uncomfortable to reach out to them, do it anyway. Work on remembering and celebrating your personal strengths and the things that you used to love about yourself.

I always recommend therapy when you've gone through something like this because it involves constantly having to re-orient yourself to what is/was real and what wasn't, and it helps to have professional navigation.

Start journaling and write down your experiences. It can help you recover from doubting reality and validate your experiences.

Mindfulness exercises, such as meditation or yoga, can help you stay grounded in your own experiences and reality.

Have you ever experienced gaslighting?

Digital Abuse

In today's age, there are new avenues of abusive and controlling behavior and it centers around social media.

Here's what it looks like: Getting jealous over social media posts. Hacking into your account. Getting angry if you don't give over messages. Secretly tracking you on your phone. Reading your messages or emails without permission. Threatening to share sensitive photos or videos online.

These are all forms of digital abuse and are serious red flags. If you felt afraid to post on social media, that's a problem.

Self-Care

Consider changing your passwords, usernames, and updating your security settings. Many apps and websites can show you what devices are currently logged into the account, and you can log them all out at once.

Temporarily disable your social media accounts or create new accounts if you feel you might be harassed. Make your accounts private and only available to people you trust. Block your ex.

Change your Cloud password and make sure there aren't any suspicious apps on your phone. Make social media your own again by cleaning up your profiles and posting what you want.

Document everything and keep a record of abusive messages and posts in case you need a report for law enforcement.

Have you experienced this type of behavior?



Sexual Abuse

No means no, even when you're in a relationship. Sexual abuse can include forcing you to do things you aren't comfortable with, not listening to boundaries, or using sex as a weapon. Shaming you in a sexual way, insulting you in a sexual nature, or sharing photos or videos without your consent is also abuse. Not all sexual abuse is violent, it can be coercive and manipulative.

Self-Care

Being able to open up in a sexual way again can take time. Be gentle with your journey. If you're having a tough time, therapy can help.

It's okay if you struggle to want to be intimate. It doesn't mean you're broken, it's just a place to start healing and recovering. Remind yourself that your body is yours to be enjoyed by you and it belongs to no one else.

Reconnect with your body through yoga, dance, or physical activity.

Regular self-care activities that involve physical touch, like taking a warm bath or applying lotion, can help you feel more connected to your body in a positive way.

Therapeutic touch, like massage, can help you become more comfortable with physical contact in a controlled, safe environment.

Have you ever experienced sexual abuse in a relationship?



Psychological Abuse in Relationships

You might know it as Narcissistic Abuse, but I prefer to call it psychological abuse. It has become a hot-button topic in the last several years. It also plays a part in many relationships, especially complicated and emotionally abusive ones. I want to touch on this subject more because it's so important to be able to recognize these signs so that your personal healing isn't compromised.

Psychological abusers are selfish in a way that looking back seems obvious but while you're in that kind of relationship it can seem well-intentioned or innocuous.

My last ex was a psychological abuser. She struggled with alcohol abuse and at the time I was lured in under the guise of needing to help/take care of her. I ignored that everything was always about her. We never really talked about me. After three years together she honestly couldn't remember the name of my website.

I was never allowed to have a negative feeling. It always got turned around on me. I was making her upset. I was stressing her out. She wasn't "doing this right now". Whenever I wanted to talk about my feelings I was shut down. If I confronted her about her drinking, she would break up with me and stop speaking to me for a short time. I financially supported her for almost the entirety of our very on-off-again relationship. Even when we weren't together, she would guilt me into paying her bills because I would be "ruining her life" or threatening her sobriety when I refused to.

The thing about psychological abuse is that it takes the things that you are and then it twists them so that you exist for another person. It's about giving them attention, meeting their needs, and never complaining about it because if you do then you must not love them.

Most abusers (psychological and otherwise) are very charismatic. They're great storytellers and they often come off as sympathetic. In their world, if you don't love them then you are the enemy. You feel sorry for someone like that and think: "I will be different and show you that people are good and loving."

And then this happens:

Sabotaging your friendships or other relationships. Making it difficult to do your job. Getting jealous of your accomplishments.

Constant lying to avoid responsibility. Never being at fault for any issues in the relationship. Turning all of the blame toward you.

Making you out to be bad or crazy at the end of the relationship. Changing the narrative so that they are the victim in the relationship.

Gaslighting

Gaslighting is making you disbelieve your reality or making you feel like you're crazy or forgetful. They may tell you that you're remembering things wrong or that something didn't happen when you know that it did. I had to keep screenshots of texts, or my ex would deny entire conversations and tell me that I was crazy and delusional.

Love-Bombing

They also do this thing called love-bombing. They will be sweet and adorable and meet your needs and the instant you do something they don't like it's all taken away from you.

You'll get yelled at, or complete coldness, and it's almost a type of behavior training - you learn what not to say or do because there will be consequences. You remember what it feels like when they are being kind and loving - so you spend all of your time trying to be worthy of that behavior again.

Devaluation

Devaluation goes hand-in-hand with love-bombing. They create high-highs and low-lows as a means to control you.

It might look like punishing you when they don't get what they want. Breaking up with you or threatening to, blocking you, giving you the silent treatment, bullying you, accusing you of not caring about them, and being a horrible person.

Then they love-bomb you by giving you all of the love and attention you want until they don't. Then the cycle repeats.

Emotional Blackmail

This looks like threats to hurt themselves, blaming you for things in their life that you have no control over. Telling you that if you don't do something for them something bad will happen to them and it will be your fault.

Exploitation

Taking advantage of you. Asking you to do something and then taking credit for it. Pushing past your boundaries when you've said no. Guilting or manipulating you out of money.

Triangulation

Bring another person into the dynamic (real or imagined) to create competition and breed insecurity. For example, they might compare their partner unfavorably to an ex. "My ex never had a problem with this."

They also might (falsely) turn someone into an enemy for you two to "fight" together.

Projection

They often project their own negative behaviors or feelings onto others. For example, accusing you of cheating, being selfish, or not loving them.

If you experienced any of those things, write about them.

Self-Care After Psychological Abuse

♥ Work on becoming comfortable talking about yourself. Abusers often love to have the focus on themselves, so it can be difficult to re-learn how to celebrate yourself or your accomplishments.

♥ It can be hard to voice critical opinions. We are so used to extreme negative reactions that we become very non-reactionary in situations that a "normal" person would speak out against. Work on finding your voice again.

♥ Be selfish. Revel in selfishness. You need to re-learn how to allow yourself to be the center of your own universe. You're allowed to make it about you and not feel bad about it.

♥ There's a pretty good chance that traits like empathy and compassion were used against you at some point. It's hard to get over the fear of falling back into those emotional traps. We shut down emotionally as a form of self-preservation. Work on slowly learning to trust your heart and intuition.

♥ In new relationships, you might have trouble expressing your boundaries for fear of emotional punishments you received in your former relationship. Work on your boundaries and believe that they deserve respect.

♥ Your abuser will often try to isolate you from your friends and family as a way to control you and force you to depend on them and only them. Use this time to reconnect with anyone you've grown apart from and be open to finding new friendships.

♥ Embrace your freedom. Abuse is an emotional cage. You are now allowed to feel/think/be however you want to be now. Let that sense of freedom back into your life.

💖 Let go of their voice in your head. When you have those thoughts, you might have to forcibly re-direct them. Thoughts like, "You are worthless. Everything is your fault. You are stupid." Need to be directed to something positive and empowering. You've put up with enough, give your mind a rest.

💜 Do emotional regulation work. Focus on balancing your emotions now that you're out of a situation with intense highs and more intense lows. Seek out activities that give you a sense of peace and well-being.

When abusers love-bomb it's followed by devaluation. Love-bombing is when they do everything right. They are attentive and thoughtful and loving and the "perfect" partner.

Devaluation often comes out of nowhere or as punishment. It's silent treatment, insults, breaking up, or coldness. These kinds of up-and-down surges in emotion can seriously mess with your emotional balance and your mental health. If the relationship was a long one, when it's over, your brain might even mistake those up and down surges as what "love" feels like, and then you seek out similar relationships and the cycle repeats itself.

💜 Yoga and meditation can help with emotional regulation and also feeling safe and calm within your body.

💙 Find a support group. Dealing with this kind of relationship holds so much shame and guilt. Understanding that others have dealt with the same types of things can help you work on forgiving yourself or the guilt/shame associated with it.

💚 Acknowledge how brave and wonderful and resilient you are to have survived this relationship. You are on the path to healing, and you will get there. You are not broken.

What did devaluation (punishment) look like in your relationship?

What things do you miss about your relationship? What was the negative side of those things?

What about yourself (and relationships) do you have to unlearn?

What about yourself do you have to rediscover?

What did this relationship take away from you?

What effect has gaslighting had on you?

Have any of your other relationships/friendships been affected?

What emotional wounds do you have to heal?

Codependent Relationships

Now let's talk about codependent relationships. A codependent relationship is one where one or both people have an extreme emotional dependency on the other person. One person needs the other, and that partner needs to be needed. It's also sometimes referred to as a relationship addiction.

Some codependent people jump from relationship to relationship very quickly and others become so destroyed by a breakup that it takes them a long time to recover.

There is often one person who is an extreme giver and the other person who is an extreme taker.

In a healthy relationship, both people are a priority and both people can express themselves and their feelings. In a codependent relationship, one person tends to have no identity outside of their partner. They feel responsible for their partner's emotions or behaviors and may go to great lengths to fix their partner's problems or keep them happy, often at the expense of their own happiness and well-being.

Low self-esteem is often the culprit. You believe that you are somehow unworthy or unlovable, so the person who shows you love and affection is like a God. People in codependent relationships often grew up deprived of love and affection. They see relationships as a way to fill that void and feel safe and loved.

Losing a relationship for a codependent person is especially traumatic and devastating. It's not just losing a relationship; it's also losing a part of yourself. It triggers feelings of abandonment and often brings up other emotional trauma that has gone unhealed.

Signs of a Codependent Relationship

One person feels responsible for the other's feelings, well-being, and problems to the point of neglecting their own needs.

Even when your partner hurts you or ignores your needs you stay because you can't imagine being with anyone else.

There is a constant state of anxiety due to always wanting the other person to be happy.

Conflict is avoided at all costs and there is a lot of difficulty in saying "no."

You feel guilty for thinking of yourself or expressing needs, especially if it is at odds with what your partner thinks or feels.

One person is dealing with addiction and there is an element of enabling – either consciously or subconsciously.

It's hard to make decisions on your own even about things that wouldn't affect your partner.

Arguments are avoided at all costs, or you easily acquiesce to what your partner needs or wants.

You may grow to be resentful of all of the things you do for your partner, but you still do them.

A lot of your reasoning is simply "because I love them" and your need to express that love compromises your values or principles.

You do a lot of things you don't really enjoy, or all of your interests revolve around your partner.

You feel like the more you sacrifice or give to your partner, the higher your value is as a person.

You get jealous of other relationships, even platonic or family relationships because it makes your partner need you less.

You have to know where your partner is at all times and become anxious or angry if you're spending time apart.

You tend to date people with severe issues, people who need "saved", or people who you want to "change".

Your mood mirrors your partner's mood 99% of the time.

You have thoughts of self-harm or suicide at the thought of being without your partner.

It's hard adapting to your partner changing or growing.

You may feel trapped in your relationship but also fear the thought of being without them.

You neglect your physical, emotional, and mental health while taking care of the other person.

Codependency might not sound "that bad" after all, you just want your partner to be happy and you'll do anything to achieve that.

The reason that it's problematic, especially when breaking up, is that the codependent person feels like their life is completely meaningless without their person in it.

The breakup feels absolutely devastating in a way that your average relationship wouldn't.

I am a recovering codependent. In my first two relationships, it was extreme. I didn't think I could live outside of those relationships.

In codependency, you need to be wanted. It is a compulsion. It's all that you think about and all that you want.

What signs of codependency did you see in your relationship?

Self-Care After Codependency

The first thing I want to acknowledge is how hard this is. How hard all of this is for you. The breakup, the heartache, all of it. Overcoming codependency will shift your entire life but it will also be worth it.

Self-care is usually pretty hard for codependent people because the focus is on you – and that's a strange concept. You are so used to giving all of yourself – your love, energy, affection, thoughtfulness – to someone else. It's your superpower.

And here I am, asking you to give up this amazing superpower. It helps you feel wanted, needed, and in control, and that's a hard thing to give up.

To give up your value.

And that's the goal in your self-care now – to see your value in other ways. Choose a new superpower.

The first step is creating a self-care practice around the things that you need. Self-care at its core is the simple act of meeting your needs. That's it. Sometimes that's easy stuff like taking a break or giving your sore feet a massage. Other times it's hard stuff like breaking toxic cycles.

It's about creating a better and happier life for yourself.

Commit to meeting your needs. Right now. I want you to make a promise to yourself that you'll do that.

♥ Discover who you are all over again. You get to go on this beautiful journey of self-exploration, and it probably feels terrifying. It can be beautiful if you let it. Focus on the things that you love. Movies, music, tv shows, clothes, hobbies – this phase of your life is going to be all about you.

💜 Figure out how to heal what attracts you to codependent relationships. I recommend therapy, or if that isn't possible, then some in-depth journaling. Find out where you began to place value on yourself by making other people happy first. It often comes from a lack of love, nurturing, and attention growing up. Abuse, rejection, and abandonment also usually play a part. Food for thought: When was the first time you felt like you had to sacrifice yourself to feel loved by someone else?

💜 Be honest but also have empathy for yourself. You have to develop the skill of calling yourself on your own BS. Are you putting yourself and your healing first? If the answer is no, then why not? Are you still letting your past relationship have control over you? Are you still swooping in to save the day where your ex is concerned?

💙 Practice working on boundaries. If you do anything – do this. It will serve you well in all relationships moving forward. Your first self-care assignment. Learn to say “no” and learn to say it often. You are not required to do everything that is asked of you. If something makes you uncomfortable: no. If something makes you feel uneasy in a mental, emotional, or physical way: no. If you simply don't want to: no.

💚 Analyze all of your other relationships. Codependency doesn't just happen in romantic relationships so it's important that you take inventory of your other relationships.

With parents, friends, your job – are you so busy trying to please them that your own needs aren't being met? If you tend to be a people-pleaser, work on saying no. While difficult at first, your other relationships will be healthier for it.

💛 Redefine your self-worth. Challenge the beliefs you have about yourself. Challenge the perception that you are only “good” when you are making people happy. Challenge the thought that you are only lovable when other people love you.

🧡 Focus on receiving. You are so used to giving that it's often hard for you to receive. You feel like you're putting people out, that you are being a bother, that somehow taking from someone else is bad or wrong, even when it's something offered. You have to unlearn that behavior. You have to learn how to let others give to you.

💜 Validate yourself. You are worthy and wonderful and kind even when you aren't bending over backward for other people. You are an amazing human being and making one person happy is not all that you're good for.

💜 Be assertive. When you get used to meeting your own needs with self-care, you'll slowly be able to convey your needs to others. “I'm feeling x right now, so I need y.” practice this! Learn how to voice your needs to the people around you. If that makes you feel afraid it might be time to reevaluate your friendships and relationships.

💜 Codependents often feel a lot of shame and guilt regarding not meeting another person's needs. You feel selfish. That's why it's important to understand what selfishness is.

Being selfish is putting your wants over another person's needs all of the time. Putting your needs over someone else's wants is not selfish. Your struggle will be to define what is a “want” and what is a “need”. A good test is to ask yourself: will this affect my mental, physical, or emotional health in a negative way that is greater than the positive effect it will have for the other person?

💙 Create a world around yourself that you are in love with. It's important to create a safe, stable, and comfortable life around yourself that is of your own creation and reflects who you are. You tend to create a world centered on your partner, it's time to create one centered on yourself.

💚 Codependents often tend to be enablers. This means you help negate the consequences brought on by someone else's behavior. You make excuses, smooth things over, or turn a blind eye. If you find yourself paying bills because your partner spends their money on non-essentials first, or you keep taking a cheating partner back, or you always apologize for their bad behavior - what you're doing is showing your partner that there are no negative consequences for the negative things they do.

💛 Have fun! After my relationship, I found it extremely hard to just relax. I had spent so much time being "on call" that I forgot what it was like to not feel like at any moment I would have to drop everything to take care of someone else. Let go of that feeling of having to be something for someone else.

🧡 Your breakup is about you, not your ex. I want you to repeat that again and again. It doesn't matter how they feel, it doesn't matter what they want, or how they are handling things. Your natural instinct will be to "fix" whatever they are feeling/thinking/experiencing. After the breakup you might feel the need to reassure them, check in with them, or hang out with them if they miss you.

Alternatively, you might be the one reaching out because you're used to feeling like you need their validation or attention.

Remember that this breakup centers on you and your needs and while it may feel like you need love/attention/validation from your ex- the truth is you have to find those things within yourself.

♥ Redirect your brain when you think about your ex. When your identity is so encompassed by someone else it's hard to stop that connection in your brain. After this kind of breakup, it's natural to feel almost a kind of obsessive thought process about your ex. You may be reliving the past or constantly wondering what they are thinking or doing.

Self-care is the answer. You have to redirect your thoughts. Find an engaging hobby, preferably a new one, so that you are forced to think about what you are doing. Distract your mind with books, music, games, apps on your phone, wonderful friends – anything that redirects your mind to something positive.

Why do you think you find yourself in codependent relationships?

List your positive traits or qualities without referencing something you do for someone else.

Do you find any aspects of codependency in your other relationships or friendships?

What boundaries do you want to create in your life?

What do you want your life to look like now?

What self-care are you incorporating into your life?

What are your needs right now?

What is the biggest thing you're struggling with?

Now that you've broken up, what urges are you having trouble with? (Reaching out, seeking contact, need for reassurance)

What do you want to remember when you feel the urge to reach out to your ex?

Breakup Emotions: False Acceptance

There is no one way to experience the emotions of a breakup. Not everyone feels everything on the spectrum of emotions and there's really no linear way to travel through them.

They come as they come.

Several at once, sharp spikes of one or another, and some emotions last for days or weeks without end.

False Acceptance/Shock

If your relationship was toxic or one that was strife with a lot of intense and negative emotions, often the first feeling will be a lifting of this heavy weight on top of you. It feels good. You feel good. And confident. And like you made the right decision.

It's similar to suffering a serious wound. Your brain cuts off certain processes, so you don't feel the pain of it and floods you with endorphins instead. Often the False Acceptance phase doesn't last long. You eventually come crashing down as everything sinks in.

Self-Care

Don't make any important decisions in this phase. Focus on grounding yourself. Give your emotions the time to settle. Try not to be impulsive but instead focus all of that energy on self-care.

At the beginning of each day try to make a to-do list and account for as much of your day as possible. Then try to do those things so that you're not left with long stretches of time when you're thinking about the relationship.

Repairing the heart is a long process, don't try to rush it.

Write about those initial days of your breakup. What emotions did you feel and how did you handle them?

Breakup Emotions: Doubt

If you were the one to break it off, or even if you weren't - chances are you're having doubts about everything. Did you make the right decision? Are you doing the right thing for you and your family or are you making a horrible mistake?

Should you fight for your relationship, or should you let it be?

Doubts are natural. All big life decisions are scary. We always say to listen to your intuition and listen to your heart. Sound advice in most situations. In breakups?

Listen to your brain. The decision to part ways was made for a reason - often a logical if emotional one. Don't doubt your judgment even if you haven't fully committed to trusting yourself. Know what you need in a relationship and know what you deserve.

Self-Care

Make a list of reasons why you ended the relationship. If you're in an off/on-again relationship, then every time you're "off" write down the things that ended it this time.

Sometimes we have to see a record of what's causing us so much pain so that we can stop sweeping it under the rug and doubting ourselves.

Talk to your friends about your feelings. They can provide a different perspective and remind you of why the breakup was necessary.

Remember that just because it hurts, doesn't mean it was the wrong decision.

Remember what brought you to this workbook and started you on this journey of healing your heart.

What doubts are you having? What do you want to remember when the doubts overwhelm you?

Breakup Emotions: Self-Hatred

This is another common emotion, either you feel terrible for breaking up with someone or you're wondering what's wrong with you because you were broken up with. What's so messed up about you that someone would leave, cheat, or otherwise treat you badly? There must be something. You must be broken. You must be unlovable. If they cheated, then there's a constant internal comparison on your not-good-enough-ness.

You take all of this energy from the breakup, and you direct it toward yourself because you need someone to blame and often it's easier to blame yourself than someone you're still in love with. It gives you that small sliver of hope that if you fix whatever is wrong with you then maybe you'll be able to fix the reason that they left you.

Self-Care

Self-hatred solves nothing. Self-healing does. If you take fault for the breakup due to cheating or from anything else, instead of steeping in self-hatred do a moral inventory. Proactively work on those things inside of you. Do you self-sabotage because you're afraid of being loved? Did your anger or jealousy issues cause your partner to feel unsafe?

Sometimes we are at fault. I've been guilty of that. In my early 20s I was a pretty angry person and as much as I hate to admit it - I was pretty verbally abusive. Very verbally abusive. And controlling. In my second relationship, I completely destroyed it. And it was 100% fair of them to break up with me.

I had to take responsibility for that, and I did. I started working on my anger and my (lack) of coping skills and I got better and was able to move forward.

The best self-care is creating a you that YOU love.



What self-hating or blaming thoughts are you having?

Breakup Emotions: Denial

Are you checking your phone for that apology text or sending them while hoping that it changes something? It's hard to believe that it's over *over*. You're waiting for something to click into place so that they realize that they want you back.

You start to minimize what led you to break up. It wasn't *really* that bad. It wasn't really worth breaking up with them or them breaking up with you.

♥ Self-Care

If you can't stop waiting to get back together, whether because it's a pattern or because you're desperately wishing that it's not really over, take a minute to read through the reasons why broke up.

Then occupy your mind - do something, anything, (not destructive) that keeps your mind off of things.

Just focus on getting through the next 10 minutes and then the minutes after that.

What excuses have you made for the behavior or breakup?

Breakup Emotions: Anger

Anger is also a natural reaction to a breakup. Whether that anger is directed at your ex, yourself, or life in general, it's hard to process it without having someplace to direct it. You'll likely want to direct it toward your ex.

I used to be the Queen of Angry Breakup Messages. I thought that if I could just unleash the anger inside of me, I would feel better. I would feel empty or numb and that's what I desperately wanted. Sometimes it would accomplish that (for a little while) and sometimes it would let me feel superior (also for a little while) but really it just hurt me to be hurtful and angry.

Self-Care

Channel your anger somewhere else. Sing loudly to angry songs. Take up a physical activity that makes you sweat. Do logic puzzles that keep your mind occupied.

Write angry letters that you never send. Feel your anger but don't let it control how you act. You're in the driver's seat.

What (healthy) outlets can you give your anger?

Going No (Or Limited) Contact

One of the most important things you can do after a breakup is to go no contact. I know. I know.

It's probably the last thing you want to hear. It's also essential to your healing process. You have to take this time to focus on your own thoughts and feelings without the opinions and feelings of your ex.

This is the hardest step for many reasons. It feels so permanent. It is you absolutely and definitively making up your mind that this is over. And that's a heavy and hard thing to do - to just let it be over.

Even when you break up, there's often that hopeful part of your heart that says but... but... but... and if you cut off contact, you're extinguishing that hope and that's so hard to let go of. Humans want hope.

But what if you can't cut off contact? What if you have kids together or you still have to cohabitate, or you're still relying on them for financial support?

Then you do what you can do. You cut off as much contact as possible. If you need to talk about kids, then you talk only about kids. You set boundaries and you stick to them like your mental health depends on it. Often it does.

Going no contact is like cutting off any bad-for-you substance. You're going to struggle, doubt yourself, and you're going to want to give in. Don't.

I'm the kind of person that always wants to have the last word in an argument and my ex knew that. After we'd break up, she'd bait

me into a conversation - usually by accusing me of something outlandish. I just couldn't let it sit. I would have to defend myself and once that door is open it has a way of staying open.

Or you get heartfelt apologies. How do you ignore apologies? Or they invite you to come over and hang out and while you know that's probably the last thing you need emotionally - there's that pesky little thing called hope. Which again, is why cutting off contact is one of the hardest things to do.

That leads us to the Big Bad Block.

If you're going through a breakup - especially from a relationship that was fraught with toxicity, abuse, or codependency - the best thing you can do is block your ex in as many ways as you can. Let's talk about that.

Blocking was hard for me. I resisted it for as long as I could after the relationship ended (almost 6 months). My ex would often text me that I was the only person in her life that cared about her or cared about her sobriety. I felt guilty into being there for her because I had convinced myself that I was the tenuous barrier keeping her from self-destruction and addiction. (Despite evidence that with or without me it didn't make much difference)

We'd have friendly conversations where I'd try to be supportive and then would come the hook. She'd tell me she missed me or that she still loved me, and she'd wait for a positive response. When I wouldn't be receptive, she'd go off on me and be emotionally abusive. Repeat cycle.

When I finally blocked her, I felt a sense of panic. How was I going to know that she was okay and not falling deeper into her addiction? How was I going to get an apology or closure for the last batch of abusive things she had said?

I had to face the fact that it didn't matter. Closure -that I was likely never to get anyway - didn't matter. Sacrificing my mental health and my time to be friendly toward her - was damaging. Having her in my life, even as a friend, was damaging.

That's what we have to weigh it against. Is it damaging to our mental health to keep this person in our life? The answer is almost always yes.

This is my advice: Unless you need to communicate with them, block their number and cut off contact.

There's nothing that they can say that will magically make you feel better in the long term.

You trick yourself into believing that you need that line of communication. You don't.

If you feel guilty for cutting off contact, then give yourself 30 days of no contact and then see how you feel. Explain to them that this is something you need for your own mental health. Your mental and emotional health matters.

What's your first reaction when you think about going no contact?

The Social Media Breakup

Now that we've talked about going no contact with your ex for your own wellbeing we need to talk about social media.

There's every likelihood that you will be tempted to check up on your ex through social media channels. You may tell yourself that you are checking to make sure they're okay. Or maybe you want to see how quickly they're moving on. Or maybe it feels like a compulsion and if you just take an itty-bitty look - you'll feel better. Or if their life looks like a train wreck it will make you feel validated.

I'm going to tell you something you probably don't want to hear.

Looking at their Facebook profile won't make you feel better.

I speak from experience. So much experience.

Let's call it what is - Self-harm. How do we combat that? Self-care.

There's a very important question that I want you to ask yourself frequently: Is what I'm doing for my own healing?

Not their healing - yours. Not what makes you feel better in the short term but what is good for you in the long term.

In toxic, abusive, or codependent relationships - blocking is your best option. It's the one that will keep you safe - mentally and emotionally.

You also might want to consider changing the privacy settings of your social media to friends only so that your ex isn't able to look at your feed from a different account in an effort to gain control over you.

If you have a lot of mutual friends, I'd even consider making "lists". On Facebook, you can split your friends into different groups which makes it easier to share your posts with a select number of people of your own choosing. You can also "unfollow" mutual friends - meaning their posts won't show up in your timeline and you'll be less likely to see reminders of your ex.

If you're going through a fairly civil breakup, you might feel able to keep the breakup social media friendly. Unfriending can be seen as an aggressive act and maybe that's not something you want to do - consider using the "unfollow" or "mute" options on social media.

They'll never know, and it will give you some space to focus on other things without their face or posts popping up in your feed and making your heart ache.

Facebook Memories. If you're worried about your ex and all of your memories popping up in your Facebook memories, you can change what you see by changing your preferences for People/Dates.

Try to resist the revenge posts. I'm just as guilty as anyone of the "I'm so happy, life is so great, glad I'm finding myself again posts" that are specifically created in the hopes that *somebody* might be looking at your profile or in the hopes that a friend of a friend tells them how great you're doing. And then there's the "I look so good today this is what you're missing" selfie.

When you're recovering from a breakup, remember that it's a type of recovery. Do what is for your greatest good. If social media is harming more than helping, then take a social media break.

The No Contact Check-List

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No Meeting Up | <input type="checkbox"/> No Phone Calls |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unfollowing on Social Media | <input type="checkbox"/> No Social Media Creeping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No Social Media Messages | <input type="checkbox"/> No Physical Contact |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No Text Messages | <input type="checkbox"/> No Emails |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid Mutual Places | <input type="checkbox"/> No Contacting Mutuals |

Which ones are you struggling with?



Have you given in at all? How did it make you feel?

What feelings are you experiencing?

30-Day Post-Breakup Challenge

Focus on basic self-care. Food, water, fresh air.	Get a journal and write.	Put all photos and mementos away.	Make a playlist of feel-good songs.	Work on creating a new daily routine.
Plan a day just for yourself.	Make self-care your focus for the day.	Wash your bedding or get new blankets.	Vent to a friend about how you feel.	Redecorate the area you spent the most time in together.
Watch/read /do something that makes you laugh.	Do one thing that physically wears you out.	Go some-place new. Get out of the house.	Give yourself a day of pampering.	Go on a cleaning spree of your space.
Have a movie night. Invite friends if you want.	Rediscover something about yourself.	Reach out to old friends and reconnect.	Do a meditation for healing your heart.	Have a day full of your guilty pleasures.
Set a new goal for your life.	Search for a book or blog to inspire you.	Make space for new beginnings.	Add one new thing to your wardrobe.	Enjoy doing something your ex didn't like.
Practice gratitude in your life today.	Buy something to make your space cozier.	Channel your energy into something positive.	Focus on a bedtime routine of winding down.	Make a list of the positives in your life. 

Post-Breakup Self-Care

-  Focus on your basic self-care. Start from the ground up. Make sure that you are eating, sleeping, and getting enough water.
-  Let yourself cry. You are grieving. You are allowed to be an emotional mess. Allow all of your feelings to be felt.
-  Don't seclude yourself away. It's good to give yourself time after a breakup but make sure that you aren't completely isolating yourself.
-  Self-compassion is key. Stop being so hard on yourself. Be kind to yourself physically and emotionally.
-  Rearrange your surroundings. Make it more "you" and less "us". A bit of your favorite color can help.
-  Get rid of things that stir up memories. You don't have to throw them away right now if you aren't ready. You can box it up and put it in the closet.
-  Pamper yourself. Do something that relaxes you and makes you feel new and shiny afterward. Have a spa day, buy a new outfit, or buy new jewelry or makeup.
-  Create a new daily routine. Fill in those gaps that used to be couple time with things that nourish you and distract you.
-  If you feel the need to eat your feelings, do it with a friend! It will keep you from going overboard and you'll have someone to talk to.
-  Put things into perspective. While you have lost a relationship, you are also making room for something new and beautiful in your life. There is more space for joy.

💚 Do something that makes you feel passionate and proud of yourself. You can volunteer, start working on a new project, renew a goal that you've neglected, or anything else that gets you excited.

💙 Go on a cleaning spree. Make your personal space sparkle with love as you clean. Focus on clearing out the negativity. Scent your space with calming essential oils or new candles.

💜 Enjoy something your ex didn't like. A tv show, a restaurant, or a type of food.

💜 Make sure that you are recovering from your breakup in the healthiest way possible. Stay away from substances and unhealthy coping mechanisms.

💖 Focus on your friendships. Don't let loneliness get a foot in the door. We all tend to put less energy into our friendships while in relationships. The energy input/output waxes and wanes through life so make this a time to re-energize friendships.

🧡 Know what the signs of depression are and if you find yourself experiencing them, know that it's okay to get help.

💛 Make fun plans to look forward to. A road trip, a concert, a vacation, or something that makes you excited about the future.

💚 When you want to text, call, or see your ex, redirect that energy to reaching out to friends instead.

💙 If you need something to read that will inspire you, check out Brené Brown or listen to one of her TED talks.

💜 Make a list of every hobby or activity that you've ever been interested in. Commit to taking a class, buying basic tools, or finding a way to experience those things!

💜 Make a self-love playlist. Choose songs that make you feel happy and inspired. When you need a pick-me-up, listen to the songs.

💖 Find an app on your phone that will make your life easier. A self-improvement one, one to help you sleep, a meditation app, or maybe one that helps you stay organized.

🍑 Read poetry that soothes your soul. Salt by Nayyirah Waheed and Milk and Honey by Rupi Kaur are amazing works of prose.

💛 There's a healing practice called "I love you, I'm sorry, please forgive me, Thank you." I've had amazing success with it. Put your hands over your heart and say these words to yourself.

I love you.

I'm sorry.

Please forgive me.

Thank you.

This act of forgiving yourself is incredibly powerful. The act of saying words of love to yourself is powerful. Telling yourself that you are sorry for the things you went through, it's all so powerful. I do this in the shower or when I'm lying in bed in the dark. It always helps my heart.

💚 When you are ready (and you might never be, and that's okay) try to wish your ex peace. Try to wish them the path to healing so they don't continue toxic and abusive cycles.

💙 Make a list of things you want in a future relationship and keep those things in mind as you move forward. Remember what red flags you saw and what red flags you missed.

💜 Normalize your feelings. You can miss them even when they were terrible to you. You can miss them seven months after the relationship ends. You can be angry and want them to suffer for years. All of your feelings are normal. Don't judge yourself for them.

💜 When you feel ready - replace memories. Stop avoiding the restaurants you always went to or start re-watching the tv show that you enjoyed together. It may be uncomfortable at first but let yourself move past it.

💜 Practice positive affirmations. When you're feeling down, build yourself up. When you're feeling like you're not going to get through this - tell yourself you will. Be so kind in the way that you talk to yourself.

🧡 Let yourself rest. This work is hard, and you are allowed to bow out for a bit to collect yourself, to pull yourself back together, and to heal. Your shine and sparkle will return.

💛 Stay present in the moment and observe your thoughts and emotions without judgment. Engage in mindfulness exercises, meditation, or deep breathing to find inner peace.

💚 Research coping skills, they're good for days when everything seems super overwhelming and painful.

💙 Remember that the end goal of this journey is not to stop loving or stop feeling, it's simply to move forward, with each step lessening the emotional pain that you're feeling.

💜 Seek support groups or online communities: Connect with others who have gone through similar experiences. Sharing stories and advice can provide comfort and a sense of belonging.

The Single Life

Have you noticed that sometimes being single feels like the worst thing you could be? As if it says something about you. You are broken. You are unwanted.

I believe that it's important to embrace being single, especially after bad relationships and even more so when there's trauma involved.

You need to heal, and your energy needs to be directed toward that healing. Being single, as lonely as it can be sometimes, has many gifts.

You have two options: you can see singledom as this void inside of you that needs to be filled or you can see it as an opportunity to sort yourself out, heal, and then focus on creating a beautiful and amazing life for yourself and your future partner.

It's time to take a deep breath and dig into that healing. I want you to figure out who you are and what you want and the things that led you to your past relationships.

I want you to focus on your emotional and mental health.

I want you to look at yourself and look at your life and see that there's nothing inherently missing. You are not waiting for someone to come along and fix you. You are not waiting for someone to complete you.

You are waiting to share the already existing happiness in your life with someone else. I think when we get to that point in our lives, that's when real love and happiness happen.

Right now, are you comfortable being single?



What things are you focusing on?

What do you feel is missing in your life?

When do you think you'll be ready for a relationship?



Single Life: Anxiety

Okay, you're single now. Life is different. You have to get used to a different routine. To no longer having a person at home with you, someone to text all day, someone to help with the kids or household responsibilities, or someone to go out with or get physical affection from.

You're missing something and there's this intense feeling of floundering because there's just so much to process, it can be overwhelming.

If you already suffer from anxiety, you can find the fear of the unknown and the what ifs to be all-consuming, and if you're not usually anxious a lot of these feelings can be hard to understand and process.

Self-Care

Focus on your coping skills and if you don't have any that's your first order of business. Anxiety can overtake your life if you let it run out of control so it's best to try to manage it early.

Even if you don't have any kind of anxiety disorder, post-relationship anxiety is a real thing, especially in codependent, toxic, and abusive relationships.

Research CBT and DBT and see if there are any of those therapy concepts that you can incorporate into your life.

There are so many ways to cope with anxiety. There's the mental: altering your thought processes and the physical: breathing, yoga, and stress-relieving activities.

What things are you anxious about?



Are you feeling any physical symptoms of anxiety?

What things bring you calm and help your anxiety?

Are you stuck in any thought-loops you can't get out of?



Single Life: Jealousy

If your ex moved on quickly, or worse was cheating and then got into a relationship with the person that they cheated on you with - you're going to be feeling a lot of emotions and none of them are easy to handle or dismiss.

You might be tempted to look at the other person's social media or to contact them. There's this need to find out what it is about them so that you can understand what is wrong with you or where you don't measure up - resist that urge.

Breathe through those feelings and focus on letting go of those impulses. Don't try to check your ex's social media for new "friends" or for someone who's all of a sudden "liking" all of their posts. All you're doing is torturing yourself. It won't give you any closure, it's not going to make you feel any better.

If the other person is someone you have to see or interact with ever, then anticipate that when you see them, you're going to be slammed with feelings but you also aren't going to break. You've got this.

My story: My last relationship was very on/off and on our breaks, I would obsessively check her social media. Toward the end of our relationship, whenever we broke up, she'd re-friend the person she cheated on me with. It broke my heart every time.

I thought I was looking for some greater purpose: closure, finality, understanding, to gain the upper ground in future arguments. In reality, it gained me absolutely nothing but a further broken heart.

♥ Self-Care

Distance, distance, distance. Challenge yourself to go 30 days without looking at your ex's social media, asking them about their love life if you're still talking, or otherwise caring that they might be moving on.

Of course, you do care, that's natural, and it's natural to be jealous - but you can either let it control you (and in the process make you extremely miserable) or you can control it (and probably settle at moderately miserable).

Write about any feelings of jealousy you're having.

Single Life: Depression

In the media, it's a classic Bridget Jones scenario where you're sitting on the couch, eating ice cream, crying, and belting out sad songs at the top of your lungs. And who hasn't done that? But there are also deeper types of depression that can happen during a breakup. Especially if your relationship was codependent or abusive.

You might lose your appetite, have trouble sleeping, and be unable to do things you used to. It can feel like every aspect of happiness has been completely erased from your life.

It's not just sadness, it's despair and hopelessness. If you're already prone to depression breakups can often trigger an intense period of severe depression.

Self-Care

If you're finding yourself in a severe depressive episode it's so important that you talk to someone but especially a therapist-someone. If that's not possible then it's essential that you reach out for support from friends, family, or support groups (online or in person). Put your mental health first and know that it's totally okay to reach out for help to get through a tough time.

*I used Talkspace to get through my breakup and because I don't like talking on the phone and doctors/appointments can give me intense anxiety - it worked for me but if your depression is severe, in person therapy is the best option.

** Depression can sometimes trick us into believing that if we just got back with our ex all would be well. Don't listen.

If you're depressed today, write about all of those feelings.



Single Life: Wanting to Go Back

In today's society, the breakup/make up seems to be a thing. Many relationships have an on/off aspect to them - whether this is because of social media, the ease of communicating, or something else entirely - I don't know.

After the initial phase of the breakup, you might end up falling back into the relationship. Maybe you think you two can be friends, so you start talking again and end up getting back together. Maybe some distance convinces one of you that the relationship wasn't so bad.

I do fervently believe that people can change - I wouldn't be here writing this if they couldn't. But in relationships, it's really important not to rely on wishful thinking. Most issues aren't fixed in a month and definitely not a few days or weeks.

Self-Care

Take a look at the list of reasons you broke up and honestly ask yourself if any of those things can be fixed in the amount of time you've been apart. Compare that to the amount of work that either of you has put into remedying the situation. Is it worth it?

Never believe the sentence "I promise I will change/stop." Always ask for an action plan and for several of those steps to be completed already.

*Abusive relationships: I believe that abusers can stop abusing. I also believe that A) It will take months/years of intense work and commitment. B) The two people should not be together during that time. C) Each person needs to commit to going to individual therapy. D) Many times, even after all of that work - both people are happier apart because of all of the baggage in the way.



When you feel like going back, list why you shouldn't.

Single Life: Hope

Are you moving on but not really moving on? You're telling yourself that you're moving on but taking absolutely no action to follow through?

It's a strange sort of limbo.

Hope is a hard thing to let go of. If you've convinced yourself that you just need space, or that they're going to come around, or that this really isn't the end - then you're probably in the hope stage.

This often happens during attempts to be friends. You're broken up but you're still in contact and suddenly you're no longer fighting about the things that caused your breakup and you're having really good, flirty, and fun conversations - none of that changes the reasons that your relationship fell apart to begin with, no matter how much you'd like that to be the case.

Self-Care

If you find yourself falling into the trap of hope, it's time to take a step back and rebuild your boundaries.

Staying in the mindset of it not really being over may feel less painful than truly letting go but it isn't. What you're really doing is prolonging the healing of your emotional wounds and causing yourself more pain.

You keep uncovering the bandage while telling yourself that it's fine but in reality, the debris is going to halt your progress.

Allow yourself to fully move on.

Write down the hopes you're having trouble letting go of.



Single Life: Guilt and Regret

Guilt happens in all types of breakups. If you were in a codependent relationship, you might feel like your ex-partner isn't going to be okay without you or that you've ruined their life in some way. You haven't.

Or maybe you feel like you should have tried harder or done something different.

And maybe you don't quite understand why you feel guilty, you just DO.

Self-Care

You aren't responsible for how they handle the breakup. You aren't responsible for how they feel. It's really difficult to believe that but remember, this is about you. As heartless as that may make you feel, embrace it. Create that boundary of knowing that you aren't responsible for how someone else acts/feels/reacts.

What regrets or feelings of guilt are you having?

Single Life: Drained and Apathetic

In emotionally tumultuous relationships, your feelings are often intense. Intense happiness, intense despair, back and forth in a toxic cycle. There will come a time after you've run the gamut of breakup emotions that you just feel completely drained of everything. It's not quite depression (although apathy can be a symptom of depression so watch out for that) it's just a lack of feeling anything.

I call it emotional fatigue. You're just so tired but not in a sad or depressed way, it's more like your tank is just empty.

Self-Care

You're allowed to give yourself a rest. You've been on emotional overload, and this is your brain's way of saying take a breather. There's a difference between feeling drained and taking the time to emotionally refuel and recharge and staying in a place of traumatic numbness. Make sure that you're taking good care of yourself and practicing self-care in a way that fills you up inside.

What helps you emotionally recharge?



Single Life: Loneliness

Loneliness is also natural, are you noticing a trend here? Every single thing that you feel is normal, it's all about how you handle those feelings. Loneliness is a big one and can also be the most destructive. It can lead to a lot of unhealthy coping mechanisms including sliding back into the bad relationship or jumping in too soon to a new one.

Self-Care

Depending on your personality and circumstances it's usually best to spend some time alone (but not too much time) and get to know yourself again. Focus on your hobbies, focus on making your life wholly yours and full of the things that light you up. Seek connection with the people in your life, especially if you spent a large part of your relationship feeling isolated from everyone. It's good to create a balanced mix of the two. Rely on your support system but also focus on your independence and learning how to love "you" time.

What does your support system look like?

How can you meet your social needs right now?

Single Life: What Are Your Struggles?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staying off social media | <input type="checkbox"/> Minimizing why it ended |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not contacting your ex | <input type="checkbox"/> Letting go |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling lonely | <input type="checkbox"/> Depression |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty moving on | <input type="checkbox"/> Too much time alone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being single | <input type="checkbox"/> No support system |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking about your ex | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling unwanted |

Describe those struggles.

Can you think of what will help you cope with those things?

Rediscovering Yourself

The great thing about being single is that now you get to rediscover who you are all over again. In relationships, there's always a certain amount of change we go through to suit our partner's needs. Some of these changes are for good and some aren't. Either way, it's time to create a beautiful life around yourself and part of that is getting to know yourself.

Go outside of your comfort zone.

It's time to spread your wings, even if you don't feel ready, just open them a bit. It might feel safe to stay at home, and you should definitely indulge in some of that - but it's also important to move out of your comfort zone.

How can you step outside of your comfort zone?

Chances are you have some free time in your schedule, it's time to use it in a productive way. Often, we try to numb ourselves with food or zoning out to the TV, but healing really starts happening when we start taking steps forward.

After my breakup, I felt this intense need to be free, but I didn't know what "free" meant. I felt so stuck inside of myself, almost like I was crawling out of my skin.

I started by getting out of the house by myself. I'd take long walks while I listened to music or podcasts. I would spend time in the park, and it allowed me to shed who I was supposed to be at that moment.

I was just a girl with a book or a crossword puzzle. It allowed me to step away from being a heartbroken girl at home.

Create A Ton of Hobbies

When there's no one around you have two choices – die of boredom and loneliness or find some way to occupy your time. I tried everything that had ever interested me – jogging, crocheting, painting, blogging, web design, reading, jigsaw puzzles, gardening, yoga, drumming, drawing, jewelry making, & coffee dates with a book in hand. It didn't matter if I was bad at it, or I ended up not really caring for it. I couldn't know if it was going to fit into my life until I tried it. I began coming up with this wonderful daily routine that always included something that I enjoyed doing.

I replaced the emptiness of my heartbreak with fun.

It wasn't any one thing that helped me find myself – it was that I was spreading my wings and finding things that made me happy outside of another person.

I started truly learning the things that I liked doing that were just for me. It wasn't about doing something to make someone else happy (codependence) or not doing something because I wasn't allowed to (control). That's how I discovered that I was (still) a writer, that I loved yoga and enjoyed meditation, and that jogging made me feel like a superhero (thank you endorphins).

The bonus is that when you are ready to step back into dating you have so many conversation topics and you have so many things that you can share with another person. Hobbies are great ways to bond and make relationships stronger.

What hobbies do you miss or want to try?



Work On Yourself

Relationships that are toxic or abusive often leave a lasting effect on your personality. They change you, and sometimes those changes are also toxic. You learn behaviors to help you survive, but in turn, you can bring those behaviors into new relationships, carrying on the toxicity.

I found myself to be a completely different person after my last relationship. I went from someone who shared emotions and feelings easily to someone who would always default to "I'm fine."

Where I used to be physically affectionate, I became closed off and it was hard to re-connect with that aspect of myself.

I had a compulsion to be right all of the time. I had spent three years being told that I was wrong, crazy, and that things that happened didn't happen. I would have to save screenshots of conversations to "prove" that things happened.

In my next relationship, I felt triggered whenever I wasn't right. I'd have to "prove" that I was right – even over stupid little things that no one else would care about.

Defensiveness is also pretty common. You're so used to defending yourself that it's your go-to reaction.

Mentally checking out is also common, especially when you're coming from a relationship that was abusive.

If you were in a back-and-forth relationship, you might be used to breaking up over every little thing, and you can carry that forward into your future relationships.

Every disagreement can cause a surge of adrenaline and the desire to run.

Making those kinds of changes isn't easy. It's something that you have to wake up and commit to every day (therapy helps!). It takes months, even years, to re-wire your brain and change your default reactions to situations.

The key is trying again and again until those changes stick.

To be honest, some traits you won't even see until you take a step into a new relationship. It's important to have self-awareness and to be able to recognize when you are triggered or where you are acting from a place of your previous relationship.

What traits, behaviors, fears, or insecurities do you have to heal or work on?



Learn to Appreciate Yourself.

While you are working on healing the damage that your relationship did you also need to see the things about yourself that are awesome.

Focus on the things you love about yourself. Water them, give them sunlight, and watch them grow. Re-embrace your creativity, or your passion for the things in your life that you love and see how strong you are to have made it to this point.

The fact that you are here, working on your own healing? It says so much about who you are.

What things do you love about yourself?

(Re)Discover your core values.

Core values are your fundamental beliefs. These guiding principles govern to you what is wrong and right. Your core values decide what you will and will not put up with, they determine if you are on the right path and if you are being true to yourself.

Write down the things that are important to you. The values that you admire in yourself and others and then ask yourself if there's anything in your life that's causing you to compromise your values.

If so, re-align yourself. We are not perfect human beings. There may be a value that is important to you, and you find yourself acting in a way that doesn't align with that - change course. You're not stuck with the same behaviors for your entire life. You can break out of the cycle.

What are your core values and how can you honor them as you move forward?

Change your surroundings.

When I was going through that period of depression after my breakup, my house was a mess. If you walked inside of it, you wouldn't know that it was mine. It reflected nothing about who I was as a person. My journey of discovery had me surrounding myself in different colors, and textures, in art and houseplants – I created a home that made me feel happy to come home to.

Look at your friendships.

Make a list of the qualities that you want in your friends and if your current friends don't embody those qualities, it might be time to find a new support system. You don't have to ditch them or cut them out of your life but there's nothing wrong with outgrowing people, it happens.

Create a support system around yourself that nourishes you.

Find your style.

Toxic relationships take their toll on your self-expression, on how you feel about yourself and your body, and the energy levels that it takes to care.

Rediscover what you like to look like. What clothes, makeup, and accessories do you like? If your ex made you feel bad about some aspect of your body how can you take your power back and celebrate yourself and your body?



Right now, do you like the person you are?




What do you need to feel ready to move on?

What do you want life to look like before your next relationship?


What "baggage" do you think you're still carrying?



Make a list of the awesome things you have in your life. 

What negative traits/behaviors did your ex bring out?

What has being single taught you about yourself?

 What has been the best part of being single?

What are your main priorities?

How have your priorities changed since your breakup?

How have you made yourself proud lately?

What do you need permission to feel right now?

Moving On: Conflicted

As you start to move on you might feel conflicted about whether it's the right thing to do. You might still have some lingering feelings about your ex, you might feel like you aren't ready to get back out there again, or you might be stuck in the negative mindset that you deserve to be alone forever.

For the first two - listen to your gut. For the third - don't always believe the things that you hear in your head.

This is where you have to start trusting yourself again and focus on what you need. If you aren't ready to move on, then you aren't ready to move on and that's okay. But make sure that it's not just fear of getting hurt again that's holding you back. You may need to work on trusting yourself again.

Make sure that you aren't jumping into any relationships where you are trying to "replace" your ex or that you still aren't having intense feelings about your ex.

Self-Care

Don't try to rush your feelings or your progress. Others might think it's time for you to move on but that's entirely up to you!

Don't put pressure on yourself to work on a timeline that isn't your own.

Moving on is something that you're either ready for or you aren't. Don't push yourself but also allow yourself to be open.

Are you ready to move on? What fears do you have?



Moving On: Acceptance

You've made peace with the way things are and you're feeling okay about your life. Acceptance often comes in its own time. There's not necessarily anything that triggers it or a timeline that it follows. It just happens that one day you wake up and you feel okay.

♥ Self-Care

Even when you feel acceptance there might be times when you go through the other emotions for short periods of time. The days of acceptance get more frequent as the sadness and anger begin to fade. Let it happen. If you still have the occasional day when you're mad at the world, that's okay. If you still have some type of feelings about your ex, that's okay too. It's not about being unfeeling, it's about moving forward.

What are your feelings about your ex and your past relationship right now?

Moving On: Forgiveness

Forgiveness. That's the end goal. You need to be able to forgive yourself. Do you need to forgive your ex if you were in a toxic relationship or an abusive relationship? Some people can and some people can't and which one you are is up to you. For some people, it's a very healing journey to forgive your ex and for others, it's not. The end goal is not letting any feelings for them negatively impact your life. Whether you call it forgiveness or moving on is up to you.

Still, there has to be a layer of forgiveness in your life, even if it's only wrapped around yourself. You learned and now you're able to move forward. You're healing.

I have forgiven...

Moving On: I Am Feeling...

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Happiness | <input type="checkbox"/> Healed (or Healing) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Acceptance | <input type="checkbox"/> Lingering Feelings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ready to Move On | <input type="checkbox"/> Anger or Resentment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Love of Myself | <input type="checkbox"/> Sadness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conflicted | <input type="checkbox"/> Optimism About the Future |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forgiving | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Ready to Move On |

Where are you at when it comes to healing your heart?

What do you need as you continue to move forward?

List the traits you want in a future partner.



What are your deal breakers?

What do you want your life to look like in five years?

How would you feel dating someone like yourself?



The Future

As you move forward, you slowly discover that the pain lessens as time moves on. Time heals all wounds as they say. Often it takes longer than we want it to.

If you've made it this far, I truly hope that you have found some healing and softness. That you've learned how to process your feelings in a healthier way and that you have a greater understanding of how absolutely amazing you are.

You've looked at what draws you to unhealthy relationships, you've identified the red flags, you've formed an understanding of yourself and that's invaluable.

So are you. Invaluable.

I hope you've learned to never let your value rest on how someone else feels about you.

I hope that you feel stronger. Braver. Healthier. Healed.

I hope that you recognize the value of meeting your needs and creating boundaries around the things that matter to you. I hope you matter to you.

I wish you all the love. A healthy love, an honest love, a love that fills you up and nourishes you.

You deserve nothing less.