

Crisis Connection

Coping with Relationship Grief

The end of a relationship is emotionally difficult for everyone; however, the end of an unhealthy relationship brings with it complex and conflicting emotions that are especially challenging.

When an abusive relationship ends, your normal feelings of loss can surprise you and create feelings of shame and guilt that complicate the grief process.

These techniques will help you navigate through your grief and recognize the complex and conflicting emotions brought on by the end of an abusive relationship:

1. **Understand the grief process:** How you deal with loss is a very individual process. There are numerous studies that explore the nature of grief. However, most agree it is important that you give yourself time to heal and permission to experience your feelings.
2. **Express your feelings:** Finding a safe way to express what you are feeling is an essential coping technique. Writing in your journal or talking to a supportive friend or a counselor is an excellent way to express yourself.
3. **Be honest about what didn't work:** It is common when a relationship ends to fantasize and romanticize the relationship. If you are honest with yourself, it will help you understand why you ended the relationship or what elements of the relationship made it unhealthy and unsafe for you.
4. **Give yourself permission to experience the full range of your emotions.** Allow yourself to feel your feelings without judgment. Accept that your emotions may be conflicting, one moment you may be relieved, only to experience sadness and regret the next. Trust your decision, and accept your feelings.
5. **Be gentle with you.** Find simple ways to bring comfort into your daily routine; take an extra walk, have lunch with a friend, focus on gratitude, and offer yourself supportive encouragement as you make this change.

6. **Receive and give support.** Do not isolate yourself from friends and family. Everyone feels stress when going through change. It is helpful to let your support people know that you are having a rough time and need their support. It is also a good idea to offer support to friends and family. Focusing on someone else's needs will help you gain perspective.
7. **Avoid contact with your ex-partner.** Having contact with him/her can make the healing process complicated. It can also be dangerous. Research tells us that you are at greater risk for violence when you return to an abusive relationship after a break-up. Once you have made the decision to leave, trust your choices, find support, and move on.
8. **Have fun.** Spend time doing things that you enjoy. Maybe you have neglected yourself and your own interests. Now is the time to nurture you.

Source: Coping with Relationship Grief by Vanessa Timmons



A Life Free of Violence

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